

THE ROMANOV'S' MILITANT CHARITY: THE RED CROSS AND PUBLIC  
MOBILIZATION FOR WAR IN TSARIST RUSSIA, 1853-1914

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## **ABSTRACT**

ANDREW J. RINGLEE: *The Romanovs' Militant Charity: The Red Cross and Public Mobilization for War in Tsarist Russia, 1853-1914*  
(Under the direction of Louise McReynolds)

This dissertation analyzes the creation and evolution of the Russian Society of the Red Cross to understand the possibilities for and limits to the development of civil society in authoritarian political structures. Founded in 1867, the Russian Red Cross's chartered mission was to provide civilian medical aid for wartime relief. By signing the Geneva Convention of 1864, tsarist Russia embraced a European humanitarian movement geared toward aiding individuals wounded in war and victims of natural disasters. Over the next five decades, the Red Cross grew into one of the largest charities in tsarist Russia. This study reveals how the ruling Romanov family and members of educated society found a common space in which both parties could promote the empire's welfare by tending to its neediest subjects. However, Russia's decision to mobilize educated society for national relief proved to be a double-edged sword for the tsarist regime. During the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 and Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, limited funds, bureaucratic mismanagement, and scandals in the press incited members of educated society to demand greater oversight of Russia's Red Cross, calls that undermined the political regime's legitimacy during moments of crisis. Despite these challenges, the Red Cross did provide an avenue for women to enter the nursing profession, although Russian nurses never achieved the professional status enjoyed by their colleagues in the West. Given that one part of the Red Cross's mission involved delivering medical aid to belligerents

in foreign conflicts, members of the tsarist state and society used this organization as a unique instrument with which to conduct “soft power” imperialism by dispatching teams of doctors and nurses to intervene in conflicts in the Balkans and Africa.

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## INTRODUCTION

This dissertation analyzes the creation and evolution of the Russian Society of the Red Cross (*Rossiiskoe Obshchestvo Krasnogo Kresta*) during the last seven decades of tsarist Russia (1853-1914) to explore the bonds between the autocracy and educated society in prerevolutionary Russia. Founded in 1867, the Russian Red Cross's chartered mission was to provide "private aid" (*chastnaia pomoshch'*) for wartime relief. Private aid consisted of dispatching civilian doctors, nurses, and privately donated medical supplies to set up hospitals near the front, operate mobile ambulances at the front, and staff temporary medical facilities in rear areas. This association was voluntary because its members chose to join as members or donate to its philanthropic campaigns. Even though Romanov empresses headed this Red Cross and ministers and other elite handled its day-to-day governance, this organization did not depend on the state to conduct its missions. Members within the organization had a degree of leeway to innovate with new types of institutions and projects. Additionally, this charity and its obligations shifted with need, capacity, and public opinion.

My first objective is to try to understand why tsarist Russia, an illiberal, undemocratic state, embraced a humanitarian movement that originated in Geneva and encouraged tsarist subjects to participate in Red Cross chapters and programs. I contend that the Russian Red Cross reveals how the Romanovs and tsarist subjects found a common space, which enabled both parties to serve Russia. Peter I (1682-1725) instilled in the autocracy the moral imperative to guide and improve Russia, and his most prominent successors continued this

mandate.<sup>1</sup> Peter I's contribution, while incredibly painful and crude, was a state capable of mobilizing human and material resources to make Russia a European power. Catherine II (1762-1796) exemplified noblesse oblige. She gave the empire educational, cultural, and legal institutions that raised Russian culture to rival European achievements in the arts and sciences. Alexander I (1801-1825) devoted his energies toward protecting Russia from the European crises emanating from the French Revolution and Napoleonic disruption; his successor, Nicholas I (1825-1855) continued to insulate Russia from European perils by instilling the ideology of Official Nationality. All four of these rulers viewed the state as the instrument by which they would carry through the autocratic moral imperative. By the middle of the nineteenth century, however, the need to confront modernity and keep up with European rivals left the autocracy unable to continue this project without the involvement of the educated public.

The Russian Red Cross sought to alleviate the plight of the wounded in war and to reduce the woes of disaster-stricken civilians. For the autocracy, patronage of a national relief organization gave the Romanovs legitimacy because it helped locate philanthropy at the center of the tsarist regime's concerns. For Russian subjects, participation in this organization affirmed bonds with the autocracy and enabled the donor to participate in the moral imperative to improve Russia. The key donors and activists who worked for the Red Cross were the Russian subjects who felt they had the strongest connection with the autocracy. This dissertation explores how, even in an authoritarian, undemocratic political

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<sup>1</sup> I borrow this concept from Vasilii Kliuchevskii, who summed up the Petrine paradox in the line: "Autocracy as a political principle is in itself odious. Yet we can reconcile ourselves to the individual who exercises this unnatural power when he adds self-sacrifice to it, and although an autocrat, devotes himself unsparingly to the public good, risking destruction even on difficulties caused by his own work." See Vasili Klyuchevsky, *Peter the Great*, trans. Liliana Archibald (London: MacMillan & Co, 1958), 271-72.

system, state and society can work in tandem—rather than in competition—to fulfill an essential responsibility of the modern state: to promote the welfare of its subjects. In late imperial Russia’s case, civil society did not solely exist as a division between tsar and people, but it also linked people to the ruling dynasty.

Guided from above yet sustained from below, the Red Cross served as a means for the autocracy to introduce and channel educated society’s involvement in promoting the empire’s well-being. Educated society could also sway its Red Cross to take on certain tasks, but the autocracy and bureaucrats running this organization often controlled how far campaigns would go. I seek to understand why this association intervened in certain cases and what it hoped to gain from these campaigns. Tied to this question is the difference between philanthropy and charity. By philanthropy, I mean a gesture or act directed toward eliminating the root causes of misfortune or malaise. Authority and power are embedded within this activity, in particular, the authority to identify the problem, decide on the solution, and determine when the threat has been nullified. Charity, I define as the direct assistance to those immediately suffering. These definitions are important because they can help determine tsarist subjects’ attitudes toward the Red Cross. Russians used both “charitable (*blagotvoritel’nyi*)” and “philanthropic (*filantropicheskii*)” when describing the Red Cross, but this organization was always more oriented toward charity, in this case relief of sudden pains, of which there were many, especially in war, than alleviating all plight in a huge, multiethnic empire. And the reading public’s lofty expectation that a national relief organization would be able to fill all the holes in Russia’s military medical services in war and overcome all the empire’s disasters undermined support for the Red Cross and the Romanov dynasty when these hopes went unfulfilled. Mobilizing educated society for

national relief, as this dissertation demonstrates, proved to be a double-edged sword for the tsarist regime. Limited funds, scandals in the press, and complaints of bureaucratic indifference or inaction tempted members of educated society to call for greater public oversight and control of Russia's national relief organization.

Since women within the Romanov court played an instrumental role in creating the Russian Red Cross and guiding many of its early endeavors, this dissertation considers the challenges and possibilities for women's involvement in philanthropy in tsarist Russia. Romanov empresses acted as the nominal heads of the Red Cross, the organization's stated aim was to prepare women as wartime nurses, and the majority of this institution's members were female nurses. These characteristics encouraged tsarist subjects to view the Red Cross as a women's philanthropic institution, but, at the same time, this organization's mandate as the empire's national relief organization for war and natural disaster meant that male generals and bureaucrats occupied all important leadership posts. Therefore, the Red Cross occupied a paradoxical position among Russian charitable institutions in that it was a women's organization dedicated to the masculine task of war-making.

This dissertation considers the Red Cross in the context of historian Adele Lindenmeyr's interpretation of the difficulties women's philanthropic institutions faced in tsarist Russia. Women participated widely in tsarist charities, but they often eschewed leadership roles within organizations and hesitated to call for legal reforms because they feared charges of political radicalism. In one telling speech from 1891, when key tsarist cultural figures called on educated society to fight a famine that threatened most of European Russia, the renowned historian V. O. Kliuchevskii contrasted in a public speech F. M. Rtishchev and Juliana Osor'ina, two figures he considered heroes of Russian charity.

Rtishchev, a close adviser to Tsar Alexis (1645-76), designed policies to enable the Russian state improve its subjects' welfare, while Osor'ina, the widow of a provincial nobleman, embodied the selfless Orthodox woman, dedicated to relieving the suffering of those surrounding her. The Red Cross struggled with its position within this binary, as tsarist cultural attitudes asked women to serve this organization out of feminine Christian and patriotic duty, but the grave nature of this institution's mission often required the masculine tasks of policy making and social reform. Furthermore, Lindenmeyr asserts that tsarist women hesitated to adopt ideas on scientific philanthropy emanating from the West because they deemed these methods un-Russian and unfeminine.<sup>2</sup> The Russian Red Cross, as this dissertation explores, suffered from similar challenges. In 1904, zemstvo advocates, members of provincial governing boards, denounced the Red Cross for corruption and amateurism after a decade of agricultural and military disasters and founded their own national aid organization to conduct war and famine relief. The zemstvo advocates' motivation for this move was to reform Russia's national relief organization into an institution that would undertake the masculine task of addressing the empire's social ills with policy changes and employ the newest scientific methods to these problems.<sup>3</sup>

This dissertation also asks what role the Red Cross played in the military history of tsarist Russia. I begin with historian Geoffrey Best's characterization of nineteenth-century thought on war as a contest between war and peace movements. Best locates the Red Cross within the peace movement, but he then supposes that, as the century progressed,

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<sup>2</sup> Adele Lindenmeyr, "Public Life, Private Virtues: Women in Russian Charity, 1762-1914," *Signs* 18, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 562-91.

<sup>3</sup> The zemstvos were local government boards in many Russian provinces created by a legal reform in 1864. These boards gave local elites greater power to manage provincial and county affairs, especially in the areas of agriculture, economic development, education, and medicine.



humanitarianism became militarized.<sup>4</sup> This dissertation tests this theory by considering how the Red Cross advanced militarism, the intentional application of military structures and values to civilian society, in tsarist Russia. How did this organization balance its commitments to wartime and peacetime endeavors? Conversely, I consider, when possible, what the Russian military, especially its medical practitioners, thought of the Red Cross. The relationship between the army and its national relief organization sheds new light on civil-military relations in tsarist Russia and on autocrat-military relations as well.

Since the Red Cross's primary mission was supplementing army medical services in wartime, this dissertation must address the history of the medical profession. Russian doctors bemoaned the poor state of the empire's health, and many blamed the autocracy for not empowering them to enact widespread reforms to improve public health or develop medicine as an independent profession. Military doctors often felt the most marginalized, since the state and officer corps simultaneously obstructed them.<sup>5</sup> In wartime, however, physicians often found a warm bedfellow in the Red Cross. The Red Cross, as an independent agency, had the ability to conduct the type of medicine that it chose. This organization also had greater resources to purchase medical supplies and devices. Thus civilian doctors often signed up for wartime Red Cross work in hopes of reaching new discoveries and advancing the science of medicine. For a small but prestigious coterie of doctors, the Red Cross served as a way of advancing the medical profession. But if this organization proved beneficial for one type of medical professional, it restricted another. Nursing as a profession, which established itself in Britain and, to a lesser extent, Germany, did not develop as an

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<sup>4</sup> Geoffrey Best, *Humanity in Warfare* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 131-35, 141.

<sup>5</sup> John Hutchinson, *Politics and Public Health in Revolutionary Russia, 1890-1918* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 24-25.

independent medical profession in tsarist Russia. This dissertation seeks to understand why the Red Cross prevented nursing from becoming an independent profession in tsarist Russia.

As a signatory of the Geneva Convention of 1864, the international conference that granted national relief organizations a role in war and codified some rules for the treatment of the wounded, the Russian Red Cross mediated in foreign conflicts between member-states by dispatching material aid and sanitary brigades. These missions were popular with the tsarist public, but the Russian state did not always see eye-to-eye with newspaper readers, who usually backed one side in these conflicts. The bureaucrats controlling the Red Cross, especially after the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78, knew better than to let popular pressures drive Russia to violate the Concert of Europe. When the tsarist Red Cross sent aid workers to intervene in foreign conflicts, especially on behalf of anticolonial or nationalist movements, they made sure these initiatives were undertaken according to international agreements on humanitarian intervention and carefully controlled these campaigns. This dissertation seeks to explore how an undemocratic state responded to popular pressures to send aid workers abroad and what these projects meant for Russian subjects.

Lastly, I must address a question that has consumed far too much attention from Russian historians. Did the Red Cross, which valued self-initiative and personal contribution, lead to the political democratization of Russia? No, but political reform was never the goal; most members of the Russian Red Cross feared political change and sought to strengthen the regime. My intention in this dissertation is not to explain why the 1917 revolutions happened in Russia or, as historian Joseph Bradley put it, to identify “what did *not* happen” that caused the Romanov regime proceed down its ill-fated *Sonderweg*. Instead, I seek to explore the possibilities for and limits to the development of civil society in an autocratic political

structure. In this case the focus is on associational activities intended to supplement the state's role in protecting the welfare of its subjects.<sup>6</sup>

## Historiography

My methodology draws upon three subdisciplines of history: social history, to determine how this voluntary association contributed to the development of civil society in Russia; institutional history to trace the development of the Red Cross as an organization; and military history, to analyze how Russia mobilized civilian resources for war. The few works on the Russian Red Cross focus heavily on gender, but I begin with Joseph Bradley's paradigm for understanding the political role of voluntary societies in tsarist Russia.<sup>7</sup> On the surface, the Russian Red Cross fit most of Bradley's criteria for modern voluntary associations.<sup>8</sup> The Russian Red Cross's membership was voluntary, it was governed by a charter, it enjoyed a degree of license to determine its activities, and it printed its own materials. This organization always asserted it was a "private society" (*chastnoe obshchestvo*) participating in the "associational life" (*obshchestvennost'*) of the country. But Bradley made no mention of the Red Cross in his monograph on voluntary associations in

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<sup>6</sup> For portraits of the diverse number of avenues that tsarist subjects used to develop civil society in prerevolutionary Russia, see Edith W. Clowes, Samuel D. Kassow, and James L. West, eds., *Between Tsar and People: Educated Society and the Quest for Public Identity in Late Imperial Russia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

<sup>7</sup> John Shelton Curtiss, "Russian Sisters of Mercy in the Crimea, 1854-1855." *Slavic Review* 54 (March 1966): 84-100; P. P. Shcherbinin, *Voennyi faktor v povsednevnoi zhizni russkoi zhenshchiny v XVII – nachale XX v.* (Tambov: Iulis, 2004), 292-408; Laurie R. Stoff, *Russia's Sisters of Mercy and the Great War: More than Binding Men's Wounds* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2015).

<sup>8</sup> Using the Free Economic Society as his template, Joseph Bradley believed that voluntary associations in tsarist Russia had to be governed by a self-written charter, made up of voluntary members, possess their own, independent structure of authority, enjoy a degree of license to pursue the society's own pursuits, and print materials the members deemed relevant to the society's mission. See Joseph Bradley, "Subjects into Citizens: Societies, Civil Society, and Autocracy in Tsarist Russia," *The American Historical Review* 107, no. 4 (October 2002): 1094-1123.

tsarist Russia, a curious omission.<sup>9</sup> His final criteria for a voluntary organization was that it must possess an independent structure of authority, a murky condition for the Russian Red Cross. Even though the organization's governing board was elected, the titular heads of the organization were always empresses, and the state or Romanovs often intervened to subsidize Red Cross activities. Therefore, I contend that this organization was a voluntary one, and it certainly contributed to the development of civil society in Russia, but it occupied an unusual place among voluntary organizations because of its association with the autocracy.

Expanding its activities to include peacetime medical and disaster relief, the Russian Red Cross became an instrument for promoting public health and philanthropy.<sup>10</sup> The scholarship on public health in imperial Russia often centers on the contestation between the autocracy and the medical profession over how to ensure the wellbeing of the population.<sup>11</sup> Searching for reasons why Russian liberals failed to avert the Bolshevik victory in 1917, these studies fault either the autocracy for not giving doctors the autonomy to practice their craft effectively, or medical professionals for backing away from the mission to serve the

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<sup>9</sup> See Joseph Bradley, *Voluntary Associations in Tsarist Russia: Science, Patriotism, and Civil Society* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

<sup>10</sup> There are several Russian-language works on the history of the Red Cross in tsarist Russia. See M. V. Beliaeva, "Rossiiskoe Obshchestvo Krasnogo Kresta v istorii Rossii 1867-1921 gg." (Ph.D. diss., Stavropol State University, 2002); E. N. Kozlovtsseva, *Moskovskie obshchiny sester miloserdiia v XIX – nachale XX veka* (Moscow: PSTGU, 2010); A. M. Oleshkova, "Evoliutsiia organizatsii i deiatel'nosti Rossiiskogo obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta vo vtoroi pol. XIX v. – 1917 g. (na materialakh Urala)" (Ph.D. diss., Nizhnyi Tagil State Pedagogical Academy, 2012); E. V. Okseniuk, *Deiatel'nosti Rossiiskogo Krasnogo Kresta v nachale XX veka (1903-1914)* (Moscow: PSTGU, 2014).

<sup>11</sup> Richard G. Robbins, *Famine in Russia, 1891-1892* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975); Nancy Freiden, *Russian Physicians in the Era of Reform and Revolution, 1856-1905* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); John F. Hutchinson, *Politics and Public Health*; Laura Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); Harley D. Balzer, ed., *Russia's Missing Middle Class: The Professions in Russian History* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1996); Adele Lindemeyr, *Poverty Is Not a Vice: Charity, Society, and the State in Imperial Russia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Charlotte E. Henze, *Disease, Health Care and Government in Late Imperial Russia: Life and Death on the Volga, 1823-1914* (New York: Routledge, 2011)

masses. This study of the Russian Red Cross pushes the conversation in a new direction: I seek to identify not what the state refused to do for medical professional, but what it did do.<sup>12</sup>

The Red Cross's mission also made it unusual among Russian voluntary organizations, but not unique among national relief organizations.<sup>13</sup> In the modern era, states have monopolized war-making, and to expect a government to refuse to direct and intervene in the activities of its national aid society runs counter to teleological narratives that have viewed the nineteenth century as a period when revolutions in manpower, managerial capacity, and industrial output have increased the magnitude of violence armies could deliver.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, the Russian Red Cross was hardly unique in that it was always under the close purview of the state. The German Red Cross was closely aligned with the monarchy and military, the Japanese Red Cross was an auxiliary of the military, and, by the turn of the twentieth century, the French, British, and even American aid societies had begun to move closer to the state.<sup>15</sup> But none of these governments totally absorbed their Red Cross societies in the decades prior to the First World War, even though the Japanese came very close. Membership and donations were usually voluntary, and Red Cross societies possessed

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<sup>12</sup> Jacqueline Lee Friedlander, "Psychiatrists and Crisis in Russia, 1880-1917" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2007); Elisa M. Becker, *Medicine, Law, and the State in Imperial Russia* (New York: Central European University Press, 2010); Galina Kichigina, *The Imperial Laboratory: Experimental Physiology and Clinical Medicine in Post-Crimean Russia*, The Wellcome Series in the History of Medicine (New York: Rodopi, 2009).

<sup>13</sup> Pierre Boissier, *From Solferino to Tsushima* (Geneva: Henri Dunant Institute, 1985).

<sup>14</sup> John F. Hutchinson, *Champions of Charity: War and the Rise of the Red Cross*, (Boulder: Westview, 1996), 27.

<sup>15</sup> Jean H. Quataert, *Staging Philanthropy: Patriotic Women and the National Imagination in Dynastic Germany, 1813-1916* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2001), 243-46; Olive Checkland, *Humanitarianism and the Emperor's Japan, 1877-1977* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: St. Martin's Press, 1994), xii-xiii; Julia F. Irwin, *Making the World Safe: The American Red Cross and a Nation's Humanitarian Awakening* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Marian Moser Jones, *The American Red Cross from Clara Barton to the New Deal* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013).

freedoms to choose which peacetime endeavors to undertake and how to conduct these campaigns. My work contributes to this conversation by exploring how the Russia's national aid organization related to the tsarist state, and I analyze how this organization negotiated its obligations between wartime mobilization and peacetime benevolence.

## **Sources**

The most substantial repository of information on the Russian Red Cross are located in the records of this organization's Main Directorate (*Glavnoe upravlenie*) in the Russian State Military History Archive in Moscow (RGVIA, f. 12,651). This repository contains the minutes from the Main Directorate's meetings, financial reports, policy briefs, communications with other ministries, and reports from agents in the field. A second helpful resource is the personal files of Maria Fedorovna, the matron of the Russian Red Cross, located in the State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF, f. 642). This microfilm collection includes numerous reports on Red Cross projects and activities. The State Historical Museum in Moscow holds a small archive with the records for the General Zemstvo Organization (GIM, f. 84) and the Moscow Women's Committee (GIM, f. 17). The Central Historical Archive of Moscow houses the files for the Moscow Governor-General, another collection with materials on the early Red Cross organization (TsIAM, f. 16). In St. Petersburg, I consulted collections for two important figures in the Red Cross, P. M. von Kaufman (RGIA, f. 954) and N. P. Balashev (RGIA, f. 892), at the Russian State Historical Archive. These documents provided insight into actors who were in the Red Cross during the famine-relief campaign of the 1890s and the Russo-Japanese War.

The Russian Red Cross was by no means modest when it came to informing the public of its accomplishments. The organization published an official newsletter, beginning

in 1870, *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenykh i bol'nykh voynakh* (Herald of the Aid Society for Wounded and Sick Soldiers). In 1877, the Russian Red Cross changed the name of its newsletter to *Vestnik narodnoi pomoshchi* (Herald of People's Aid) and began publishing it biweekly. Following the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78, this periodical altered its name again to *Vestnik Rossiiskogo obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta* (Herald of the Russian Society of the Red Cross). And once more, after the Russo-Japanese War, they renamed the publication *Vestnik Krasnogo Kresta* (Herald of the Red Cross) and expanded the format into a longer, monthly journal. This source reproduced reports from Red Cross institutions, transcripts from meetings, treatises on the application of private aid to war, and memoirs from Red Cross members. These publications are detailed and informative, but they present little criticism of the organization or its members.

Red Cross agents nearly always produced postwar or campaign reports that detailed every action and expense. The Red Cross's own press or those of Russian state ministries published these accounts. After the Russo-Turkish War, for example, several of the surviving agents penned lengthy accounts of what the Red Cross accomplished.<sup>16</sup> Not long after the Russo-Japanese War, the organization synthesized the reports from all of the agents into a thick, two-volume set.<sup>17</sup> These works were likely published to show the public that the Red Cross was accountable for its donations and to prove to the army that this organization made a significant contribution to the war effort. Another small but useful set of documents are

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<sup>16</sup> For example, see S. Kolomnin, *Obshchii meditsinskii ocherk Serbo-Turetskoi voiny 1876 g. i tyla armii v Bessarabii i Rumynii vo vremia Turetskoi voiny 1877 goda*, vol. 1 (St. Petersburg: A. Suvorin, 1878); P. A. Rikhter, *Krasnyi Krest v Rumynii i Severnoi Bolgarii 1877-1878. Otchet glavnoupolnomochennogo obshchestva popecheniia o ranenykh i bol'nykh voynakh* (St. Petersburg: Rossiiskyi Krasnyi Krest, 1879); N. Abaza, *Krasnyi krest v tylu deistvuiushchei armii, 1877-1878*, vols. 1-2 (St. Petersburg: Rossiiskoe Obshchestvo Krasnogo Kresta, 1880).

<sup>17</sup> *Otchet o deiatel'nosti Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta vo vremia russko-iaponskoi voiny*, vols. 1-2 (St. Petersburg: Glavnoe upravlenie udelov, 1911).

official histories and published collections of documents. Although the official histories often present a simplistic and triumphalist view on the state of this organization, these volumes offer an encyclopedic synthesis of all of the Red Cross's activities.<sup>18</sup>

Famous physicians would either be commissioned by the Red Cross to inspect medical facilities during campaigns and produce book-length reports, as the famous surgeon N. I. Pirogov did in 1877, or they published independent studies of medical projects.<sup>19</sup> As informative as the Red Cross's official works, these accounts proffer more criticism and recommendations. Memoir sources, although they vary in quality, sometimes provide interesting commentary on what kind of people worked for the Red Cross and what they thought about their experiences.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, I tapped medical and military journals. Such publications as *Vrach* (Physician), *Moskovskaia meditsinskaia gazeta* (Moscow Medical Gazette), *Meditsinskii vestnik* (Medical Herald), and *Voенно-meditsinskii zhurnal* (Military-Medical Journal) contained accounts about the application of private aid in war. The two most famous military journals in tsarist Russia, *Voенnyi sbornik* (Military Miscellany) and *Morskoi sbornik* (Naval Miscellany) offered a few articles on the Geneva Convention and foundation of the Russian

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<sup>18</sup> See, for example, M.M. Fedorov and V. F. Botsianovskii, *Istoricheskii ocherk deiatel'nosti Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta* (St. Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1896); *Rossiiskoe Obshchestvo Krasnogo Kresta, sostoishchee pod Avgusteishim pokrovitel'stvom ee imperatorskogo velichestva gosyadaryni imperatritsy Marii Feodorovny. Ocherk vzniknoveniia i deiatel'nosti Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta* (St. Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1913).

<sup>19</sup> N. I. Pirogov, *Voенно-vrachebnoe delo i chastnaia pomoshch' na teatre voiny v Bolgarii i v tylu deistvuiushchei armii v 1877-1878 gg.*, vols. 1-2 (St. Petersburg: Glavnoe upravlenie Obshchestva popecheniia o ranenikh i bol'nykh voynakh, 1879); E. V. Pavlov, *Na Dal'nem Vostoke v 1905 godu*, vol. I (St. Petersburg: Shmidt, 1907).

<sup>20</sup> I located almost all of the memoirs cited in this dissertation using Petr Zaionchkovskii's index of prerevolutionary Russian personal narratives. See, *Istoriia dorevoliutsionnoi Rossii v dnevnikhakh i vospominaniakh: annotirovannyi ukazatel' knig i publikatsii v zhurnalakh*, vols. 1-5 (Moscow: Kniga, 1976-1989).



Red Cross. I also examined the newspaper *Golos* (Voice), which supported the Red Cross during the Russo-Turkish War, and *Novoe vremia* (New Time), for its coverage of the Italo-Abyssinian War, to gain an understanding of how newspapers reported on this organization.

## **Structure**

This dissertation is divided into eight chapters that chronologically follow the Red Cross's evolution in tsarist Russia. The first chapter analyzes the precursor to the Red Cross, the Exaltation Society of Nurses, that Elena Pavlovna created during the Crimean War. A visionary Romanov, Elena Pavlovna created this society to alleviate suffering, support Russia's war effort, and respond to British and French projects to mobilize women for war. N. I. Pirogov led a detachment of these women and published numerous accounts of their exploits in the most widely read journal of the period because he wanted to begin to develop nursing as a female profession in Russia, and, inspired by the beginning of the Great Reform-era, he saw value in expanding public roles for women. The Exaltation Society nearly failed because the military would not give the remaining nurses permission to work in army hospitals and the nursing order had no peacetime mission or endowment. This chapter demonstrates that Russia experienced a precursor to private aid in wartime in the Crimean War, so there were supporters of the Red Cross in the tsarist empire before this institution existed.

Chapter 2 shifts the narrative to Europe, where Henri Dunant brought delegates from several countries to sign the Geneva Convention in 1864. I consider why Russia waited to embrace this movement and then analyze how a small coterie of tsarist subjects with connections to the Romanov court convinced the tsar to create a national aid society. These activists ran into trouble with Metropolitan Filaret Drozdov, who disliked the secular nature

of Russia's national aid society and felt it was too European for Russia. But autocracy trumped Orthodoxy, and the Russian aid society came into being because the court supported it, albeit with a few unpopular changes to please Filaret. This chapter identifies some of the difficulties of relocating European institutions to Russia, but it demonstrates that Russians with connections to the Romanov court could lead reform initiatives.

Chapter 3 analyzes the Russian Red Cross's first activities in peacetime. This society did not know how to expand its membership or endowment because of the empire's low-level of cultural and economic development and because Russia was at peace. What the Russians most admired was the United States Sanitary Agency, an organization that taught them to consider private initiative and innovation without political subversion. During the early years, the Russian Red Cross developed a newsletter to advertise its mission, but the organization struggled to attract interest from medical professionals. The Franco-Prussian War convinced the Russians that a properly organized, sizeable aid agency could perform great feats in war. In chapter 4, I consider how the Russians learned from the Franco-Prussian War that they needed to conduct peacetime activities to convince the public to support the Red Cross. In the 1870s, the Russian Red Cross welcomed private initiative to create barracks hospitals for civilians and to raise funds to relieve peasants during the famine of 1874. This push to expand the Red Cross into the Russian provinces coincided with the implementation of universal conscription in Russia, a reform that private aid advocates believed might benefit their organization. By 1875, this society had the capability to manage small-scale, isolated philanthropic projects, such as temporary hospitals, and quickly organize large-scale famine-relief campaigns. For the Red Cross, visibility was key; the project to support troops in Central Asia accomplished little, but that was not the point.

Russians had to see their aid organization to understand that it was active and they could contribute to it.

By 1875, the Red Cross was active but not yet popular. The South Slavic uprisings against the Turks in the Balkans quickly changed this situation. Chapter 5 discusses how Russians embraced the idea of intervening on behalf of their Orthodox coreligionists. The missions to assist the South Slavs ran counter to the autocracy's foreign policy, and mission creep, the tendency for military interventions to expand their size and list of objectives as new challenges arise, in the Balkans pulled Russia into a war for which its armies were unprepared. This chapter considers the Red Cross's accomplishments in the Russo-Turkish War, when this organization drew widespread support from many sides of society. Still, the military had to subsidize the Red Cross during this conflict, and many postwar commentators believed that private aid was too detached from the military.

Chapter 6 analyzes the Red Cross during the interwar decades. Largely ignored by the military, the Red Cross expanded its activities to target urban populations and continued the large-scale famine relief campaigns. I consider the impetus behind these projects and what the autocracy and Red Cross planners sought to gain. Lastly, I offer an explanation for why nursing did not develop as a profession in tsarist Russia during these years.

Chapter 7 describes the Red Cross's efforts at delivering relief during the Russo-Japanese War. Even though the society was unprepared for war in 1904, the Red Cross mobilized tremendous resources for the campaigns in the Far East. I show how doctors used the Red Cross as a means to experiment and develop the field of wartime psychiatry. I end by discussing a new rival to the Red Cross, the General Zemstvo Organization, a national body created by provincial governing bodies to handle wartime relief, and the campaigns in 1905

and 1906 to relieve famine in rural Russia. Here the contrast between the ethos of philanthropy and charity starkly appear. The Red Cross wanted to help peasants in immediate need; the General Zemstvo Organization wanted to transform the peasants so there would be no more famines.

In the final chapter, I discuss three of the Russian Red Cross's humanitarian missions abroad in the decades before World War I. I argue that these missions enabled Russians to affirm their status as a European power, use medicine as a form of diplomacy, and alleviate domestic pressures. Unlike the humanitarian interventions in the Balkans in 1876, these missions were carefully controlled by the state to coincide with Russia's foreign policy interests.

## CHAPTER 1 – THE CRIMEAN WAR AND THE EXALTATION SOCIETY

Russia possessed a precedent for the Red Cross in the voluntary nursing brigades created by Grand Duchess Elena Pavlovna during the Crimean War. Amid the strict conservatism of Nicholas I's reign, progressive members of the Romanov court organized brigades of volunteer nurses to tend to wounded soldiers in the Crimea. And educated society followed these women's exploits; *Morskoi sbornik* (Naval Miscellany), the most progressive journal of the era, serialized news on the nurses at the front and published their memoirs after the war ended in 1856. Therefore, the cultural framework for the foundation of the Russian Red Cross did not derive solely from Western imports.<sup>21</sup> True, the Geneva Convention of 1864 and Western influences shaped the structure of and the activities that Russia's national aid society eventually undertook, but the groundwork for what Russians expected this organization to accomplish was established by developments in Crimea.

With Europe's largest army and a small number of military doctors, Russia's participation in the Crimean War was virtually assured to be a disaster for tsarist soldiers. Even though recent scholarship on the Crimean War has questioned whether Russian military medical services lagged that far behind their Western adversaries, eyewitness reports and the Ministry of War's immediate reform of the military medical establishment after the Peace of Paris in 1856 indicates that contemporary Russians believed the empire desperately needed

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<sup>21</sup> Alexander II chartered the Aid Society for Wounded and Sick Soldiers in May 1867. This organization changed its name to the Russian Society of the Red Cross (*Rossiiskoe Obshchestvo Krasnogo Kresta*) in 1879.

improvements.<sup>22</sup> The Russian Red Cross came to play a role in the project to improve military sanitation by training and mobilizing women and civilian doctors to work in wartime hospitals, and it encouraged the Russian public to donate medical supplies and monies for wartime aid.

This society's activity served two purposes. First, the Red Cross drew the educated public toward the autocracy, which needed greater participation from below to manage a multinational empire struggling with the challenges of modernity. Second, civilian participation in relief in the Crimean War enabled the public to know of and correct some of the worst abuses within the army, the most important institution in the Russian state. Civilian doctors and nurses in the Crimea, as direct agents of the autocracy, possessed an unusual capacity to identify corruption within the ranks and police violators. For this reason, when Russia created its Red Cross, the early advocates in this project, who had participated in the Crimean War, insisted this organization be independent from the military and bureaucracy but still under the patronage of the autocracy. The Romanovs' imperial mandate, therefore, gave this organization leeway in deciding how best to conduct wartime relief. This chapter analyzes how three exceptional figures, Grand Duchess Elena Pavlovna, N. I. Pirogov, and E. M. Bakunina, the early head of nurse of this movement, built upon historical precedents and established Russia's first wartime nursing brigades.

### **Nursing Societies under Nicholas I**

In many ways similar to the West, Russia possessed a small network of nursing societies (*obshchiny sester miloserdiia*) prior to the Crimean War, and these houses served as one type of institutional precursor that would be brought under the auspices of the Russian

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<sup>22</sup> Iu. A. Naumova, *Ranenie, bolezni i smert: Russkaia meditsinskaia sluzhba v Krymskuiu voinu 1853-1856 gg.* (Moscow: Modest Kolerov, 2010).

Red Cross after 1867. France led the way in European nursing with its large network of Saint Vincent de Paul's *Filles de la Charité*, or Sisters of Charity. This Catholic movement emerged during the seventeenth century as a way to reengage the laity by promoting social welfare after the French Wars of Religion; by the nineteenth century, the Saint Vincent de Paul order had spread chapters across the globe.<sup>23</sup> These institutions contracted with hospitals, orphanages, and schools to provide trained women to serve as nurses, apothecaries, and teachers.<sup>24</sup> In Central Europe, the Lutheran Evangelical Theodor Fliedner established the Deaconess Institutes in Dortmund in 1844 and in Berlin in 1847. These institutes won the support of King Frederick Wilhelm of Prussia, and the network of houses spread to more than thirty locations with nearly 1600 deaconesses by the time of Fliedner's death in 1864. Britain and Ireland also possessed communities of Catholic and Anglican nurses in the Sellonites in Devonport and Elizabeth Fry's Institute for Nursing Sisters.<sup>25</sup> All of these nursing societies had strong religious components, and, while these orders might take on new tasks in wartime, the founders emphasized the peacetime missions of caring for the poor, sick, and homeless.

Russia had a strong tradition of Orthodox lay communities, which began to emerge after Catherine II reduced the number of female monasteries in 1764. With less opportunity to join regular monasteries and the cloistered life of an Orthodox nun unappealing to some, lay communities became a space where women, often from the lower estates, could devote

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<sup>23</sup> Susan E. Dinan, *Women and Poor Relief in Seventeenth-Century France: The Early History of the Daughters of Charity* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2006), 141-42.

<sup>24</sup> See Colin Jones, *The Charitable Imperative: Hospitals and Nursing in Ancien Regime and Revolutionary France* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), especially chapter 5, pp. 162-208.

<sup>25</sup> Helen Rappaport, *No Place for Ladies: The Untold Story of Women in the Crimean War* (London: Arun, 2007), 95-96.

themselves to religion and practice charity. These communities usually developed around a pious matron who established or managed almshouses in rural Russia. Metropolitan Filaret Drozdov, the most important figure in the Russian Orthodox Church from 1821 to 1867, encouraged lay communities by providing them with spiritual guidelines and enabling some to transform into monasteries. These communities filled a niche in the Russian empire; they borrowed the commitment to charity, practiced by some Catholic religious communities in the western provinces, and combined this direction with Orthodox piety and peasant generosity.<sup>26</sup> For practitioners of Russian Orthodoxy, the individual's selfless donation of alms to the suffering was necessary for salvation. What Orthodoxy lacked was Protestant Evangelicalism's commitment to social mission. Mainstream Orthodox believers cared less about whether the beggars proved themselves worthy of alms or what they did with the help than that the pious frequently made donations to the needy.<sup>27</sup>

The Romanov women showed their dedication to Russia by establishing state-sponsored charities. Catherine II established a number secular institutions, such as foundling homes and schools for girls, but her successor, Maria Fedorovna (1759-1828), née Sophie Dorothea of Württemberg, the wife of Tsar Paul I (1796-1801), set the imperial standard by greatly expanding the number of state-sponsored charities and bringing them under the organizational management of the Institutions of Empress Marie, a division of the government. Noblewomen followed the empress's lead by setting up their own charities. During the reign of Nicholas I, philanthropic activities emerged as one avenue for ambitious

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<sup>26</sup> Wendy Rosslyn, *Deeds, Not Words: The Origins of Women's Philanthropy in the Russian Empire* (Birmingham: Centre for Russian and East European Studies, the University of Birmingham, 2007), 138-44.

<sup>27</sup> Adele Lindenmeyr, "The Ethos of Charity in Imperial Russia," *Journal of Social History* 24, no. 4 (Summer 1990): 680-81.



women to overcome legal restrictions that forbade female participation in voluntary associations.<sup>28</sup> Russian women prior to the 1870s enjoyed no opportunities in state institutions of higher or professional education, but aristocratic culture preferred highborn women be trained in European refinements. Under the guidance of private tutors, gentry princesses learned French, gained a familiarity with the fine arts, and developed the requisite social graces to entertain guests and manage the household.<sup>29</sup> A few women transcended confinement at home and sought liberation in philanthropic pursuits. The Grand Duchess Elizaveta Fedorovna, wife of Nicholas I, and the nobles E. V. Golitsyna and N. Trubetskaia were among a small number of women who founded private clinics.<sup>30</sup> Others created Women's Charitable Committees (*Damskie komitety*), the most famous of which was the Women's Patriotic Society, originally founded in 1812 to provide aid to victims of the Napoleonic Wars. These women's committees proliferated during the 1850s and 1860s as an outlet for female patriotism.<sup>31</sup>

The empire's wealthiest women established nursing confraternities, which turned philanthropy into a full-time occupation.<sup>32</sup> The inspiration for Russia's humanitarian nursing communities came from foreign sources. Small communities of the Catholic Sisters of Mercy existed in Riga and Vil'na (Vilnius), which had likely been imported from France to the

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<sup>28</sup> Joseph Bradley, *Voluntary Associations*, 8-10.

<sup>29</sup> Richard Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism, and Bolshevism, 1860-1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 4-6.

<sup>30</sup> L. G. Kondrashkina, "Zhenskii vopros v Rossii i vozniknovenie sestrinskogo dvizheniia v 40-50-e gg. XIX v.," in *Zhenshchina v grazhdanskom obschestve: istoriia, filosofii, sotsiologiia. Materialy VI konferentsiia "Rossiiskie zhenshchiny i evropeiskaia kul'tura", posviashchennoi teorii i istorii zhenskogo voprosa i obshchestvennogo dvizheniia*, ed. G. A. Tishkin (Saint Petersburg: Sankt-Peterburgskogo filosofskogo obshchestva, 2002), 154-55.

<sup>31</sup> Lindenmeyr, *Poverty is Not a Vice*, 126-28.

<sup>32</sup> Kondrashkina, "Zhenskii vopros," 155-56.

Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth before tsarist Russia acquired these provinces. These orders managed hospitals and wards for the poor and assisted prisoners.<sup>33</sup> Prussia's humanitarian, quasireligious nursing organizations, which were usually tied to patriotic leagues for women (*Valerländische Frauenvereine*), surely also influenced the Romanov and other elite Russian women that set up nursing societies. The German nursing orders gave "outpatient care" (*weibliche Krankenpflege*) to the needy and emphasized monarchism, class, and patriotism among aristocratic women.

Two key characteristics of the Prussian-type of nursing societies narrowed their appeal to elite women. First, these orders did not pay the nurses, whose devotion was supposed to come from maternal love and Christian piety. This policy also ensured that the nurse's lifestyle was really available to aristocratic women only in early nineteenth-century Prussia. Second, the nursing orders were quasireligious, meaning these institutions' members were often pious and their mission statements, rules, and names often reflected Christian themes. However, Protestant anticlericalism gave little possibility for religious orders to develop in Prussia, and these nursing orders avoided several key characteristics of Catholic religious orders. Prussian nurses usually took vows pledging loyalty to the order and its mission, but, unlike priests or nuns, they could walk away at any time. Also, members of Protestant nursing orders could own and inherit property, so long as it remained in the care of family members while they resided in the community. Thus elite Prussian women did not have to give up their aristocratic pretensions when they signed up for these orders.<sup>34</sup> This

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<sup>33</sup> Rosilyn, *Deeds, Not Words*, 147-51.

<sup>34</sup> Lora Joyce Wildenthal, "Colonizers and Citizens: Bourgeois Women and the Woman Question in the German Colonial Movement, 1886-1914," Ph.D. diss., (University of Michigan, 1994), 20-23.

type aristocratic institution appealed to the Russian nobility during reign of Nicholas I, which wanted to expand its social mission without surrendering class pretensions.

Grand Duchess Aleksandra Nikolaevna and Princess Theresa Ol'denburgskaia established Russia's first nursing community, the Holy Trinity Society (*Sviato-Troitskaia obshchina*), in St. Petersburg in 1844. This society received an imperial charter in 1848, which listed a clinic, hospice, school, and reformatory at the facility.<sup>35</sup> The purpose of this institution was not merely to relieve suffering and care for the sick but also to improve behavior, "to lead those who have fallen on the path to truth."<sup>36</sup> The first leader of this society, S. A. Biller, was a British Quaker raised in Russia.<sup>37</sup> In Moscow, F. P. Gaaz, a doctor and renowned prison reformer, and S. S. Shcherbatova founded the Nikolai Community, a society associated with the Women's Ward for the Poor, to treat victims of the cholera epidemic of 1848.<sup>38</sup>

These early nursing societies began from patriotic and philanthropic desires to relieve the sick or help with orphans, particularly girls, and they were not professional medical institutions.<sup>39</sup> Even though they employed religious symbols and slogans, these institutions were not part of the Orthodox Church. A women's committee headed by Princess Aleksandra Nikolaevna and staffed by noble women and other court favorites oversaw the Holy Trinity

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<sup>35</sup> P. V. Vlasov, *Blagotvoritel'nost' i miloserdie v Rossii* (Moscow: Tsenterpoligraf, 2001), 403.

<sup>36</sup> *Polnoe sobranie zakonov rossiiskoi imperii* (hereafter PSZ), second series, 55 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1825-1881) 23 (1848), no. 22626: 612.

<sup>37</sup> S. K. Makhaev, *Podvizhnitsy miloserdii: Russkie sestry miloserdii, kratkii biograficheskii otchet* (Moscow: G. Liosner and D. Sovko, 1914), 38-39.

<sup>38</sup> E. N. Kozlovtseva, *Moskovskie obshchiny sester miloserdii v XIX – nachale XX veka* (Moscow: PSTGU, 2010), 34.

<sup>39</sup> Kondrashkina, "Zhenskii vopros," 157.

Society.<sup>40</sup> Women between the ages of twenty and forty were permitted to join or leave the society freely, so long as they passed the probationary training period and remained unmarried. Nurses could own property, but it had to stay with their parents or remain in the care of financial institutions while they served.<sup>41</sup> These communities even lacked the requirement that nurses be Orthodox. However, the societies regulated behavior, visiting hours, work regiment, and uniforms. Nurses were not allowed personal clothes or items, and any monies that they earned became the property of the society.<sup>42</sup> The lifestyle may have mandated simplicity, but the fact these women acted as full-time philanthropists made them atypical for Nicholaevan Russia. Each nursing home employed a doctor tasked with instructing the women in all medical procedures associated with the feldsher (paramedic) trade except bloodletting.<sup>43</sup> And nurses taught at the primary school for poor girls as well.<sup>44</sup>

Prior to the Crimean War, Russia's nursing communities conducted poor relief and gave limited medical assistance. In times of national emergency, these organizations might provide some assistance to wounded soldiers, but that was not their full-time occupation. Once Russia was drawn to war with Turkey in 1853, and Britain, France, and several minor states intervened the following year, concern for the substantial number of wounded led Grand Duchess Elena Pavlovna to create the first nursing community specifically designed for war relief, the Exaltation of the Cross Society (*Krestovozdvizhenskaia obshchina*), the true precursor of the Russian Red Cross. This institution enjoyed success at the front and in

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<sup>40</sup> PSZ 23 (1848), no. 22626: 616.

<sup>41</sup> PSZ 23 (1848), no. 22626: 613.

<sup>42</sup> PSZ 23 (1848), no. 22626: 613.

<sup>43</sup> PSZ 23 (1848), no. 22626: 618.

<sup>44</sup> PSZ 23 (1848), no. 22626: 614.

the press due to two principle actors: Russia's most exceptional woman of her era, Grand Duchess Elena Pavlovna, and the empire's most renowned surgeon, Nikolai Ivanovich Pirogov, who led the Exaltation Society during its wartime trial.

### **Elena Pavlovna**

Born Princess Friederike Charlotte Maria of Württemberg in 1806, the future Grand Duchess Elena Pavlovna's life in many ways resembled her German predecessor Empress Catherine II's experiences in Russia. Both princesses moved to Russia at young ages for nuptial arrangements; neither enjoyed a happy marriage; and both dedicated considerable effort toward improving their adopted empire. Educated in Paris at the private lycée of Madame Campan, the future Elena Pavlovna moved to St. Petersburg in 1823 to marry Mikhail Pavlovich, Tsar Alexander I's younger brother. Like her renowned Pomeranian predecessor, Elena Pavlovna quickly mastered Russian and converted to Orthodoxy. She displayed a deep interest in science, art, and medicine, and possessed Peter I's compulsion to learn directly from leading specialists.<sup>45</sup> The marriage to Mikhail Pavlovich proved trying, since he was an awkward martinet, who, similar to his father, disdained the company of intelligent women and sought escape on the parade ground. Even though the Russian court's formalities bored Elena Pavlovna, her charm and tact left a deep impression on all those she encountered. Maria Fedorovna, Elena Pavlovna's mother-in-law, placed the network of state-sponsored charitable institutions, the Department of the Institutions of Empress Maria, at the young princess's disposal in 1828.<sup>46</sup> This department managed a web of medical and educational institutions and possessed capital reserves that grew to equal some state

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<sup>45</sup> "Velikaia kniagina, Elena Pavlovna, 1806-1873," *Russkaia starina* 33 (March 1882): 790.

<sup>46</sup> Shane O'Rourke, "The Mother Benefactress and the Sacred Battalion: Grand Duchess Elena Pavlovna, the Editing Commission, and the Emancipation of the Serfs," *The Russian Review* 70, no. 4 (October 2011): 589.

ministries.<sup>47</sup> Empowered by talent, wit, and, the most precious of tsarist commodities, proximity to the sovereign, “the scholar of the family,” as Nicholas I labeled her, soon broadened her interests from philanthropy to legal reform.<sup>48</sup>

Around 1845, Elena Pavlovna began hosting a salon at the Mikhailovskii Palace that drew a diverse group of Russian bureaucrats, nobles, and even some nonaristocratic professionals. The atmosphere of the salon shifted from charades and literary aesthetics to political debates and reform projects after Mikhail Pavlovich’s death in 1849.<sup>49</sup> Nicholas’s Russia may have become more closed after the Revolutions of 1848, but Elena Pavlovna’s clique remained the clubhouse for the coterie of men Bruce Lincoln labeled the “enlightened bureaucrats.”<sup>50</sup> Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolaevich, the minister of the navy; Prince D. A. Obolenskii, minister of justice; the Miliutin brothers, future ministers interior and war; historian K. D. Kavelin; and Prince V. A. Cherkasskii frequently attended these soirees. This group closely followed the Slavophile-Westernizer debates of the 1840s and 1850s and dissected ideas coming from European progressives. Devoted to “a better order in Russia,” this company envisioned the autocracy as the only viable engine for change.<sup>51</sup> Protected by their proximity to Nicholas I, who resided in the building next door, this group began to experiment with minor innovations during the Crimean War as the “Iron Tsar’s” health

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<sup>47</sup> Adele Lindenmeyr, *Poverty is Not a Vice*, 75.

<sup>48</sup> W. Bruce Lincoln, “The Circle of the Grand Duchess Yelena Pavlovna, 1847-1861,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 48, no. 112 (July 1970): 375.

<sup>49</sup> Paige Lincoln Thorner Snoddy, “A Jewel of the Crown: Grand Duchess Elena Pavlovna’s Crusade for Autocratic Reform in Mid-Nineteenth Century Russia,” (M.A. thesis, University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill, 1996), 25-44.

<sup>50</sup> Lincoln, “The Circle,” 374-5.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 380; D. A. Obolenskii, “Moi vospominaniia o Velikoi Kniagine Elene Pavlovne,” *Russkaia starina* 137 (March 1909): 505.

faded. Subsequently, during the reign of Alexander II, the same group of statesmen who graced Elena Pavlovna's salon came into their inheritance and introduced reforms into every corner of the Russian state and society. Elena Pavlovna was not merely hostess to the reformers: She actively involved herself in the emancipation of the serfs by chairing a key inquiry on the serf question from the German spa of Wilbad in 1857, by experimenting with emancipation plans on her estate in Karlovka, and by personally goading Alexander II into action, all of which shaped the legislation Russia implemented in 1861. She also expanded Russian charities during the 1860s and promoted the fine arts by founding the Russian Musical Society with A. G. Rubenshtein and Iu. F. Abaza in 1868.<sup>52</sup>

The most remarkable Russian woman of her era, Elena Pavlovna's ambition, position, and connections to the best the tsarist empire had to offer enabled her to create the Exaltation of the Cross Society, Russia's first wartime nursing society and precursor to the Red Cross, during the Crimean War. In order to give this project legitimacy and ensure it had a chance at success, she turned to Russia's most prominent doctor of the nineteenth century, N. I. Pirogov, for direction.

### **N. I. Pirogov**

Nikolai Ivanovich Pirogov bore the most responsibility for promoting the idea that Russia needed wartime nursing. Pirogov not only led groups of Exaltation Society nurses to the Crimean theater of war, but he also advocated on behalf of women's future in medicine by praising these nurses in one of the most progressive journals of the 1850s, *Morksoi sbornik*, the Ministry of the Navy's official publication. One of tsarist Russia's most famous surgeons and a hero to the nineteenth-century intelligentsia, Pirogov was the second most

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<sup>52</sup> Lincoln, "The Circle," 384-85; Snoddy, 45-75; O'Rourke, "The Mother Benefactress," 606-7.

important backer these women could have secured. Educated progressives such as Pirogov demanded and steered the Great Reforms and, in this case, scientific and patriotic renown lent legitimacy to the foundation of and support for the Russian Red Cross.

At an early age, fate guided Pirogov toward medicine. While the future surgeon attended V. S. Kriazhev's private school for noble children, Pirogov's father, a low-level civil servant, found himself involved in a scandal resulting from the disappearance of thirty thousand rubles of state funds. Investigators held the father responsible for repaying this debt, a burden that ruined the family's finances and caused them to lose their property. Without tuition money to continue secondary studies, Pirogov prepared independently for the entrance exam of the Medical Faculty of Moscow University.<sup>53</sup> As scholars such as Nancy Frieden have shown, medicine was hardly a profitable career in tsarist Russia.<sup>54</sup> At age fourteen, with the help of a forged document that increased his age to the state-mandated sixteen, Pirogov entered the Medical Faculty. A talented student in a dour institution, Pirogov left Moscow to continue his studies at Dorput University, a German-speaking institution, at which the aspiring surgeon first encountered Western medical innovations and liberal ideas about education.<sup>55</sup> Pirogov defended his dissertation on the abdominal aorta in 1832 and left for further study of surgery in Berlin and Paris. During one of these trips in 1837, the young Pirogov first encountered women serving as nurses in a Parisian hospital, an experience that convinced him of the possibilities of employing women in medicine.<sup>56</sup> At the end of the

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<sup>53</sup> Iu. G. Malis, *N. I. Pirogov ego zhizn' i nauchno-obshchestvennaia deiatel'nost': Biograficheskii ocherk* (St. Petersburg: P. P. Soikin, 1893), 8-9.

<sup>54</sup> Frieden, *Russian Physicians*, 23-27.

<sup>55</sup> Malis, *N. I. Pirogov*, 17.



decade, he returned to Dorput to teach surgery and became a traveling sensation in the Baltic provinces, meandering from town to town to perform surgeries. The 1830s brought Pirogov a profession and popularity, but in the 1840s he achieved scholarly repute.

Pirogov left Dorput for the Medical-Surgical Academy in St. Petersburg, Russia's flagship medical institute. In 1838, the Russian state transferred management of the Medical-Surgical Academy from the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the Ministry of War. Recognizing opportunity in this bureaucratic reshuffling, Pirogov persuaded the new director, Count P. A. Kleinmikhel', to open a surgical clinic for medical students. Kleinmikhel' promoted Pirogov to Professor of Hospital Surgery and appointed him to run the facility in 1841. Five years later, Russia founded the Institute of Anatomy and again made Pirogov the director. During the 1840s, Pirogov developed an interest in etherization, an innovation that became one of tsarist Russia's most famous contributions to Western surgical practice. Beginning with experiments on animals, he soon moved to painless operations on unconscious humans.<sup>57</sup>

In 1847, the Ministry of War commissioned Pirogov to travel to the Caucasus to instruct doctors on etherization in an active theater of war. At the time, Russia faced an ongoing insurgency in the Caucasus, and the inhospitable terrain of mountain warfare, mobile adversaries, and the distance from St. Petersburg caused this corner of the empire to become the laboratory for imperial military and political innovations. Pirogov witnessed the siege of Salta, at which he conducted medical procedures in unorthodox, makeshift lazarettos. This experience provided him with the human subjects who led to several studies

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<sup>56</sup> N. I. Pirogov, *Sevastopol'skie pis'ma*, ed. Iu. G. Malis (St. Petersburg: M. Merkushchev, 1907), 6; N. I. Pirogov, *Sevastopol'skie pis'ma i vospominaniia*, ed. S. I. Shtrakh (Moscow: Akademiia nauk SSSR, 1950), 196.

<sup>57</sup> Malis, *N. I. Pirogov*, 36-37, 39-40, 46.

on gunshot wounds, battlefield amputation, starch dressings, and anesthesia in surgery, the last of which soon became a staple of Russian military medical practice before it was widely practiced in the West.<sup>58</sup> The following year Pirogov returned to St. Petersburg and answered an invitation from Grand Duchess Elena Pavlovna, who wished to make the acquaintance of the ambitious surgeon. Encouraged by the grand duchess to give free reign to his experiments, Pirogov busied himself studying Asiatic cholera, which had reached epidemic proportions in Russia in 1848. For the next six years until he left for the Crimea, he ran the Department of Hospital Surgery and conducted procedures or gave consultations in the largest hospitals of St. Petersburg.

War drew Pirogov to the Crimea, and, as a talented surgeon and patriotic Russian, he submitted an application to serve as a volunteer doctor for the military. At first Pirogov's petition went unanswered, but he soon thereafter received a letter from the grand duchess informing him that she had interceded on his behalf. Elena Pavlovna invited Pirogov to lead the project to send nurses to the front, giving him full freedom to select the doctors for this mission.<sup>59</sup> Pirogov consented to the project and began training the nurses at his clinic to dress wounds and care for patients. Even though he admitted that the nurses were hastily trained and sometimes poorly selected, he staked his reputation on the project and embarked for the Crimea with the first group of twenty-eight nurses in October 1854.

In the Crimea, Pirogov worked closely with nurses in Simferopol and Sevastopol, only leaving for a short trip to coalesce during the summer of 1855. The war taught him to

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 49; G. B. Bertenson, *Nikolai Ivanovich Pirogov: Ocherk ego obshchestvennoi deiatel'nosti, kak professora, vracha-khirusga, pisatel' i pedagoga s 24-go maia 1831 g. po 24-oe maia 1881 g.* (St. Petersburg: K. Rikker, 1881), 9.

<sup>59</sup> Malis, *N. I. Pirogov*, 52-53.

treat wounded extremities with gypsum dressings, opting to let wounds heal instead of rushing to amputate. He introduced an efficient system of triage at the Nobles' Assembly, the main lazaretto during the Siege of Sevastopol.<sup>60</sup> Here he observed that infections spread in unclean, closed facilities and advocated for ventilation to counter deadly miasmas. Never bashful when confronted with malpractice, Pirogov railed against hospital administrators' mismanagement and staffers' criminality in the wards.<sup>61</sup> He found an ally in the nurses, whom he tasked with bedside care and housekeeping duties and whom he praised for keeping male sanitary workers in line. Following the fall of Sevastopol, he retreated north with the remaining Russian forces, treating evacuated soldiers in Simferopol and in southern Russia until the end of the war. Pirogov later published a guidebook on wartime surgery, *The Universal Principles of Battlefield Surgery*, which appeared in German in 1863 and in Russian two years later.<sup>62</sup>

Pirogov ceased practicing medicine during the early period of Alexander II's reign and devoted himself to reshaping Russia through education, a pursuit that won him a reputation as a visionary rather than as a pragmatist. His greatest publication of the period, "Questions of Life (*Voprosy zhizni*)," argued that future citizens required a diverse education rooted in the humanities, an idea that became fundamental to early reform efforts in education.<sup>63</sup> Invited by Minister of Education A. S. Norov to serve as the curator of the school districts of Odessa and Kiev, Pirogov introduced numerous changes to curricula,

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<sup>60</sup> Malis, *N. I. Pirogov*, 56-57.

<sup>61</sup> Bertenson, *Nikolai Ivanovich Pirogov*, 14.

<sup>62</sup> N. I. Pirogov, *Nachala obshchei voenno-polevoi khirurgii, vziatyie iz nabliudeniia voennogospital'noi praktiki i vospominanii o krimskoi voine i kavkazskoi ekspeditsii* (Dresden: E. Blokhman, 1865).

<sup>63</sup> N. I. Pirogov, "Voprosy zhizni," *Morskoi sbornik* 23 (July 1856): 559-97.

classroom practices, and extracurricular activities. His most controversial measures expanded educational opportunities for women, Jews, Muslims, and adults. As historian William Mathes suggested, these reforms probably went too far, too quickly, and the Ministry of Education stripped Pirogov of his powers by reassigning him in March 1861.<sup>64</sup> For the next five years, Pirogov traveled and worked on special projects for the Ministry of Education before retiring to his estate in Vishnia, Ukraine, where he resumed practicing medicine until his death in 1881. A favorite of the Russian Red Cross, Pirogov resurfaced during the Franco-Prussian and Russo-Turkish Wars to inspect and compose reports on wartime medical facilities and practices.

This physician's vision helped Russia recognize the benefit of a national aid society, staffed by well-trained nurses. Even though he lacked the subtlety for tsarist politics, Pirogov shared many of the same characteristics as the enlightened bureaucrats who implemented the Great Reforms and later served the Russian Red Cross. Similar to many midcentury progressive bureaucrats, he was destined for state service due to his family's limited financial means. Education in Dorput, a command of German, and travels abroad exposed him to progressive ideas emanating from Europe. A stint in the Caucasus provided Pirogov with the impetus for innovation and a laboratory in which to experiment. The Crimean War forced him to reckon with Russia's weaknesses and sparked new innovations: in this case, the introduction of civilian medical workers to war. Lastly, by advocating on behalf of expanded educational opportunities for women, Pirogov opened the door for women to enter the medical profession in Russia. His collaboration with Elena Pavlovna was the first step toward the creation of the Russian Red Cross.

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<sup>64</sup> William L. Mathes, "N. I. Pirogov and the Reform of University Government, 1856-1866," *Slavic Review* 31, no. 1 (March 1972): 29-33.

## Russian Nurses in Crimea

All three of the major combatants in the Crimean campaign—Russia, Britain, and France—mobilized women for service during this conflict, a coincidental development that was by no means an historical accident. Educated readers in the three major powers shared a common discourse, and the ideas for mobilizing women to serve in military hospitals informed one another across European borders. English-speaking scholars have long drawn attention to how an exposé in *The Times* on 12 October 1854 spurred public opinion to demand improvement in sanitary conditions for the British wounded, and Florence Nightingale, propelled by this outcry, wrangled permission from reluctant officials to organize a nursing brigade to sail to the East.<sup>65</sup> Nightingale enjoyed success in this endeavor and is today the chief heroine of Crimea.

Britain, with its liberal traditions of private property and proud experience with private initiative, led the way in mobilizing civilian resources and public opinion in this conflict. Nightingale was one of many civilians: Alexis Soyer, the celebrated cook, taught the army to manage its canteens; Sir Joseph Paxton and Sir Thomas Peto built roads and railroads in the Crimea; and W. S. Lindsay, the shipping magnate, saw expeditionary warfare as boon to business.<sup>66</sup> But the success of Nightingale's mission was by no means preordained. Her pestering of bureaucrats won nurses access to military hospitals in Scutari and Balaklava, far from the front, and British commanders, anxious the nurses would undermine discipline or generate scandals if killed or captured, did as much as they could to

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<sup>65</sup> John Shelton Curtiss, "Russian Sisters of Mercy in the Crimea, 1854-1855," *Slavic Review* 25, no. 1 (March 1966): 84-85.

<sup>66</sup> Olive Anderson, *A Liberal State at War: English Politics and Economics During the Crimean War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1967), 114-18.

forbid these women from proceeding anywhere near the fighting.<sup>67</sup> Nightingale's nurses were hardly the only British women in the theater of war. Many women traveled to the Crimea as state-sanctioned wives and laundresses, accompanying the troops "on the strength," or following the armies as privileged officers' wives, stowaways, or tourists.<sup>68</sup> Nightingale's vision of officially recognized, secular brigades of nurses, who were skilled in medicine and fulfilled a peacetime as well as wartime role in hospital care, affected the early advocates of wartime nursing in Russia.

By war's end, Nightingale had hired, trained, and paid over two hundred women to work in Scutari and other British medical facilities in the East. All nurses signed a contract with the state that entitled them to pay of twelve to eighteen shillings a week, a good salary for a laboring British woman. Despite her preference for unattractive, lower-class women who lacked a certain allure, Nightingale had to dismiss many of her nurses for drunkenness and lechery in the hospitals. However, in the end, Nightingale succeeded in winning over public opinion to the plight of the wounded, and in 1860 she set up a training school at the St. Thomas hospital to reproduce her vision of nurses professionally trained in medicine.<sup>69</sup>

The French had trained nurses from the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul and *cantinières*, women who were permitted to follow the army to sell victuals to troops. In fact, Thomas Chenery's report in *The Times* on the deplorable treatment in Scutari, the very article

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<sup>67</sup> Curtiss, "Russian Sisters," 100.

<sup>68</sup> See, Helen Rappaport, *No Place for Women*, 30. The presence of these women should be viewed as holdovers from the early modern period, when women played a valuable role in the pillage economy of an army on the march.

John Lynn argued that these women played an invaluable role in the pillage economy of medieval and early modern armies on the march. The modern state gradually replaced the camp followers, female and male, with sophisticated supply and sanitation services during eighteenth century. See John Lynn, *Women, Armies, and Warfare in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>69</sup> Rappaport, *No Place for Women*, 104 and 170-71.

that prompted Nightingale's success, sparked the British to action by reminding readers that the French already had Sisters of Charity in the theater of war.<sup>70</sup> The French Military Medical Services actually drafted these women, but their perceived role as consolers instead of medics earned them ire from Florence Nightingale, who sought to establish nursing as a secular profession.<sup>71</sup> Educated Russians learned of Nightingale's actions from British newspapers, but they contributed to this same dialogue as well. Elena Bakunina, a Russian nurse in the Crimea, published letters in *The Times*.<sup>72</sup> The tsarist public, however, could not force change on its own because of the autocratic political structure that required all change to come from above. In Russia's case, the introduction of voluntary aid workers to war came from within the Romanov family itself, a peculiarity that led to a significant difference between the adversaries' experiences with nurses in the Crimean War. British commanders did all they could to keep Nightingale away from the front, but Russian nurses, armed with Elena Pavlovna's mandate, dispatched to where they were needed the most, besieged Sevastopol, a testing ground that blurred the division between front and rear.

It took the embarrassment at the Battle of Alma in 1854, at which tsarist military medical authorities proved woefully unprepared to treat the wounded, to prod Elena Pavlovna to action.<sup>73</sup> After hearing news of this engagement, the grand duchess turned to

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<sup>70</sup> "The Crimea," *The Times*, October 12, 1854, 7.

<sup>71</sup> Rappaport, *No Place for Women*, 110.

<sup>72</sup> Sister B, "A Letter from a Russian Sister of Mercy," *The Times*, January 5, 1856, 8.

<sup>73</sup> Prior to Elena Pavlovna's intervention, a few Russian women had made their way to the front. The most famous of these, Dasha Sevastopol (Dar'ia Lavret'evna Mikhailova), was a fifteen-year-old orphan who disguised herself as a man, followed the army to Alma, and set up a primitive dressing station to treat the wounded in September 1854. Little is known of her story, but after the war the tsarist regime allegedly honored her with a medal and a payment of one thousand rubles. See, Pirogov, *Sevastopol'skie pis'ma*, ed. Iu. M. Malis, 208, note 24.

Minister of War V. A. Dolgorukov and persuaded him to issue a decree founding the Exaltation Society on 28 October 1854, Russia's first nursing society devoted to wartime service. She advertised soon after for volunteers and petitioned V. V. Pelikan, the head of the Military Medical Department, to train the nurses in the Second Military Hospital in St. Petersburg. Elena Pavlovna never confessed where she got the idea for creating this society, but she surely was aware of the urban nursing societies in Russia and knew of Nightingale's efforts in Great Britain. D. A. Obolenskii, an intimate of the Grand Duchess's salon, wrote years later that during the war the fate of the wounded was never far from her mind, and Pirogov had been petitioning her with projects to aid the wounded since 1854.<sup>74</sup>

The idea to mobilize women for the front was quite radical for Russia at the time since military discipline insisted that women be forbidden from working in military hospitals and by their nature were incompatible with the "exclusive preserve of the military profession."<sup>75</sup> The Russian commander in the Crimean theater, A. S. Menshikov, surmised that the nurses would spread syphilis in the ranks.<sup>76</sup> N. O. Sukhozanet was reported to have told the emperor that junior officers would "knock up" (*obriukhatit'*) the nurses.<sup>77</sup> Emperor Nicholas I supposedly viewed women attending at the beds of soldiers as "unforgivable freethinking."<sup>78</sup> But Elena Pavlovna found a sympathetic ear in Grand Duke Konstantin

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<sup>74</sup> D. A. Obolenskii, "Moi vospominaniia," 517.

<sup>75</sup> Obolenskii, "Moi vospominaniia," 518. The official history of the Russian Ministry of War also stated that military authorities viewed the introduction of women with suspicion, but the shortage of feldshers and trust of the doctors eased this transition. See *Stoletie voennogo ministerstva*, ed. D. A. Skalon, vol. 8, part 2 (St. Petersburg: M. O. Vol'f, 1908), 129.

<sup>76</sup> Naumova, *Ranenie, bolezni i smert*, 30.

<sup>77</sup> A. V. Posternak, *Ocherki po istorii obshchin sester miloserdiia* (Moscow: Sviato-Dimitrievskoe uchilishche sester miloserdiia, 2001), 83.

<sup>78</sup> Obolenskii, "Moi vospominaniia," 518.



Nikolaevich, who permitted female nurses to work in two naval hospitals. Chartered in October 1854, the first group of thirty-two Exaltation nurses assembled for a quick training course in a wing of the Kalinkinsk Hospital and departed for the Crimea in early November.<sup>79</sup> Even Pirogov, the leader of these nurses, wrote to his wife that he harbored reservations about the project in December 1854. He admitted to A. A. Pirogova that “up to this time there is no word of amorous intrigues with the officers, but [they] have already begun to speak of it, so I forbade nurses from being dispatched to junior officers, all the more so since there are few serious patients [among them].<sup>80</sup> These concerns, it seems, proved unfounded, and Pirogov would later become the loudest advocate for wartime nursing.

In total, slightly more than 160 Russian women answered the call to serve as nurses of the Exaltation Society during the war and postwar evacuation to the Russian interior. Seventeen of these women perished during the conflict. Additionally, at least eighty-five Compassionate Widows from the St. Petersburg, Moscow, and Odessa Women’s Shelters served in some capacity as nurses in Crimea.<sup>81</sup> Unlike British nurses who received salaries from the state, Russian private aid was truly private. The grand duchess paid for the nurses’ uniforms, travel, and supplies with two hundred thousand rubles of her own funds and supplementary donations from Nicholas I and private sources, but none of the volunteers received monetary remuneration for their efforts.<sup>82</sup> A few of the patriotic Russian women came from the elite ranks of society—E. K. Bakunina or A. P. Stakhovich even had

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<sup>79</sup> Obolenskii, “Moi vospominaniia,” 518; *Sestry miloserdiia*, ed. N. N. Kolesnikov, 32.

<sup>80</sup> Pirogov, *Sevastopol’skie pis’ma i vospominaniia*, 30.

<sup>81</sup> “Ofitsial’naia chast’,” *Morskoi sbornik* 13 (November 1854): 49; *Stoletie voennogo ministestva*, D. A. Skalon, ed. (St. Petersburg: M. O. Vol’f, 1908), vol. 8, part 2, p. 120

<sup>82</sup> Soroka, Marina and Charles A. Ruud, *Becoming a Romanov, Grand Duchess Elena of Russia nad her World (1807-1873)* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2015), 203-4.

connections at court—but most nurses were military wives or other commoners.<sup>83</sup> After the conclusion of the Treaty of Paris in March 1856, nurses in the Crimea and along the Black Sea coastline assisted with the evacuation of the wounded back to central Russia. And, as indicated by one memoir source, a few women from Finland served as nurses during the bombardment of Sveaborg fortress outside Helsinki in 1855.<sup>84</sup> The number of Russian women who volunteered in the Crimean War may have been limited, but the numerous letters and memoirs that appeared in *Morskoi sbornik* suggest that a clique of bureaucrats was encouraged to know of the female contribution to the war effort.

### **Russian Nurses in the Press**

The heroic descriptions in the press of the Exaltation nurses' wartime exploits situated these women among the ranks of the heroic defenders of Sevastopol, a myth that pervaded the Russian memory of war up to the present. During the Crimean War, however, as Louise McReynolds has argued in her work on the mass-circulation press, Russian readers had limited access to news from the front in their native language.<sup>85</sup> In contrast to Britain, Nicholas I refused to enable a market-based public sphere to develop because of concerns that Russian literature would degenerate into a dissolute gabfest or be inundated with subversive political rhetoric. Thus, when Russian readers turned to their newspapers for tidings on the war, they found mostly official bulletins. Even though tsarist readers' access to information on the war was limited, educated Russians could find detailed information on the

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<sup>83</sup> Curtiss, "Russian Sisters of Mercy," 84-85.

<sup>84</sup> See "Vypiska iz pis'ma nachal'nitsy finliandskogo otdeleniia Krestovozdvizhenskoï obshchiny sester popecheniia o bol'nykh i ranenykh," *Morskoi sbornik* 18 (October 1855): 353-61.

<sup>85</sup> Louise McReynolds, *The News Under Russia's Old Regime: The Development of a Mass-Circulation Press* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 22-23.

pages of *Morskoi sbornik*.<sup>86</sup> This periodical, which during the Crimean War enjoyed unprecedented freedom to publish on a wide variety of political, social, scientific, and even philosophical themes, quickly became one of the most widely read “thick journals” in Russia.<sup>87</sup> Although *Morskoi sbornik* contained advertisements for women to volunteer as nurses in 1854, the first articles documenting the Exaltation nurses’ accomplishments appeared in spring 1855, after Nicholas I had died.<sup>88</sup> These articles combined lengthy quotations from Pirogov’s reports to Elena Pavlovna and excerpts from letters by individual nurses describing daily activities at the front, and this content suggests that these publications were compiled with the grand duchess’s assent.<sup>89</sup>

Literary accounts on the nurses began to appear in *Morskoi sbornik* at this time for three important reasons. First, educated society awoke to the errors of Nicholas I’s reign during the war. The “Iron Tsar” expired on 2 March 1855, and while he would not have agreed with A. V. Nikitenko’s appraisal of the entire reign as “a mistake,” rumor had it that he pined for change on his deathbed. At war under a new tsar, Russia stood at critical juncture in its history. Amid this uncertainty, new opportunities for shaping policy arose that

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<sup>86</sup> Jacob Kipp, “The Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolaevich and the Epoch of the Great Reforms, 1855-1866,” Ph.D. diss., (Pennsylvania State University, 1970), 114.

<sup>87</sup> W. Bruce Lincoln, *The Great Reforms: Autocracy, Bureaucracy, and the politics of Change in Imperial Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1990), 46-47.

<sup>88</sup> See for example the announcement in the “Official section” (*Ofitsial’naia chast’*) of *Morskoi sbornik* 13 (November 1854): 49.

<sup>89</sup> “Sestry Krestovozdvizhenskoï obshchiny popecheniia o ranenikh v Krymu,” pts. 1-3, *Morskoi sbornik* 14 (January 1855): 110-17; 14 (February 1855): 366-76; 15 (April 1855): 477-502; “Vypiska iz pis’ma nachal’nitsy Krestovozdvizhenskoï Obshchiny Sester Popecheniia o ranenikh Gospozhi Stakhovich,” *Morskoi sbornik* 16 (July 1855): 189-93; “Izvlachenie iz pis’ma, Krestovozdvizhenskoï obshchiny sestry G. B. . . .,” *Morskoi sbornik* 18 (September 1855):67-74; “Vypiska iz pis’ma nachal’nitsy finliandskogo otdeleniia Krestovozdvizhenskoï obshchiny sester popecheniia o bol’nykh i ranenikh,” *Morskoi sbornik* 18 (October 1855): 353-61; “Vypiska iz pisem sester Krestovozdvizhenskoï obshchiny popecheniia o ranenikh, v Krymu,” *Morskoi sbornik* 18 (October 1855): 361-69;

depended on public opinion. In a society primarily made up of illiterate serfs, public opinion remained largely confined to government elites, the same individuals who read *Morskoi sbornik* and possessed the talent and connections to prompt the young tsar to enact reforms.<sup>90</sup> Second, the nurses had recently arrived in the theater of war as part of a new project, which supporters wanted to see succeed. Historian Iu. A. Naumova speculated that these essays may have been published to allay conservative generals' fears that the nurses undermined discipline at the front.<sup>91</sup> She is probably correct in this assertion, since Elena Pavlovna knew there were more than a few critics of her project among the office corps. Third, the head of the Russian navy, Konstantin Nikolaevich, the man responsible for turning *Morskoi sbornik* into novel forum for political discussion and reform, was an inner member of Elena Pavlovna's salon and supporter of the Exaltation nurses. Personal and familial connections thus surely played a role in bringing these accounts to print.

These accounts emphasized that nurses were integral to the war effort and they did their part as patriotic members of Russian society, serving selflessly and rooting out corruption where it occurred. All of the contemporary accounts stressed the danger and courage of the wartime experience. While no women or civilians participated in combat, the nurses suffered through bombardments, epidemics, shortages of supplies, sleepless nights, and tireless labor at gruesome tasks. One source stated, "Everyday, under enemy fire, with danger for our own lives at the dressing stations, nurses not only tended to the wounded, but dressed them and aided the medics with amputations."<sup>92</sup> Another recounted a scene in which

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<sup>90</sup> For more on this cohort of statesmen, see W. Bruce Lincoln, *In the Vanguard of Reform: The Enlightened Bureaucrats, 1825-1861* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1982).

<sup>91</sup> Naumova, *Ranenie, bolezni i smert*, 30.

<sup>92</sup> "Sestry Krestovozdvizhenskoii obshchiny popecheniia o ranenikh v Krymu," *Morskoi sbornik* 15 (April 1855): 477-78.

a soldier whom she was dragging to safety had his head blown apart by an exploding shell.<sup>93</sup> An account from the bombardment of Sveaborg mentioned that the shelling lasted forty-six hours. After transporting and dressing patients throughout this engagement, nurses collapsed on the floor and slept between the patients.<sup>94</sup> Later Russian volunteer aid workers, in part because of the precedent set during siege warfare in the Crimean War, believed efforts to relieve suffering were best performed as close to the battlefield as possible. When Russia went to war with the Ottoman Empire in 1877, the Russian Red Cross continued this tradition by outfitting independent units to act in the theater of operations immediately behind the front lines.

These published letters also appealed to patriotic sentiments among the Russian public to win donations for the wartime medical effort. Many of the letters ended with grocery lists for specific items. For example, Pirogov personally asked for a sanitary chemical solution produced by the Zhdanov factory, and the editor of this compilation of letters reminded readers of *Morskoi sbornik* that donations for the Exaltation Society could be delivered to the Ministry of the Navy's Commissariat Department.<sup>95</sup> Subsequent requests asked for food, tobacco, and medical supplies.<sup>96</sup> And *Morskoi sbornik* published lists of donors and made a point to register the names of the volunteers who served in the Exaltation

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<sup>93</sup> "Vypiska iz pisem sester Krestovozdvizhenskoï obshchiny popecheniia o ranenikh, v Krymu," *Morskoi sbornik* 18 (October 1855): 362.

<sup>94</sup> "Vypiska iz pis'ma nachal'nitsy finliandskogo otdeleniia Krestovozdvizhenskoï obshchiny sester popecheniia o bol'nykh i ranenikh," *Morskoi sbornik* 18 (October 1855): 354-55.

<sup>95</sup> "Sestry Krestovozdvizhenskoï obshchiny popecheniia o ranenikh v Krymu," *Morskoi sbornik*; 14 (February 1855): 374-76.

<sup>96</sup> "Sestry Krestovozdvizhenskoï obshchiny popecheniia o ranenikh v Krymu," *Morskoi sbornik* 15 (April 1855): 481, 482, note 1, 502; "Vypiska iz pis'ma nachal'nitsy Krestovozdvizhenskoï Obshchiny Sester Popecheniia o ranenikh Gospozhi Stakhovich," *Morskoi sbornik* 16 (July 1855): 192-93.

Society.<sup>97</sup> These rosters identified the husbands or fathers of each nurse, providing the reader with a social profile of the group. Some members of the group were daughters or wives of landowners and state councilors, but more than a few came from the families of lower-tiered officers, burghers, or merchants. The decision to publish these lists showed the readers of *Morskoi sbornik* that the Exaltation Society was based on egalitarian principles. By encouraging the readers to donate supplies and money for the maintenance of the Exaltation Society and by proclaiming the nursing brigades open to energetic women of all estates, *Morskoi sbornik* sought to inspire the public to play a greater role in supporting the welfare of all the empire's subjects.

Pirogov himself advocated on behalf of greater opportunities for women as nurses and supported private aid in war in a published report to Elena Pavlovna and his "Historical Survey of the Activities of the Exaltation of the Cross Society Nurses," both of which first appeared in *Morskoi sbornik*.<sup>98</sup> In these essays, Pirogov historicized the exploits of the Exaltation nurses and offered recommendations on how to employ medical volunteers in future wars. By listing the exploits of individual nurses, Pirogov sought to make E. M. Bakunina, E. P. Kartseva, A. P. Stakhovich, and others household names for a Russian public eager for tales of heroism. He detailed how these women were dispatched to numerous hospitals and lazarettos in Sevastopol, Simferopol, Kherson, and other towns in Crimea and Southern Ukraine. At the most critical hours of the siege, Pirogov recounted, the nurses

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<sup>97</sup> For a list of nurses, see *Morskoi sbornik* 14 (January 1855): 115-17, and 18 (October 1855): 351-53.

<sup>98</sup> N. I. Pirogov, "Iz vlechenie iz otcheta predstavlenogo ee imperatorskomu vysochestvu gosudaryne velikoi kniagine Elene Pavlovne, professorom Pirogovym, o deiatel'nosti sester Krestovozdvizhenskoii Obshchiny i vrachei prikomandirovannykh k sei obshchine," *Morskoi sbornik* (May 1855): 150-56; "Istoricheskii obzor deistvii Krestovozdvizhenskoii obshchiny sester popecheniia o ranenyykh i bol'nykh, v voennykh gospitaliakh v Krymu i khersonskoi gubernii, s 1 dekabria 1854 po 1 dekabria 1855," *Morskoi sbornik* 21 (March 1856): 165-96.

tended to hundreds of wounded at the Nobles' Assembly, the main lazaretto in Sevastopol, and worked under bombardment from enemy fire. These women were "indifferent to fear and revealed no aversion to the most frightful destruction of human bodies."<sup>99</sup>

Nursing brigades, Pirogov argued, worked best when they were small and had members assigned to specific duties, which he listed as "housekeepers, apothecaries, and wound-dressers." He tasked nurses with keeping written records of any shortages or derelictions they observed in the wards.<sup>100</sup> The nurses' oversight improved morale, overcame patients' mistrust, and compelled the military hospital workers to stop pilfering from the wounded.<sup>101</sup> Pirogov concluded his survey by asking future generations to judge to what extent this society carried out its mission, a call to educated Russian to expand opportunities for women in public and professional life.<sup>102</sup> The "Historical Survey" must have drawn attention from the reading public because sections of this work and Pirogov's reports to Elena Pavlovna quickly appeared in other prominent publications such as *Severnaia pchela* (*The Northern Bee*).<sup>103</sup>

The two most prominent medical surveys of the Crimean War, Pirogov's *General Principles of Battlefield Surgery* and Doctor Kh. Ia. von Giubbenet's *Essay on the Medical and Hospital Divisions of Russian Forces in Crimea, 1854-1856*, praised the work done by the nurses and envisioned deployments for trained nurses in Russia's future wars.<sup>104</sup> Pirogov

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<sup>99</sup> N. I. Pirogov, "Iz vlechenie," *Morskoi sbornik* (May 1855): 155.

<sup>100</sup> N. I. Pirogov, *Sevastopol'skie pis'ma i vospominaniia*, ed. S. Ia. Shtraikh, 130.

<sup>101</sup> Pirogov, "Iz vlechenie," 152.

<sup>102</sup> Pirogov, *Sevastopol'skie pis'ma i vospominaniia*, ed. S. I. Strakh, 132.

<sup>103</sup> See *Severnaia pchela*, January 10, 1856, 36.

<sup>104</sup> N. I. Pirogov, *Nachala obshchei voenno-polevoi khirurgii, vziatiya iz nabliudenii voenno-gospital'noi praktiki i vospominanii o Krimskoi voine i Kavkazskoi ekspeditsii*, vol. 1, (Dresden: E. Blokhman, 1865); Kh.

admitted he was surprised “weak women” bustled day and night for the wounded. He saw great promise in the women who led the evacuation, claiming “they followed the transports, going from one cart to the other and warming the frozen with wine, and at night they poured them warm tea and coffee.” In the winter, they dressed the evacuees in warm clothing so that mortality rates among the evacuees were not much higher than sedentary patients. Pirogov concluded that Russia should found a wartime “medical transport command made-up of doctors, feldshers, and nurses.” This voluntary aid society, a proto-Red Cross, would relieve military medical authorities of having to handle evacuation and treatment in the rear, thereby freeing more personnel to serve at the front. For the aid society to be most beneficial to the military, it must be free to acquire the skills it deemed necessary and “enjoy full independence in its activities.”<sup>105</sup> Pirogov viewed independence as a crucial starting point for private aid in war because his experience in Crimea taught him to mistrust the military to deliver support services effectively.

In a much later letter from 1876, titled “On the Exaltation of the Cross Society,” addressed to Countess E. F. Raden,<sup>106</sup> Elena Pavlovna’s secretary, Pirogov argued that the experiment with dispatching nurses in the Crimean War had been successful because of the women’s feminine tact, sensitivity, and independence from service requirements, all of which

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fon Giubbenet, *Ocherk meditsinskoi i gospiatal’noi chastii russkikh voisk v krymu v 1854-1856 g.* (St Petersburg: N. Nekliudov, 1870).

<sup>105</sup> Pirogov, *Nachala obshchei voenno-polevoi khirurgii*, vol. 1, 48.

<sup>106</sup> E. F. Raden was a key figure in Elena Pavlovna’s social circle. She assisted the grand duchess in the founding of the Exaltation Society and after the Crimean War worked on inquiries on the emancipation of the serfs. Following Elena Pavlovna’s death, Raden helped manage many of the charitable institutions the grand duchess had set up. Raden continued residing in the Mikhailovskii Palace as a lady-in-waiting for Empress Maria Aleksandrova, wife of Alexander II. During the Russo-Turkish War, Raden helped organize Red Cross warehouses and sewing circles in St. Petersburg. After the death of P. G. Ol’denburgskii in 1881, she became deputy to Maria Fedorovna, wife of Alexander III, and managed the empress’s educational and charitable institutions. See “Raden, Baronessa Edita Fedorovna,” *Ruskii biograficheskii slovar’*, vol. 15, ed. A. A. Polovtsov (St. Petersburg: Imperatorskaia akademiia nauk, 1910), 369-71.



enabled them to counter staff officers' abuses. Although he admitted there were some problems with gossips, uneducated nurses, and insubordinates, Pirogov still felt this project had great potential. But this potential hinged on the independence needed to develop nursing into a scientific, secular profession. Unlike in the West, where nursing societies were often under auspices of religious denominations, Pirogov insisted: "Our Sister of Mercy should not be an Orthodox nun." Instead, she should possess "practical intellect" and a "solid technical education" but still "preserve a sensitive heart."<sup>107</sup> Always the humanist, Pirogov articulated that expanding female education and opening new professional opportunities for women would enable talented women to improve Russia's health.

Pirogov's medical rival, Kh. Ia. von Giubbenet, a professor from Kiev, shared the view that Russia's experiment with nurses in the Crimean War produced fruitful results.<sup>108</sup> Von Giubbenet's account located the impetus for action with Konstantin Nikolaevich, who at the beginning of the war encouraged civilians and government workers to donate medical supplies and foodstuffs to a special committee to aid wounded sailors. The result of this drive, von Giubbenet contended, was that sailors had much better medical and provisional support at the beginning of the war.<sup>109</sup> Once Elena Pavlovna and Maria Aleksandrovna, the wife of the future Tsar Alexander II, heard of this private initiative to aid sailors, they organized the Exaltation Society and dispatched Pirogov and von Giubbenet to lead the brigades.<sup>110</sup> Von Giubbenet believed that the Exaltation Society's activities gave female aid

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<sup>107</sup> Pirogov, *Sevastopol'skie pis'ma i vospominaniia*, 197, 204-5, 209.

<sup>108</sup> Pirogov complained bitterly that von Giubbenet had rebuffed some of the medical innovations claimed by Pirogov, in particular, the employment of tirage. See Pirogov, *Sevastopol'skie pis'ma i vospominaniia*, ed. S. I. Strakh, 544-48, note 184.

<sup>109</sup> von Giubbenet. *Ocherk*, 8.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

in war a more “defined and permanent character.” Since it was no secret that Russia’s wartime losses were frightfully high, even among doctors and medical students, it came as little surprise that Pirogov and von Giubbenet both agreed Russia needed to mobilize as many civilian doctors and nurses as possible in future conflicts.<sup>111</sup>

Eyewitnesses to the Crimean War created a small but important discourse in the military and medical press that advocated for civilian medical workers, especially women, to participate in wartime relief. Russia’s greatest bard at the time, Leo Tolstoy, even included two commonplace vignettes of female nurses in his *Sebastopol Sketches*, a choice that suggested readers were well aware of these women’s involvement in the recent war.<sup>112</sup> But postwar plans for the Exaltation Society were ambiguous. Since the Exaltation nurses only agreed to one-year commitments during the war, it seems that Elena Pavlovna had never decided what to do with this institution after the conflict. In the decade from the Treaty of Paris to the foundation of the Russian Red Cross in 1867, the empire’s number of nursing societies increased, but questions persisted on how these institutions were to be structured and funded and what role they were to play in medicine and charity. Also, there was confusion at the top over the proper relationship between the nursing orders and the Orthodox Church. Russians asked: Should the nursing societies resemble religious orders in the West, or should they have a secular character?

These questions arose during an era of profound change in Russia. The younger and more energetic Tsar Alexander II (1855-1881) encouraged freer debate on political topics and listened to voices within the state bureaucracies calling for change. Over the next two

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 18-19, 21.

<sup>112</sup> Leo Tolstoy, *The Sebastopol Sketches*, David McDuff, trans. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), 83-84, 140-42.

decades, Russia reformed nearly every state institution, abolished serfdom, expanded education, opened associational life to private initiatives, welcomed industrialization, and expanded the empire's borders into Central Asia. Even though the Slavophile-Westernizer debate pervaded all state policies during the era, and no shortage of Russians voiced suspicions that changes had gone too far, Russia had made great strides in modernizing its governing institutions by the end of Alexander II's reign. The creation of the Russian Red Cross portrayed the possibilities and limitations of the Great Reform-era. After some reservations, Russia began to restructure many of its disparate nursing societies into a national Red Cross organization from 1867 onwards. The last section of this chapter and the next tells the story of how a small group of Russians, with ties to the court and nursing movement, embraced the idea that public initiative, under autocratic oversight, could aid tsar's soldiers in war.

### **E. M. Bakunina**

Ekaterina Mikhailovna Bakunina, the Russian version of Florence Nightingale kept the Exaltation Society together following the Crimean War. Elena Pavlovna entrusted her with running the Exaltation Society due to her service in the war and good rapport with Pirogov and other elites. Born into a family of service nobles in 1810, Bakunina at first embraced the domestic comforts her station provided. Her father, M. M. Bakunin, served as the governor of St. Petersburg. Both of her brothers followed similar career paths. Her mother, née Varvara Golenishcheva-Kutuzova, was a patroness of the theater and a gifted writer. No talent was lost on the elder sisters of the family, Evdokiia and Praskov'ia: One grew up to be a famous artist, and the other a popular poet. The black sheep of the family turned out to be the cousin, Mikhail Bakunin, the famous anarchist, whom Ekaterina visited

in the Schlüsselburg prison as Mother Superior of the Exaltation Society. Ekaterina's youth corresponded closely with the position afforded by her birth, carefree studying under elite private tutors and dabbling in music, dancing, and art. When she reached her twenties, the family's financial position became strained. A suitable dowry for Ekaterina may have been beyond the family's means, and this shortcoming probably influenced her decision to eschew the aristocratic lifestyle.<sup>113</sup> With the graces of an aristocrat, the devotion of an *intelligent*, and the piety of an Orthodox Russian, Bakunina became the archetype of the tsarist Sister of Mercy.

Her memoir recounts that, in the summer of 1854, while vacationing in Vladimir with a friend, she first heard that France and Britain had entered the war.<sup>114</sup> A few days later, everyone knew of the Russian defeat at Alma in September 1854. In October, she returned to Moscow, where she read in newspapers that the French used nurses in wartime hospitals; soon thereafter, she learned Nightingale had sailed east. Around this time, Elena Pavlovna decided to organize the Exaltation Society and sought volunteers with a newspaper announcement. The idea of doing her part captivated Bakunina, and, despite feeble attempts by her relatives to dissuade her, she resolved to join the Exaltation Society. Seeking a way to offer her application to the grand duchess, Bakunina first approached S. S. Shcherbatova, a well-known Moscow philanthropist. Shcherbatova forwarded Bakunina to Countess Anna Golitsyna in St. Petersburg, an intimate of the grand duchess, to whom Bakunina wrote. When a reply finally came, Bakunina learned that she had missed the muster for the first

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<sup>113</sup> Vladimir Sysoev, *Sestra miloserdiia Ekaterina Bakunina* (St. Petersburg: Zolotaia kniga Sankt-Peterburga, 2012), 25-59.

<sup>114</sup> For her memoir, see E. M. Bakunina, "Vospominanie sestry miloserdiia Krestovozdvizhenskoï obshchiny," pts. 1-4, *Vestnik evropy* (March 1898): 132-76; (April 1898): 51-56; (May 1898): 55-105; (June 1898): 587-617; Online at E. M. Bakunina, "Vospominanie sestry miloserdiia Krestovozdvizhenskoï obshchiny," Biblioteka Iakova Krotova, accessed September 25, 2014, [http://krotov.info/library/02\\_b/ak/unina\\_e.htm](http://krotov.info/library/02_b/ak/unina_e.htm).

brigade of nurses, and, since a second group would follow, she should ready herself for medical service. An additional letter to E. F. Raden won Bakunina with an invitation to come to St. Petersburg to begin her training at the Second Infantry Hospital. Her voyage to the Crimea began in December, a long and arduous journey by carriage in the winter. On the way, her detachment of eight nurses received a letter from Pirogov that split the group, some travelling to Kherson and others, including Bakunina, to Sevastopol.<sup>115</sup>

Bakunina spent the period from January to August 1855 in Sevastopol working directly under the supervision of Pirogov in the main hospital at the Noble's Assembly. Her memoir describes toil among the wounded and provides some unflattering descriptions of the other nurses. She decried hospital workers who stole patients' compensation for wounds. After the death of E. A. Khitrovo, the leader of the nurses in Sevastopol in February 1856, Elena Pavlovna named Bakunina as the head nurse. Following the war, she continued her management of the Exaltation Society at its new location in St. Petersburg. These years brought uncertainty to the society, which suffered from Elena Pavlovna's determination to transform the order into a religious institution, a lack permanent housing, financial troubles, and ambiguity over its peacetime role. Bakunina coped with these problems for a while, but disputes with Elena Pavlovna over whether or not the order should be secular drove her to abandon the Exaltation Society and found her own clinic for peasants in Tver' Province, in 1860. Her clinic in Kozitsyno later attracted the attention of Empress Maria Aleksandrovna and the local zemstvo, which provided funds to run the establishment. In 1877, Bakunina accepted an invitation to participate in the Russo-Turkish War and led nurses in the Caucasus. After the war, she returned to Kozitsino and continued to treat peasants until her

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<sup>115</sup> Bakunina, "Vospominanie," *Vestnik evropy* (March 1898), 133-36.

death in 1894.<sup>116</sup> Bakunina oversaw the Exaltation Society during the frustrating transition following the Crimean War. As a noblewoman who dedicated herself to unpaid, patriotic service, she made the ideal Russian Sister of Mercy. The issues she faced as head of this uncertain institution—impoverishment, ambiguity of purpose, and frustrations gaining access to hospitals—remained unresolved for the Russian Red Cross throughout much of the tsarist period.

### **Nursing Societies Following the Crimean War**

Surprisingly, the debate over the peacetime character of the Exaltation Society pitted Pirogov and Bakunina against Elena Pavlovna. The grand duchess, inspired by Christian nursing orders in the West, considered the idea of transforming the Exaltation Society into a quasireligious institution similar to the European nursing societies during the postwar years. Following the Peace of Paris, Elena Pavlovna toured Europe. In France, she met with Father Étienne, the head of the Catholic Order of Saint Vincent de Paul. Impressed with the French Sisters of Charity, Elena Pavlovna allegedly promised Father Étienne to increase the links between the Exaltation Society and the Catholic orders and to petition the tsar about expanding the Catholic nurses' activities in Poland.<sup>117</sup> The grand duchess's moves in this direction concerned Pirogov and Bakunina, who fought to keep the Exaltation Society secular, what they called a "moral-philanthropic institution." Sharing a view with which Nightingale would have found common cause, Pirogov disdained the idea of turning nurses into nuns. He thought that institutions such as the French Sisters of Charity were holdovers from the Middle Ages and unsuitable for the modern world. He advocated that the nursing

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<sup>116</sup> S. K. Makhaev, *Podvizhnitsy miloserdiia: russkie sestry miloserdiia, kratkii biograficheskii otchet* (Moskva, 1914), 24; Vladimir Sysoev, *Bakuniny* (Tver': Sozvezdie, 2002), 52.

<sup>117</sup> Soroka and Rudd, *Becoming a Romanov*, 236-37.

societies should have strict standards of professional competency, without interfering with the nurses' free time. But nursing was more than a mere job for an Orthodox Russian gentrywoman. Bakunina responded that she wanted good nurses who joined "for love of the work and self-sacrifice, and not [only] to meet their material needs."<sup>118</sup>

To learn from foreign nursing societies, Bakunina traveled to Berlin, Paris, and Bruges in 1858. The Evangelical deaconesses she visited in Berlin disappointed her because most of them had entered the society for money rather than from a love of aiding others. This society, named Bethany, preferred peasants because of their religious convictions and shunned nobles such as Bakunina. German Catholic nunneries appeared to Bakunina as medieval relic designed for saving souls and ill-suited for engaging social problems. The French Order of Lazarists in Paris impressed her more, and she was pleased to see that these women worked in military hospitals. Still, nothing in the West seemed a good fit for Russia.

Bakunina wanted to direct the Exaltation Society to address Russia's secular needs, an alignment that corresponded closely to the intelligentsia's social mission to serve the empire's unenlightened masses. She noted "the Exaltation Society is the result of patriotic sentiment that sought to take part in the common good; [it] professes sympathies for the suffering of many and a preparedness to share in mutual misfortune and labors."<sup>119</sup> Wartime relief may have been the original "principle of our order," but the Exaltation Society needed a new mission in peacetime. Frustrated with the grand duchess's flirting with the Catholic orders, Bakunina repeatedly contemplated quitting the Exaltation Society. These uncertainties continued until the end of the decade, as evidenced by the fact that Pirogov

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<sup>118</sup> Bakunina, "Vospominaniia," Biblioteka Iakova Krotova; Pirogov, *Sevastopol'skie pis'ma i vospominaniia*, ed. S. I. Strakh, 137-38.

<sup>119</sup> Bakunina, "Vospominaniia," Biblioteka Iakova Krotova.

wrote Bakunina in September 1859 begging her to ignore the present troubles and continue to head the Society.<sup>120</sup> Pirogov also met with Elena Pavlovna that December and implored her to maintain the society's secular character, but the grand duchess was unflinching in her intention to transform the society into an institution that resembled European nursing orders. A month later, Bakunina retired to Kozitsino, and E. P. Kartseva, another veteran nurse from the Crimean War, took over the Exaltation Society. Kartseva served as its head for the next decade and also resisted the spiritual direction, and the society never turned into a nunnery.<sup>121</sup> Instead, like most Russian nursing orders, the Exaltation Society acquired some trappings of a convent, such as a permanent priest who sat on the board of directors and a requirement that all members be Orthodox, but this institution remained outside the jurisdiction of the Holy Synod, and its primary mission was decidedly secular – to relieve the suffering of sick and wounded soldiers.

Many of the Exaltation nurses professed a desire to continue their duties serving soldiers after the Crimean War, but no one knew where they would practice this craft or how to fund these services. Initially, once the Exaltation Society nurses returned from the Crimea, they housed the order in the Mikhailovskii Palace in St. Petersburg.<sup>122</sup> Elena Pavlovna petitioned Alexander II in October 1856 to turn the Exaltation Society into a permanent institution with the backing of the Russian state, and Konstantin Nicholaevich encouraged the grand duchess to expand the number of nurses and prepare them to serve in naval

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<sup>120</sup> Bakunina, "Vospominaniia," Biblioteka Iakova Krotova; Pirogov, "Sevastopol'skie pis'ma i vospominaniia," ed. S. I. Strakh, 141-42.

<sup>121</sup> Sysoev, *Sestra miloserdiia*, 271, 275.

<sup>122</sup> *Rossiiskoe Obshchestvo Krasnogo Kresta: Istoricheskii obzor deiatel'nosti* (St. Petersburg: P. O. Iablonskii, 1902), 86.



hospitals.<sup>123</sup> Soon after, however, Elena Pavlovna left Russia for the spas of Europe and did not return for two years. With the grand duchess away, the state delayed granting the Exaltation Society a peacetime charter, funds dried up, and the Ministry of War refused to let the nurses work in army medical facilities.<sup>124</sup> In early 1857, Pirogov implored V. I. Tarazov, the chief physician of the Exaltation Society, to be resolved in the face of prohibitions against nurses in military hospitals. This letter also mentioned that the nurses had become demoralized and many had been reduced to poverty.<sup>125</sup> Bakunina recounted that epidemic diseases killed several nurses in both the Mikhailovskii Palace and in an apartment the nurses inhabited in Kronstadt, a naval base near the capital.<sup>126</sup> Anecdotal evidence suggested that commanders of military hospitals did not want the nurses impinging on their workspace, a source of revenue for pilferers from the army's quartermaster corps, and they kept the nurses at bay with bureaucratic indifference, legal restrictions, and tactless rumors of political subversion.<sup>127</sup>

The Exaltation Society survived because of the needs of the navy and the personal support of Konstantin Nikolaevich. Even before the Crimean War ended, the grand duke ordered twenty-four thousand rubles be set aside to assist the nurses during peace.<sup>128</sup> Following the evacuation from Crimea, the navy was the first institution to welcome Exaltation nurses into its own hospitals, admitting forty nurses to work in the naval hospitals

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<sup>123</sup>Mel'nikova, *Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov'*, 156.

<sup>124</sup> A. Sinytsin, "E. M. Bakunina: Biograficheskii ocherk," *Vestnik evropy* (July 1898): 216.

<sup>125</sup> Pirogov, *Sevastopol'skie pis'ma i vospominaniia*, ed. S. I. Strakh, 135-36.

<sup>126</sup> Bakunina, "Vospominaniia," Biblioteka Iakova Krotova.

<sup>127</sup> Pirogov, *Sevastopol'skie pis'ma i vospominaniia*, ed. S. I. Strakh, 136; A. Sinytsin, "E. M. Bakunina," 217.

<sup>128</sup> Kipp, "The Grand Duke," 114.

on Kronstadt and another eight in the St. Petersburg Naval Hospital in 1856. Later another six nurses were assigned to the Kherson Naval Hospital.<sup>129</sup> While the army dallied, the navy ensured some of these women had a place to practice their craft.

The Ministry of War delayed admission of the nurses to army hospitals until the 1860s, a moment when the Exaltation Society's fortunes suddenly reversed. Pirogov had enjoyed a modicum of success in introducing nurses into the Kiev Military Hospital, which admitted a dozen nurses in 1859. That same year, the Exaltation Society drew up its first peacetime charter, which required that all nurses undergo a one-year training period before they were recognized as fully fledged nurses.<sup>130</sup> Military service was the stated purpose of the Exaltation Society, but other philanthropic activities fell within the purview of its mission. Also in 1860, the Exaltation Society acquired a property at 154 Fontanka Embankment in St. Petersburg, where they housed the nurses and set up a small hospital ward and school for girls. The Ministry of War's recognition of this society came the following year, and the result of this decision ensured Exaltation nurses would gain employment in military hospitals.

In January 1860, the Minister of War, N. O. Sukhozanet, convened a committee to restructure the command of military hospitals in hopes of eliminating the problems with supply and corruption that had distressed Russian facilities in the Crimean War. The goal of this committee was to reorganize hospitals so military doctors would be empowered vis-à-vis the quartermaster commissariat, the alleged source of graft. One item this committee discussed was the placement of nurses in military hospitals, a question that divided the

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<sup>129</sup> "Voennye gospitali v Rossii i ikh novoe ustroistvo," *Voennyi sbornik* (June, 1863): 430; Shibkov, *Pervye zhenshchiny-mediki v Rossii* (Leningrad: Medgiz, 1961), 45-46.

<sup>130</sup> Mel'nikova, *Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov'*, 158.

members of the committee. Critics of nursing in Russia stressed that these orders thrived only in Catholic countries, where the Church was more strongly connected to the people, and that these institutions were obsolete holdovers from the Middle Ages. Furthermore, opponents believed that the Crimean War was no proof that the Ministry of War would find qualified women, since many of the Exaltation nurses had joined the society during the conflict out of patriotic fervor and left after 1856. Finally, nurses would cause more, not less, bureaucratic problems, and their cost would exceed two hundred thousand rubles per year, a sum better spent on improving the pay and training of the male hospital staff.<sup>131</sup>

Although dissenters on Sukhozanet's committee predicted future problems, the majority held that the female nurses gave care that was more "sympathetic and attentive" than the male feldshers and orderlies. Nursing proponents naturally looked to the Crimean experience and postwar employment in naval hospitals to show that women added a vital component to military medical care. State Councilor Pal'tsev, the senior doctor at the Kherson Military Hospital, proclaimed at one of Sukhozanet's committee meetings that forty Exaltation nurses had helped greatly when his own facility was overburdened with five thousand patients during the evacuation in 1856.<sup>132</sup> In any case, the committee refused to reach a final verdict, electing to expand the project gradually to more institutions because "to reject this project based on similar experiences, which more or less benefits the wounded servicemen, would not accord with the unceasing care the state provides for the wellbeing of the army."<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> "Voennye hospitali v Rossii i ikh novoe ustroistvo," *Voennyi sbornik* (June 1863): 428-29.

<sup>132</sup> *Stoletie voennogo ministerstva*, vol. 3, part 2, ed. D. A. Skalon, 73-74.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 430-31.

To silence critics, the Ministry of War committed itself to monitoring the management, training, and selection of nurses as well as establishing careful guidelines for their employment in military hospitals. A Russian law made these positions permanent and promised the nurses benefits from the Ministry of War, such as salaries, housing, and funeral expenses.<sup>134</sup> Also, the First Infantry Hospital in St. Petersburg welcomed a limited number of nurses at this time, and the committee agreed to expand the project to military hospitals in Moscow, Brest-Litovsk, Warsaw, Riga, and Kherson in 1860 to ensure a supply of trained nurses in key military districts.<sup>135</sup> A legal directive dated three years later, in 1863, established the ground rules for employment of nurses in military hospitals. The Ministry of War obliged itself to pay these women a salary just under two hundred rubles per annum for “care of the sick and to ensure that the hospital orderlies performed their duties correctly.” Heeding Pirogov’s advice on women’s attentiveness to abuses, the law called on the Mother Superior of the nursing society to report any misappropriation of food, drink, bedding, or dressings to the commander of the hospital or military district. The law made no mention of the nurses performing medical functions; instead, their tasks were to console the sick, observe standards of cleanliness, and assist the priest.<sup>136</sup> The next year, another law referred to sixteen Exaltation nurses who worked in the First Infantry Hospital in St. Petersburg. This hospital provided three rooms for the nurses to inhabit and tasked the women with policing orderlies, maintaining sanitation, and consoling the sick. The law failed to discuss pay for the nurses, but it established state pensions of one hundred rubles per year for nurses who served

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<sup>134</sup> PSZ 35 (1860), no. 35688: 418-21.

<sup>135</sup> “Voennye gospitali v Rossii i ikh novoe ustroistvo,” *Voennyi sbornik* (June 1863), 432; *Stoletie voennogo ministrerstva*, vol. 8, part 3, ed. D. A. Skalon, 58.

<sup>136</sup> PSZ 35 (1860), no. 35688: 418-21.

for twenty-five years in good health or fifteen years for those whose careers were cut short due to illness.<sup>137</sup> Still, evidence suggests the Ministry of War continued to harbor doubts about opening its doors to female nurses.

The Ministry of War's own journal, *Voennyi sbornik* (Military Miscellany), published two articles that laid bare the two sides of this debate. The first, A. Runovskii's "A Few Words on Hospital Personnel," questioned what duties women should perform in a wartime hospital. This polemic admitted that women had earned a place within wartime medicine, admiring the "well-known" feminine love of "order and tidiness," but Runovskii also limited women's duties to those of cooks and laundresses. He alleged that older women lacked the physical strength for difficult tasks and young women threatened discipline. Sexual indiscretion concerned Runovskii the most, and he warned that patients' nudity within the hospitals, idleness during recovery, the lower classes' relaxed views on sexual intercourse, and strong feelings of arousal that accompanied recovery put men at risk from nurses' presence in hospitals. Women, he believed, were fit for only two duties in the hospital: to be comforters, sitting at the bedside of the most serious patients (*sidelki*), or to oversee the distribution of medicine to patients, replacing the corrupt and drunken feldshers who usually performed this task. The greatest difficulty, Runovskii foresaw, was finding enough responsible women to fill these roles. He stated that nurses produced an undoubted benefit to the quality of care in military hospitals, but he was unwilling to admit more than one or two per hospital to work as observers or comforters, a miniscule role in facilities that often

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<sup>137</sup> PSZ 38 (1863), no. 39165: 62-66.

numbered several hundred beds.<sup>138</sup> Runovskii, it seems, believed women had a role in military medicine, but it was extremely narrow.

In 1864, N. Ivanina, one of very few women to pen an article for *Voennyi sbornik*, argued for greater employment of nurses in military hospitals. She presented the traditional argument that women's temperament and upbringing made them more disposed to caring for the sick. And while there were many positions in hospitals that these women could fill, she acknowledged that education limited the number of qualified candidates. One solution was a project at the Ekaterinodar (Krasnodar) Women's School that taught pupils care for the wounded and sick because the Cossacks in this region had poor access to doctors. She conceded that the Ministry of War should try out candidate nurses for a few weeks to see if they possessed the moral and educational qualities needed for the job.<sup>139</sup> The successes these advocates won were limited at best; the Ministry of War admitted few women and provided them with inadequate pay, medical training, and opportunities for advancement. At the same time, rights to a salary, pension, and housing, must have appealed to some women who sought a patriotic calling and a degree of independence.

Although the Ministry of War frustrated proponents of military nursing, peacetime philanthropic nursing societies continued to expand as associational life blossomed during the Great Reforms. Many of these societies needed wealthy backers to acquire property and hire doctors. The Grand Duchess Aleksandra Petrovna founded the Pokrovskaia Society in 1859 to tend to the poor and sick in St. Petersburg. Four years later Countess Golytsina established a shelter in Moscow with a hospital and nursing society. In 1865, the aristocrat

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<sup>138</sup> A. Runovskii, "Neskol'ko slov o gospital'nykh prislugakh," *Voennyi sbornik* 20 (August 1861): 400-403.

<sup>139</sup> "I. Ivanina, "Neskol'ko slov otnositel'no vvedeniia sester miloserdiia v voennye gospitali," *Voennyi sbornik* (January 1864): 121-28.

M. M. Dondukova-Korsakova spent forty thousand of her own rubles to found a society of village nurses in Pskov Province named the Mary Magdalene Sisters of Mercy. This rural society was unique because the nurses were supposed to travel the countryside attending to the sick, teaching literacy to the newly emancipated peasants, and watching over peasant children during planting and harvest periods.<sup>140</sup> These societies possessed state charters and occupied themselves with medicine and philanthropic assignments. The Nikolai Community, which previously had worked in prison hospitals, was renamed Assuage My Fears (*Utoli moia pechali*) under the direction of Countess N. B. Shakhovskaia. This organization acquired property in the Lefortovo region of Moscow for clinics with the aid of private donors and grew into one of Russia's prominent nursing communities.<sup>141</sup> The Great Reform-era witnessed a spread of every type of charity across Russia, and elite women led many of these endeavors.

## **Conclusion**

Two exceptional Russians, Elena Pavlovna and N. I. Pirogov, created nursing brigades to attend to tsarist troops during the Crimean War. This project occurred in dialogue with developments in France and Britain that permitted a female role in military medicine. Elena Pavlovna's patronage enabled this society to come about in Nicholas I's Russia, a regime that sought to limit most forms of private initiative. During and after the war, Konstantin Nikolaevich lent his support to this project by publishing memoirs and accounts that emphasized the positive role these women played in reducing suffering in armed conflict. No one knew what would happen to the Exaltation Society, which was chartered in

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<sup>140</sup> PSZ 40 (1865), no. 41973: 379-81.

<sup>141</sup> Vlasov, *Blagotvoritel'nost'*, 406.

war and given a solely military mission, after the cannon fire ceased in 1856. This nursing order altered its purpose and continued to operate in peacetime due to the patronage of key figures in the court. The creation of the Exaltation Society shows the development of a nascent civil society in tsarist Russia that drew upon the autocracy and state for support. Russian women of many social backgrounds joined this society, and this reveals that membership in wartime was open to anyone. In reality, however, the ideal nurses were women similar to Bakunina, who presumably possessed the economic means, education, and drive to serve Russia's most unfortunate subjects without remuneration.

By the 1860s, Russia possessed a number of nursing societies committed to philanthropic work, institutions that mirrored similar associations in the West in their mission and purpose. These nursing orders were small, isolated, and often under-funded, but the public spirit of the Great Reforms encouraged Russian subjects to think of themselves as agents active in the empire's betterment. Developments in Western Europe—in particular, debates about mobilizing civilian aid workers for war—drew Russia into the conversation of how best to provide for armies engaged in combat. Even though Russian generals harbored doubts, the opportunities provided by the Geneva Convention of 1864, which mandated national aid societies in member countries, resonated with members of the Romanov court. By decade's end, these individuals had overcome resistance from military and religious figures and established a national aid society for Russia. This group of advocates convinced themselves that the European mission to devote civilian resources toward alleviating the plight of the wounded was within Russia's best interests and a national Red Cross society, in dialogue with foreign aid societies, was the best means for managing this project.



## **CHAPTER 2 – RUSSIA AND THE GENEVA CONVENTION**

Russia was more hesitant to embrace the Geneva Convention of 1864 than its European counterparts, but, as European states ratified the convention one by one and Prussia revealed in the German Wars of Unification how valuable private aid workers in war had become, the tsarist autocracy refused to stay idly for long. Elena Pavlovna had created the Exaltation Society in the Crimean War to provide supplementary sanitary workers to the armies, so the precedent for private aid workers in war was already in place, even if the Russian Ministry of War expressed doubts this type of project was necessary. Activists at the Romanov court in the 1860s convinced Empress Maria Aleksandrova and by extension, Alexander II, to embrace the humanitarian movement and create a national aid society. The creation of the Russian Red Cross was not an entirely seamless ordeal for Russia, and the reluctance from conservatives reveals limitations on the autocrat's ability to effect immediate change. The head of the Orthodox Church and elites in Moscow at first opposed a Red Cross-type organization because it appeared too foreign for Russia. This resistance, however, was only temporary, and by the end of the 1860s Russia possessed a chartered national aid society with a broad membership and limited financial resources. This chapter first traces the history of the Geneva Convention and locates Russia's limited role in the effort to create this compact. The latter half of the chapter analyzes the efforts by well-connected Russians to create a national aid society and the resistance they faced from conservatives and doubters.

The classic narrative of the European humanitarian movement begins with Henri Dunant, the co-founder of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the activist most

responsible for hosting a series of conferences in Geneva in 1863 and 1864 on improving the plight of the wounded. Born in Geneva, Dunant spent his young life dabbling in religion, the Christian Unions, which were the German precursor of the YMCA, and colonial business ventures. Fate and economic misfortune led him to Castiglione, a village near Solferino, Lombardy, in hopes of ingratiating himself with Emperor Napoleon III and winning concessions for an unlucky business venture in Algeria. Instead of crossing paths with the emperor, Dunant found himself witness to the aftermath of the Solferino engagement, Europe's bloodiest battle since Waterloo. This experience prompted Dunant to change his life's work from conquering Africa with European capital to alleviating pain on the battlefield, the crusade for which he is most remembered.<sup>142</sup>

Technically a draw, Solferino proved significant because the French paid little attention to deploying military sanitation services prior to the battle. As a result of this mishap, when Dunant entered Castiglione, he met tens of thousands of wounded who had little hope of finding medical care. Appalled by the grisly spectacle, Dunant volunteered his own services in consoling the wounded and purchasing supplies. This experience moved him deeply, and the next year he penned his famous *A Memory of Solferino* as an exposé on the horrors of modern warfare and the insufficient attention European armies paid to the wounded. In the latter half of this volume, Dunant asked, "Would it not be possible, in times of peace and quiet, to form relief societies for the purpose of having care given to the wounded in wartime by zealous, devoted and thoroughly qualified volunteers?" These societies, although permanent, could remain inactive in peacetime but always be ready for war. He drew special attention to the work of Elena Pavlovna and Florence Nightingale in the

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<sup>142</sup> Boissier, *From Solferino*, 12-16; Hutchinson, *Champions*, 13-14.

Crimean War, predicting that these women could have accomplished great feats if their brigades had been at Solferino. Since, “the personnel of military field hospitals is always inadequate,” then the only possible answer was “to turn to the public.” And so he proposed that all nations establish a convention for aid societies, which must be agreed upon in peacetime because, once hostilities commenced, belligerents would not work in concert with one another. Dunant expressed confidence that no government would hesitate to deny aid to its wounded nor would any public withhold contributions for the wounded; however, he warned that wars would become more deadly as weapons advanced.<sup>143</sup>

Initially, Dunant self-published 1,600 copies of *A Memory of Solferino* in late 1862 and sent volumes to Europe’s ruling families, politicians, military men, and newspaper reporters. The book appealed to a broad audience and even drew praise from Victor Hugo and Charles Dickens, but Florence Nightingale and Jean-Charles Chenu, the former head of the French military’s medical department, considered Dunant’s proposal foolhardy, since, the state bore responsibility for caring for the wounded.<sup>144</sup> Nevertheless, one copy of the memoir reached Gustav Moynier, a lawyer and philanthropist in Geneva, who endeavored to turn Dunant’s idea into an international agreement.

Moynier inspired a small group of generals and military doctors to create the International Committee for Relief to the Wounded in Wartime, a board that devised plans to make aid to soldiers an issue of international concern. This committee also discussed methods for improving sanitary technologies and increasing the number of nurses, and they determined that belligerents should give aid workers free access to distribute relief in

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<sup>143</sup> Henry Dunant, *A Memory of Solferino* (Geneva: American Red Cross, 1986), 105-28.

<sup>144</sup> Boissier, *From Solferino*, 40-42.

wartime and be recognizable by a common symbol. The members concluded that the only way to ensure that European nations followed these principles was to reach an international covenant between states, so they sent invitation letters to a welfare congress in Berlin in 1863 and copies of *A Memory of Solferino* to rulers and officers throughout the continent.<sup>145</sup>

By the time the International Committee met again, they had received approval for the covenant from several states including Prussia. Uplifted by this support, they encouraged countries to set up their own relief societies at meeting in March 1863. To ensure that militaries accepted these societies, the International Committee proffered three rules: Relief societies must be state recognized, voluntary nurses must be subordinate to military discipline, and the nurses must demand no cost from the armies. At the third meeting of the International Committee, Moynier reported that the Berlin welfare congress had been cancelled, so the five members decided to hold their own congress in Geneva. Fearing European governments would dismiss this proposal as the pipe dream of idealists, Dunant canvassed the continent to drum up support for the Geneva congress. During conversations with European military men, Dunant decided to add the idea of neutrality for medical personnel to the docket of issues to be discussed in Geneva, a decision that Moynier considered fraught with risk because it impinged on the question of who was a belligerent in war.<sup>146</sup>

In total, thirty-one individuals from sixteen states and four philanthropic societies attended the meeting in October 1863, the precursor of the First Geneva Convention. Delegates often were members of general staffs or medical officers.<sup>147</sup> Russia's emissaries to

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<sup>145</sup> Boissier, *From Solferino*, 49, 55-56.

<sup>146</sup> Boissier, *From Solferino*, 55-57, 61-64, 69; Hutchinson, *Champions*, 30.

this first congress were M. E. Esakov and A. A. Kireev, favorites of the two Romanovs pressing for Russia to establish a national aid society, Elena Pavlovna and Konstantin Nikolaevich. Alexander Kireev was Konstantin Nikolaevich's adjutant and would later become an important Slavophile writer. M. E. Esakov's background was more obscure, but the transcript of the 1863 Geneva conference listed him as the librarian for Elena Pavlovna.<sup>148</sup> These two delegates did not officially represent the Russian state. Rather, they served as personal emissaries for the grand duke and duchess. Dmitrii Miliutin, who, as the minister of war, had the power to bind Russia to an international agreement, informed the congress by letter that he received his invitation too late to dispatch an official delegation.<sup>149</sup> In reality, the minister of war was occupied at the time with putting down an uprising in the Congress of Poland.

During the four days of debate, three major issues concerned the delegates: the employment of volunteer nurses, neutrality for medical workers, and an emblem to identify neutrals. The first point of contention, over female nurses, pitted Prussia against France and Great Britain. The Prussians supported deploying voluntary nursing brigades to permanent facilities in the rear only because military objectives trumped those of philanthropy.<sup>150</sup> The British and French disagreed with the Teutons; British generals claimed they had solved the problems from the Crimean War by reforming the army's medical services, and the French

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<sup>147</sup> Boissier, *From Solferino*, 70.

<sup>148</sup> *Compte rendu del al Conférence Internationale réunie à Genève les 26, 27, 28, et 29 Octobre 1863 pour étudier les moyens de pourvoir a l'insuffisance du service sanitaire dans les armées en campagne* (Geneva: Comité International de la Croix-Rouge, 1904), 19.

<sup>149</sup> N. Zaborovskii, "Mezhdunarodnaia konferentsiia v Zheneve ob ustroistve chastnykh obshchestv dlia posobiia ranenykh," *Voennyi sbornik* (August 1864): 381.

<sup>150</sup> Zaborovskii, "Mezhdunarodnaia konferentsiia," 384.

stressed that civilian volunteers would burden its professional military.<sup>151</sup> The delegates surprised their Swiss hosts by reaching agreements easily on the other two issues. They chose a red cross on a white ribbon as the symbol for neutral agents on the battlefield. For the last issue, neutrality for medical workers, there was an historical precedent. The Prussians cited a 1759 treaty with France that neutralized the wounded and suggested that this accord be extended throughout Europe. The conference ended with praises for Dunant, and the International Committee pledged to serve as a consultative organ for states in setting up the aid societies.<sup>152</sup>

### **The 1863 Conference and Russia**

The Russians' participation in the congress came in two forms. First, Miliutin may not have been sitting at the table, but he made his presence known at the conference. On the first day, he addressed the delegates by letter in which he stated the Russian military had begun to reform its sanitary services and encouraged further international discussion on this theme. He also warned the delegates to avoid any discussion of international law and "leave this part of the question to the initiative of states and their competent organs."<sup>153</sup> At the time, Russia was in the process of enacting comprehensive reforms of its military sanitary services intended to avoid the disasters of the Crimean War.<sup>154</sup> It seems likely that Miliutin thought in

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<sup>151</sup> Boissier, *From Solferino*, 75-76.

<sup>152</sup> Boissier, *From Solferino*, 73, 79, 87.

<sup>153</sup> Zabrovskii, "Mezhdunarodnaia konferentsiia," 381.

<sup>154</sup> For the most comprehensive treatment of these reforms, see *Stoletie voennogo ministerstva*, vol. 8, part 4, ed. D. A. Skalon (St. Petersburg: M. O. Vol'f, 1911), 1-293; John Keep, *Soldiers of the Tsar: Army and Society in Russia, 1492-1874* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 373; P. F. Gladkikh and O. A. Kriuchkov, *Ocherki istorii otechestvennoi voennoi meditsiny*, vol. 2 (St. Petersburg: Petropolis, 2009), 42-55.

terms similar to the British and French: He wanted to give military reform a chance before he was willing to permit civilians to interfere with his army.

Following this initial conference, Miliutin set up a special committee to review the Geneva project's designs to use private aid in wartime, and this committee came out against deploying civilian volunteers on the battlefield. The Russians' dilemma came from having to deal with an uprising in Poland. The discussions in Geneva centered on deploying nonmilitary actors in conventional wars between European states, but, in Poland, Russia faced civilian insurgents, revolutionaries, and terrorists. Konstantin Nicholaevich, who briefly served as Viceroy of Poland, nearly lost his life to an assassin's bullet outside a Warsaw theater the following year. This type of warfare gave the Russians pause to think: Why give Polish terrorists privileges when they certainly would not return the favor?

The Geneva conference's call to neutralize the wounded and all medical workers, thereby giving them the status of inviolable nonbelligerent, restricted the methods Russian generals had available to quash rebellion in Poland. If red cross logos awarded anyone free access to the battlefield, then the line between insurgent and aid worker might disappear completely, as the Prussians would discover with French civilians in 1870.<sup>155</sup> g dilemma became further complicated by the fact that the Polish lands were split among three European states. Too much trouble might begin calls for intervention, especially if the Russians became the first to violate the Geneva compact. Lastly, Miliutin probably feared what would happen to Russian aid workers if they became too intimate with the military operations in Poland. Radicals and students were the most vociferous opponents of the 1863 campaign in Poland, and their protests encouraged Russian officialdom's welcoming attitude toward public

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<sup>155</sup> Best, *Humanity*, 152.

discussion of national affairs to cool after the first round of reforms in the early 1860s.<sup>156</sup> As a result of these uncertainties, Miliutin canceled the project to discuss the International Committee's recommendations, and Russia sent no delegates to the conference that produced the Geneva Convention of August 1864.

Konstantin Nikolaevich and Elena Pavlovna objected to the minister of war, and their positions found supporters in Russia. M. E. Esakov presented a report on the Exaltation Nurses in the Crimean War as an example for other states to emulate at the fourth session of the 1863 Geneva conference. In this speech, he argued that nurses overcame the military's initial ill will and earned the respect of soldiers, society, and the press. Following the war, many of these nurses found positions in military and civilian hospitals, where they continued to hone their skills, he claimed.<sup>157</sup>

Less than a year later, the translator of *Voennyi sbornik*'s account of the Geneva conference, Dr. N. Zaborovskii, provided commentary to his summary with which Konstantin Nikolaevich and Elena Pavlovna would have sympathized. He acknowledged that the Russian military had undertaken medical reforms, but he believed that a relief society would be a welcome addition and set forth guidelines for how Russia should create this society. He suggested that this society should be overseen by trained professionals with access to the collection of medical instruments at the Medical-Surgical Academy, Russia's school for military doctors. All civilian personnel must be subordinate to the military medical services, he recommended. If the volunteers did not want to work in military hospitals, then

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<sup>156</sup> Boissier, *From Solferino*, 89-90; Hutchinson, *Champions*, 39. On the January Uprising in Poland, See Adam B. Ulam, *Prophets and Conspirators in Prerevolutionary Russia* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1988), 119-26.

<sup>157</sup> Zaborovskii, "Mezhdunarodnaia konferentsiia," 393.



they should open their own hospitals, as the members of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem had done in Second Schleswig War of 1864. Lastly, he argued that Russia should form a relief society so that it did not have to rely on foreign aid as it had in the Crimean War, when the Russians hired American doctors to supplement overtaxed medical workers.<sup>158</sup> He concluded, “Our aid societies can manage without invited or uninvited guests. They should be for the Russian people, and because of this requirement, they will certainly enjoy united support – the more the matter belongs to the people, then the more efficient it is.”<sup>159</sup>

But advocacy, no matter how committed or loud the apostle, did not translate into sudden changes when it encountered the tsarist bureaucracy. It would take two more events for Russia to charter its own national aid society and adopt the Geneva Convention. First, Prussia’s military machine had to remind everyone how beneficial private aid workers could be in war. Second, a personal campaign within the Romanov court, the same type of finesse that enabled Elena Pavlovna to found the Exaltation Society, prompted Alexander II to endorse the Russian Red Cross’s establishment in 1867.

Meanwhile, in the West, the 1863 Geneva congress had not bound any states to follow the rules it proposed. None of the delegates possessed the power to enact policies on behalf of their governments, and there was no method for policing these stipulations had they been accepted as law. In the final resolutions of the conference, the delegates only agreed to establish aid committees and accepted the red cross symbol as universal.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Orlando Figes, *The Crimean War: A History* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2010), 313-14.

<sup>159</sup> Zaborovskii, “Mezhdunarodnaia konferentsiia,” 396.

<sup>160</sup> Boissier, *From Solferino*, 87; Hutchinson, *Champions*, 35-37.

Following the congress, Moynier and Dunant knew that they needed to get European states to recognize the neutrality of medical personnel in order to safeguard voluntary workers in future conflicts. Only an international convention of government representatives could transform the suggestions from the 1863 conference into law. The International Committee spent the early months of 1864 petitioning the Swiss Federal Council to broker an international convention in August 1864. Meanwhile, European states began to set up aid societies, the most significant of which was that formed by Prussia with eighty-five local chapters. By year's end, a dozen countries responded positively to the invitation for the convention in Geneva, including Prussia and France.<sup>161</sup>

The opportunity to test the proposals from the 1863 conference arose when a sudden war between Prussia and Denmark broke out over Schleswig and Holstein in January 1864. Louis Appia, an original member of the International Committee, agreed to serve as an aid liaison to Prussia and toured private hospitals during the conflict. Following the war, Appia published a report that reached two important conclusions for the development of the future Red Cross societies. First, he witnessed civilian aid workers collecting wounded on the battlefield itself and endorsed this type of relief work. Second, the Hamburg committee's performance in this conflict convinced Appia that Dunant was wrong: Aid committees should prepare for future wars by collecting funds and materials during peacetime and coordinating with general staffs on logistics.<sup>162</sup> A major problem that arose during this short war was how to protect medical staff from the enemy. Appia noted in his report that Danish doctors retreated with the army, abandoning patients in field hospitals to advancing Prussian forces.

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<sup>161</sup> Boissier, *From Solferino*, 88-89, 105; Hutchinson, *Champions*, 38-39, 45.

<sup>162</sup> Hutchinson, *Champions*, 62-64.

Therefore, a question the 1864 convention would have to address was how to give army doctors the right to practice their craft without undermining military responsibilities.<sup>163</sup>

In the eighteenth century, Western armies usually neutralized medical services and the wounded at the outset of conflicts, but these agreements were limited to specific wars, as the Prussian arrangement with the French was in 1759. What the Geneva Convention sought to do was to dictate universal standards of behavior for future wars. The August 1864 conference went surprisingly smoothly, and the delegates agreed to neutralize hospitals, medical personnel, the wounded, and all aid workers. In theory, this policy meant that doctors would remain with the wounded if captured or overrun by enemy forces. Also, no person or structure displaying the Red Cross's logo was supposed to be targeted or molested by either belligerent army. The major issue of contention centered on the question of voluntary nurses. The French and Prussians quarreled over whether to permit nurses to operate near the front, and no mention of voluntary nurses appeared in the final wording of the convention.<sup>164</sup> Short and intentionally vague, the ten articles of the Geneva Convention of 1864 succeeded because they left states a degree of latitude for interpretation. What the convention failed to create was any method or body for enforcing these rules, a position general staffs across the continent may have preferred. Any state's adherence to the statutes of the 1864 convention was entirely voluntary.<sup>165</sup> During the two years following the 1864 convention, a number of European states ratified the document and formed aid societies.

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<sup>163</sup> Boissier, *From Solferino*, 96, 100; Hutchinson, *Champions*, 58-64.

<sup>164</sup> Boissier, *From Solferino*, 115-16.

<sup>165</sup> Hutchinson, *Champions*, 46-50.

In May 1865, Prussia sponsored an essay contest among European figures in the Red Cross movement on how best to organize private charity during military conflicts. Gustav Moynier submitted the winning essay, which he later published as the volume *War and Charity (La guerre et la charité)*.<sup>166</sup> This work, as Hutchinson labels it, presented the first “theoretical explanation” to justify aid societies’ intervention in military medicine.<sup>167</sup> Moynier began by demonstrating that, despite recent improvements, military sanitation services had failed in modern wars. He then stated that, since the state conscripted soldiers for limited terms of service from all strata of the population, it had an obligation to treat these soldiers as if they were dependents. The state, therefore, replaced the family as the guardian of its dependents, the soldiers. Since no existing military medical service would suffice in a large, modern war, a task for which the state was responsible, then “it is its [the state’s] duty to allow others to do that which it is not able to do by itself.”<sup>168</sup> In other words, private initiative had the obligation to fill in for the state’s shortcomings. This idea may not have sat well with Miliutin, whose reforms of the military sought to eliminate any shortcomings in supply, or the Russian autocracy, which did not permit tsarist subjects to take the lead in proffering reforms. Thus, Moynier’s admission that the tsarist state would never be able to fulfill its obligations to its dependents and civilian society needed to take up the slack subverted one of the principle intentions of the Great Reforms.

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<sup>166</sup> G. Moynier, *La guerre et la charité; traité théoretique et pratique de philanthropie appliqués aux armées en champagne, par G. Moynier et L. Appia* (Geneva: Librairie Cherbuliez, 1867). This work was later translated into English as *Help for Sick and Wounded, Being a translation of La Guerre et la Charité by Gustave Moynier and Louis Appia*, John Furley, trans. (London: John Camden Hotten, 1870).

<sup>167</sup> Hutchinson, *Champions*, 67.

<sup>168</sup> Moynier, *War and Charity*, 29, 31-31, 40.

For Russia, military innovation soon succeeded where diplomacy had failed. Prussia's success in the Austro-Prussian War of 1866 demonstrated to the Russians the usefulness of mobilizing private aid societies in war. At the outbreak of this conflict, the Prussian Ministry of War declared that it would unilaterally abide by the Geneva Convention. Prussian medical personnel received armbands with red crosses, and the Ministry of War integrated its aid society in war plans, which made Europe's most developed relief organization ready at the outbreak of hostilities. In total, the Prussian aid committee sent seventy trainloads of supplies and over one thousand civilian medical workers to the theater of war. Although the Prussian aid society began the conflict with only 20,000 talers in its central coffer, by the end of the war it had raised 4,000,000 and mobilized 1,500 workers for the relief effort.<sup>169</sup> Conversely, Austria-Hungary possessed several patriotic and aid societies but did little to exploit their potential or even trust the Geneva Convention. The result of these practices proved a cruel burden on Austrian soldiers because doctors retreated with the army, abandoning the wounded to die in unattended lazarettos.<sup>170</sup> By the war's end, Austria acceded to the Geneva Convention to avoid problems such as these in the future.<sup>171</sup>

Russia watched Prussia's successes and Austria's failures. Two reports on Prussian medical services appeared in *Voенно-медицинский журнал* (Military Medical Journal), the Russian Ministry of War's medical journal, soon after the war. The first, by Dr. Adolf Marsikani, mentioned that, despite Prussia's having the largest number of doctors in Europe, after two weeks of fighting they had to mobilize civilian and foreign physicians.<sup>172</sup> Later,

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<sup>169</sup> P. Bogaevskii, *Krasnyi Krest v razvitiі mezhdunarodnogo prava: chast' pervaiа, natsional'nye obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta i Zhenevskaia konventsіia 22 avg. 1864 goda* (Moscow: A. A. Levenson, 1906), 133-34.

<sup>170</sup> Hutchinson, *Champions*, 75-76.

<sup>171</sup> Boissier, *From Solferino*, 179-84.

Marsikani impressed upon the reader that many students, nurses, and members of religious orders “in Prussia more than anywhere else place themselves at the disposal of the lazarettos in wartime with true selflessness.”<sup>173</sup> Russia’s second commentator on Prussian medical services, Dr. I. F. Geifel’der, remarked that on June 15 the Prussian state had appealed to aid societies to organize hospital beds in private facilities. In total, civilians organized almost six thousand hospital beds, and these facilities seemed to observers better than military hospitals because they were smaller and staffed with more passionate relief workers.<sup>174</sup> These two accounts gave some Russian medical professionals the opportunity to recognize the benefits of employing voluntary aid societies in war. While it was unlikely that many casual readers sought out *Voennyi-meditsinskii zhurnal* for its coverage of foreign wars, several doctors close to the Romanov court did participate in the small group that oversaw Russia’s adoption of the Geneva Convention.

Less than a year after the Austro-Prussian War, on 3 May 1867, Russia founded its own aid society, the Aid Society for Sick and Wounded Soldiers (*Obshchestva popecheniia o ranenykh i bol’nykh voynakh*).<sup>175</sup> Nineteen days later, Russia informed the International Committee that it had agreed to the Geneva Convention. Personal campaigns within the court, similar to Elena Pavlovna’s push to found the Exaltation Society, led Russia to create its national aid society.

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<sup>172</sup> Adolf Marsikani, “Meditsinskie zametki iz Prussko-avstriiskoi kapanii,” *Voенno-meditsinskii zhurnal* (January 1867): 32.

<sup>173</sup> Marsikani, “Meditsinskie zametki,” 60.

<sup>174</sup> I. F. Geifel’der, “O deiatel’nosti voенno-meditsinskogo upravleniia v Prussii vo vremia Avstro-prusskoi voiny 1866 g.,” *Voенno-meditsinskii zhurnal* (July 1867): 103-4.

<sup>175</sup> This organization changed its name to the Russian Society of the Red Cross in 1879.

## The Creation of the Russian Aid Society for Wounded and Sick Soldiers

Russia participated in the original Geneva conference of 1863, but Alexander II initially refused to ratify the Geneva Convention of 1864 or found a national aid society until 1867. The foundation of the Russian aid society reveals the difficulties of importing a Western idea into the tsarist empire. Similar to Elena Pavlovna's creation of the Exaltation Society, Russia's aid society required four ambitious individuals working personal connections within the Romanov court to turn this project into a reality. One founder, Dr. Filipp Iakolevich Karel', came from Revel, Estonia, and had studied with Pirogov in Dorput in the late 1820s. He later became a military doctor and served as a personal physician to Nicholas I and Alexander II.<sup>176</sup> Another was P. A. Naranovich, the head of the Medical-Surgical Academy and a contemporary of Pirogov.<sup>177</sup> M. S. Sabinina was a concert pianist, who, beginning in 1860, taught music at the Romanov court. Even more obscure was M. P. Frederiks, the daughter of General P. A. Frederiks. Both Sabinina and Frederiks served as ladies-in-waiting for Empress Maria Aleksandrovna. This clique followed cultural developments in the German states and knew of Prussia's encouragement of wartime aid societies. They also became intimate with the most active German-born philanthropist at court, Elena Pavlovna, and her circle of progressives. Sabinina and Frederiks did not view private aid as a passing fad, nor did they fear getting their hands dirty. Both toured Prussian medical facilities during the Franco-Prussian War and led nursing brigades in the Balkans in the 1870s. Naranovich and Karel' remained involved in the Russian Red Cross's governing board during the first decade of its existence.

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<sup>176</sup> Pirogov, *Sevastopol'skie pis'ma*, ed. Iu. G. Malis, 219, note 48.

<sup>177</sup> "Naranovich, Pavel Andreevich," *Russkii biograficheskii slovar'*, vol. 11 (St. Petersburg: Glavnoe upravlenie udelov, 1914), 58-60.

How to transplant a Western idea into Russia proved a challenge for the founders of this organization because, as this group knew, Russian society lagged far behind the West in education and material well-being. The majority of the empire's subjects were recently emancipated serfs, illiterate and mistrustful of the state. Metropolitan Filaret, the head of the Orthodox Church, disapproved of any project that might divert the Church's resources or alter its institutions to follow Western models. He found the Red Cross movement too liberal in its interaction between the sexes and disliked the secular orientation of its mission and activities. Also, the rivalry between St. Petersburg, the "Window to the West," and Moscow, Russia's religious capital and more authentic representative, presented early challenges to this society. Lastly, the Russian Aid Society was supposed to welcome members from all layers of Russian society. This all-encompassing ideal, based on European notions of citizenship, struggled with the reality of a tsarist state that did not permit the lower classes or subversive minorities any role in managing the empire. As a result of these concerns, the upper levels of the Russian Red Cross remained a nest for high-ranking bureaucrats and court favorites until 1917; there was no Clara Barton, who began as a school teacher, in tsarist Russia.

An edited collection of documents first published in the journal *Istoricheskii vestnik* (Historical Herald) in 1892 to mark the Russian Red Cross's twenty-fifth anniversary provides the best account of the foundation of this organization.<sup>178</sup> These documents originally lay in Sabinina's personal archive, and they emphasized her and Frederiks's initiatives to create the society and the resistance the planners faced from Metropolitan Filaret and conservative Muscovites. Celebrating the Red Cross as an essential tsarist charity,

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<sup>178</sup> *K dvadtsatipiatiletiiu Rossiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, ed. N. Almazova, (Moscow: Universitet, 1892).



these documents shed little light on the likely resistance to this organization from within the military or Council of Ministers. Russian bureaucrats and generals surely wanted keep the civilians from impinging on the state's military policies and duty to care for the wounded in war. The sources, however, remain silent on these concerns. According to Sabinina's narrative, the proposal to establish an aid society first came about as a way to commemorate the Danish Princess Dagmar's arrival to Russia in September 1866.

Initially betrothed to marry Tsarevich Nicholas Aleksandrovich, the eldest son of Alexander II, Dagmar's first match with a Romanov proved unlucky when Nicholas suddenly died in the spring of 1865. On his deathbed, Tsarevich Nicholas allegedly expressed a desire to pass Dagmar to his younger brother, Alexander Aleksandrovich, the future Tsar Alexander III (1881-1894). This decision pleased the wishes of their father, Alexander II, who sought to prevent his sons from marrying German princesses, the traditional consorts for Romanov bachelors.<sup>179</sup> To mark the wedding of the herculean Alexander Aleksandrovich to the delicate Dagmar, the court surgeon, P. A. Naranovich, who had recently returned from Berlin where he witnessed Prussian medical services during the Austro-Prussian War and had brought back a collection of the newest medical instruments, proposed to Dr. Karel' and Sabinina that they found a modern clinic based on Prussian models. Sabinina contended that a national aid society was more pressing, since the idea was "already widespread throughout Europe, except in Russia and Turkey."<sup>180</sup> She was somewhat mistaken on this note; the sultan had adopted the Geneva Convention on paper in 1865, but

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<sup>179</sup> Cornye Hall, *Little Mother of Russia: A Biography of the Empress Marie Feodorovna (1847-1928)* (London: Shephard-Walwyn, 1999), 22-24.

<sup>180</sup> *K dvadtsatipiatiletiu*, ed. N. Almazova, 3.

the Ottomans made no effort to set up an aid society.<sup>181</sup> Karel', also aware of aid societies in the Austro-Prussian War, intended for women to play a major role in the Russian organization from the beginning because of their allegedly natural inclinations for nursing and caregiving.<sup>182</sup> Sabinina and her clique set about ordering charters and literature on Europe's national aid societies.<sup>183</sup> The wealth of information, planning, and state sponsorship needed to establish this organization required time and preparation, and these hurdles caused Sabinina to miss her initial target of putting the organization in place by the royal wedding on 28 October. Dagmar herself seemed to play no role in the creation of the aid society, but later, after she married Alexander Aleksandrovich, converted to Orthodoxy, and assumed the name Maria Fedorovna, she became the royal patroness, or symbolic head, of the Russian Red Cross from the late 1870s to the fall of the Old Regime in 1917.

The first meeting of the aid society occurred in Baroness Frederiks's quarters in the Winter Palace on 14 December 1866. In addition to Frederiks, Sabinina, and Karel', the head military doctor Kh. B. Ritter, P. A. Naranovich, and his son, the physician A. P. Naranovich, also attended the meeting. The discussion centered on how to adapt examples of wartime aid organizations from Prussia, the United States, and other European powers to organize a national aid society for Russia. The Naranovichs, for example, admired Prussian aid societies, which they had witnessed in action during journeys the father-and-son pair had made during the Schleswig-Holstein campaign of 1864. However, the group acknowledged that Russia suffered from structural weaknesses: "The social conditions that brought forth

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<sup>181</sup> Hutchinson, *Champions*, 138.

<sup>182</sup> *Osnovanie Rossiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta i razvitie ego deiatel'nosti v period 1867-1875: sistematicheskii sbornik materialov*, vol. 1 (Kiev: I. F. Tupits, 1881), 4.

<sup>183</sup> *K dvadtsatipiatiletiu*, ed. N. Almazova, 4.

sanitary activities in other countries to a large extent do not compare with those that exist in Russian society,” and “only when these ideas become fully ours, Russian, can they be implanted in our society and put to use.” Conceding that the group of six had little chance of raising the cultural level of Europe’s most populous and backward power, the participants settled on three important questions to discuss at later meetings: They asked when and how they should organize this society; they asked what this society would do in war and peacetime; and, most importantly, they considered how to fund this society.<sup>184</sup>

Naranovich the elder came out as the most aggressive participant at the initial meeting, calling for the Russian aid society to be founded then and there, with those present as the initial members. He insisted that membership be voluntary and open to all classes of society, a tenet set forth by Dunant and shared among European relief societies. During peacetime, Naranovich believed, the Russian aid society would limit its activities to preparing materials needed for moments when “war severed the normal course of affairs.”<sup>185</sup> This statement, which was in line with Dunant’s and Moynier’s views on warfare, ignored Russia’s regular conflicts in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Russia, as we shall see, distributed private aid and upheld the provisions guaranteed in the Geneva Convention in conventional wars against other signatories only. Additionally, the presumption that the Red Cross would engage solely in war work changed quickly as the realities of managing a poorly developed empire necessitated continuous aid to needy subjects. This meeting made clear that several concerned Russians had committed themselves to founding a national aid society. They knew that in order for this organization to succeed, it required state support,

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 4.

which could only come from an imperial charter guaranteeing the agency oversight of Russia's wounded.

The next day Frederiks and Sabinina approached Empress Maria Aleksandrovna for help founding the society. The empress embraced the idea, offered to place the society under her patronage, and promised to speak with the emperor about confirming a legal charter for the society. The following morning, Karel' mentioned the society to the sovereign, who, having been briefed by his wife on the project, told Karel' to seek consultation with Prince A. M. Gorchakov, the minister of foreign affairs, on the details of the "Treaty with Switzerland." Russia at this time had not yet adopted the Geneva Convention, but protocol stated that a government inform the Swiss Federal Council and International Committee to be considered a signatory of the Geneva Convention. Soon after, Naranovich produced a charter consisting of nineteen articles, and Sabinina forwarded the document to K. P. Pobedonostsev, the chief legal reformer in the Ministry of Justice. The initial draft of this charter must have been ill-conceived because Pobedonostsev objected to the eighth article, which stated that the society's "Main Directorate (*Glavnoe upravlenie*) should be permanent, fixed, and additional members would not possess the right to vote in decisions." This rule contradicted the society's egalitarian ideals and permanent mission, Pobedonostsev warned. He instructed Sabinina to consult other military doctors and sanitation experts to define more narrowly the society's intended activities. We can infer little on whether Naranovich and Karel' made any effort at learning from military doctors how to organize voluntary sanitary brigades to suit the army's needs, but when they printed the final charter in 1867, the plans for employing medical volunteers in wartime remained vague. Nevertheless, the members of the nascent

Russian aid society believed that they took all of Pobedonostsev's reservations under consideration and amended the draft according to his wishes.<sup>186</sup>

The next step for the planners was to solicit members for the society, and the empress aided Sabinina and Frederiks in this task by suggesting potential candidates, such as Avrora Demidova, an ideal choice due to her Russian name, significant wealth, and propensity toward benevolence, and the court priest, Father V. B. Bazhanov. Some of the candidates seemed apprehensive to participate; several invitees declined the offer, but many later backtracked and became members. Some early members who answered the call were Admiral K. N. Possiet and his wife, Rozaliia Ippolitovna, Countess M. Orlova-Davydova, one of Maria Fedorovna's ladies-in-waiting, General E. I. Totleben, the fortification expert and veteran of Sevastopol, and P. A. Morits, a military surgeon. This group met almost daily in Frederiks's apartment, where they continued to work on the charter.

After several rounds of revisions, this group printed a few copies of the charter to drum up interest in the society. At this point, Totleben received notes from the Ministry of War expressing concern that the society sought to impinge on its prerogative of caring for the wounded. The Ministry of War requested that the aid society be subordinate to the military, but the members rejected this measure as inadmissible for a voluntary society and contrary to the Geneva Convention.<sup>187</sup> As the revisions increased, the size of the charter grew from eighteen to eighty-four articles, and each new paragraph prompted further disagreements over how this society should function. By 6 March 1867, they had a charter ready for Pobedonostsev, who endorsed the document and proclaimed that the society "forms a new

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 5-6.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 8.

era in the history of the social development of our country.”<sup>188</sup> Pobedonostsev did not elaborate on what meant by this line, but he may have thought this group of planners had found a way to adopt a European institution for Russian realities. If so, these organizers would soon be disappointed with the way some Russians reacted to the proposal. Existing nursing orders, the Orthodox Church, and influential Muscovites all expressed concern that they were being forced to accommodate a Western idea at their own expense.

One important element that the organizers had not considered was how to employ nurses from the existing orders in the society. Russia’s nursing societies possessed state charters that determined their charitable activities, so the aid society could not simply order them around. Baroness Frederiks wrote Princess A. V. Golitsyna, the head of a nursing order in Moscow, to inform her of their project and let her know that Totleben was traveling to Moscow to consult with her about how nurses might be employed in wartime. Frederiks also suggested that Golitsyna correspond with Mademoiselle Lize Krotkova, a manager of a private hospital, and Father Antonii Medvedev, the head of the St. Sergius Monastery in Sergeev Posad, the most influential monastery in Russia, on preparing nurses. Finally, Frederiks mentioned that Metropolitan Filaret Drozdov, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, should already know about the project, because the empress commissioned General Totleben to report to him first of all. Sabinina much later commented that this letter from Frederiks was evidence that the founders of the Russian aid society had envisioned that the existing nursing societies would play a fundamental role in this organization from the beginning.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 10.

But this letter was also brusque. Read from Golitsyna's perspective, the women of the court were making plans to send nurses already dedicated to assisting poor civilians away to war. Golitsyna replied to the letter, stating that she embraced this movement but would not provide any funds for it. Golitsyna's nursing society was located at the St. Sergius Monastery, and she feared that organizers in St. Petersburg were trying to increase the size of her nurses beyond her capacity to feed or house them. She likely wanted to keep her nursing order associated with the Church, and she asked Frederiks to write Father Antonii and ask him for funds from Metropolitan Filaret, because the monastery in Sergeev Posad was wealthy and the nursing society received none of this money.<sup>190</sup> The Orthodox Church in these letters appeared apprehensive about a private organization that pressured to turn nuns into military nurses, and Filaret struck back with a challenge that threatened to alter the entire form of the organization.

The first group with which Totleben met comprised of Metropolitan Filaret and a number of aristocratic Muscovites. After this session, Totleben penned a letter to Frederiks and Sabinina dated 10 March that repeated the Muscovites' concerns over the character that the Petersburg organizers wanted to give to the society. At the meeting with the Muscovites, it seemed that Totleben was blindsided by complaints that "no clergymen were named on the list of participants" in St. Petersburg, and Metropolitan Filaret was confused why they did not solicit help from the Metropolitan of St. Petersburg in setting up the society.<sup>191</sup> How could an aid society that represented all of Russia exclude the Orthodox Church? And the patriarch found the mixture of sexes in local chapters unacceptable. "His Holiness does not allow that

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 11.

women manage together with men in the committees; women must be completely separate,” Totleben transmitted to Frederiks. This attitude toward reform was characteristic of Filaret. As Gregory Freeze has argued, in the era of the Great Reforms, Filaret remained a *tserkovnik* in the age of *chinovniki*, a “cleric” in an era of “statesmen,” or a staunch defender of ecclesiastical privilege, hierarchy, and independence. Reformers’ egalitarian and permissive leanings, such as the insistence that all of Russia participate in the aid society, offended Filaret, who harbored deep reservations about the emerging women’s movement in Russia. And the designs to mobilize the clergy and Church for aid to the wounded, a secular pursuit and a mission that would be neither cheap nor easy, were highly suspicious to the guardian of Russian Orthodoxy.<sup>192</sup>

The Muscovites also demanded that they have their own agency that would enjoy independence from the Main Directorate in St. Petersburg.<sup>193</sup> They asked to increase the number of merchants and doctors in the society and insisted that female participation be confined to women’s committees (*damskie komitety*), secular philanthropic boards for noblewomen.<sup>194</sup> The Muscovites did acknowledge women may be admitted as “founding members” of the society, which would enable them to vote at general assemblies, but the proportion of male to female “founding members” must be forty men to twenty women. Lastly, the Muscovites expressed concern that all of the society’s capital would be held in the State Bank in St. Petersburg, a rule that might make it difficult for the Moscow chapter of the organization to access its capital.

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<sup>192</sup> See Gregory L. Freeze, “Skeptical Reformer, Staunch Tserkovnik: Metropolitan Philaret and the Great Reforms,” in *Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow 1782-1867: Perspectives on the Man, His Works, and His Times*, Vladimir Tsurikov, ed. (Jordanville: The Variable Press, 2003): 151-92.

<sup>193</sup> *Osnovanie Rossiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, vol. 1, 7.

<sup>194</sup> *K dvadtsatipiatiletiiu*, ed. N. Almazova, 11.



Totleben relented to some of the Muscovites' ideas. He recognized the need to concentrate capital in the empire's largest cities such as Moscow, Odessa, and Kazan, where they would create local (*mestnye*) chapters with greater autonomy. Totleben also wrote Dr. Karel' an admission that the secular, Western-style aid society they advocated for might be impossible to arrange in Orthodox Russia. He noted that as soon as he arrived in Moscow, he learned that success was most easily achieved when "the metropolitan, most-esteemed throughout all of Russia, takes the matter into his own hands." Furthermore, the Third Rome's influence should not be understated: "This was what Moscow preferred, and Moscow undoubtedly has much greater meaning throughout the empire." He added in the postscript to this note that "here they do not like Petersburg; Moscow is unwillingly subordinate to Petersburg."<sup>195</sup>

The organizers in the capital discussed the consequences of this letter at a 14 March meeting at General A. K. Baumgarten's residence. Baumgarten was a logical choice to consult on the society because he was a career military man, a decorated veteran of the Caucasus and Crimean War, and held an important role within the Ministry of War as the reformer of the Nicholas Academy of the General Staff.<sup>196</sup> This session produced a document that addressed some of the Muscovites' concerns, but the St. Petersburg organizers refused to budge on the secular orientation of the society or Filaret's demand that they segregate the sexes within the society.<sup>197</sup> The organizers declared that there should only be only one society, and it should be headquartered in St. Petersburg because all the state ministries were

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>196</sup> "Baumgarten, Aleksandr Karlovich," *Russkii biograficheskii slovar'*, ed. A. A. Polovtsov, vol. 2 (St. Petersburg: Glavnoe upravlenie udelov, 1900), 596.

<sup>197</sup> *Osnovanie Rossiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, vol. 1, 8.

located there. Communication with these ministries, especially in wartime, the organizers insisted, was required for the aid society to fulfill its mission.

In regard to the question of autonomy for local chapters, the Petersburg clique recognized that it had to grant local organizations a degree of latitude to decide their own affairs, so long as they stayed true to the organization's mission. On the question of membership, the founders agreed that the leaders of the central organ in St. Petersburg would come from influential persons, well known throughout Russia. They conceded that the number of clergy within the governing board of the relief society should be increased from the current two, but the organizers insisted on granting the clergymen membership as "honorable members," without voting rights in organizational affairs. When they selected candidates for the Main Directorate, the early members did not place any high-ranking clergymen on this board. The organizers dismissed the Muscovites' request to increase the number of merchants, and they failed to explain why they sought to exclude this group.<sup>198</sup> These concessions raised little alarm among the founders in St. Petersburg, and the empress approved of these changes.<sup>199</sup>

Metropolitan Filaret's insistence that meetings must be single-sexed deeply upset Baroness Frederiks, who wrote to Totleben complaining that Filaret believed the separation of men and women was necessary for the organization to be successful. She told the general that she envisioned no role for women within the administration of the Main Directorate, but

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<sup>198</sup> Moscow merchants were some of the greatest contributors to Russian charities at the time, and the decision to keep them out of the Main Directorate may have been based on the class preferences of many of the founding members in St. Petersburg. The organizers came from the highest ranks of the Russian aristocracy and state, and the probably preferred to welcome only likeminded individuals to govern the aid society. On the social makeup of the Main Directorate, see I. V. Egorysheva, "Novye dannye iz istorii Krasnogo Kresta v dorevoliutsionnoi Rossii," *Sovetskoe zdavookhranenie* (February 1981): 57-60.

<sup>199</sup> *K dvadtsatipiatiletiu*, ed. N. Almazova, 12-14.

she believed that women should be utilized to collect funds and materials, especially in the local chapters, because it was impossible to predict whether educated society in the provinces would embrace a national aid society. She added that Filaret thought “women, outside the realm of family responsibilities, should fulfill a modest share of the activity, but, in all states that are the most enlightened, women refuse to play a modest role, instead participating in charity together with men.”<sup>200</sup> She found the metropolitan’s attitude toward women unflattering and that the committee should inform him of this displeasure. She then turned to the question of who should head the society. Totleben, she named as a worthy candidate, but he had too many responsibilities in the Ministry of War to head the society. The empress suggested naming A. A. Zelenoi, the head of Ministry of State Domains, an able candidate, having served in the navy and army. Wounded at Sevastopol, he played a major role in the emancipation of serfdom. The first general meeting of the Russian Red Cross selected Zelenoi as its chairman on 18 May.<sup>201</sup>

Totleben responded to Frederiks’s letter, stating that he met with two influential Muscovites, General A. P. Akhmatov, a former member of the Holy Synod, and Prince Trubetskoi, to discuss the issue of women’s participation in the society. Totleben and Trubetskoi then approached Filaret and explained to him that similar societies in America and Prussia existed without the strict separation of the sexes. Filaret, scoffed at this line: Russia was not to displace tradition to slavishly follow the West. Frustrated, Totleben returned from Moscow and met with the emperor and empress on 23 March, at which he told the ruling couple, “His holiness would not remain a member of the society, nor sign up for it

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>201</sup> Fedorova and Botsianovskii, *Istoricheskii ocherk*, 20.

if the society refused to observe the rule on the separation of the sexes.”<sup>202</sup> This harsh pronouncement from the Orthodox Church dismayed the founders, especially because they believed that the Church would be one of the Red Cross’s most prominent supporters. Additionally, the organizers hoped that they could use Orthodox parishes as collection points for donations in the provinces. These hopes seem to have been dashed by the decision of one uncompromising metropolitan.

This disappointment did not end the organizers’ efforts. The State Council approved the charter on 3 May. This charter, consisting of eighty-six articles, laid out the rules for how the organization would function. The aid society’s purpose was to work with the “military administration” to deliver aid to the wounded in war. To accomplish this task, the society would provide materials and medical workers of both sexes to the military. The organization would consist of members of several ranks: “honorable members” (*pochetnye chleny*), or those who belonged to the Romanov family, heads of state ministries, and the Church; “charitable members” (*blagotvoritel’nye chleny*), those who donated at least one hundred rubles at once or ten rubles per year; “active members” (*deistvitel’nye chleny*), those who gave fifty rubles at once or three rubles per year; and “junior members” (*sorevnovateli*), those who gave less money or donated materials.

The charter organized the Russian Red Cross into three levels: the Main Directorate, provincial chapters, and women’s committees. In a concession to Filaret, the charter confined women’s roles to the women’s committees. The Main Directorate consisted of a twenty-five-member board under the patronage of the empress, who selected the chairman and two deputies. The members of the society voted for candidates for this board at yearly general

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<sup>202</sup> *K dvadtsatipiatiletiiu*, ed. N. Almazova, 16.

assemblies. As the head governing body of the society, the Main Directorate collected yearly reports from all local chapters and had the right to order subordinate chapters to deliver funds and supplies to where they were needed. Also, the Main Directorate represented the society in all relations with state ministries, the zemstvos, and other voluntary societies. Local committees needed at least thirty members in a town to form, and these branches required permission from the provincial governor, who was usually a member. In an apparent concession to the Muscovites, the charter permitted local committees to store their funds in state or other banks, so long as they reported all accounts to the Main Directorate once a year. Women's committees acted as the feminine half of the local committee, and the charter tasked them with raising funds for the society, collecting sanitary supplies, and overseeing training programs for nurses.<sup>203</sup>

The charter listed special guidelines for the organization's wartime activities. If war broke out, the Main Directorate would deliver inventories of its stores to the Ministry of War. The aid society was responsible for forming brigades and conducting relief activities in the theater of war. To ensure smooth coordination between relief workers near the front and military commanders, the society planned to send agents to the Main Headquarters of the army. The empress named these agents, and their duty was to command all relief workers in the theater of war. The charter left instructions for the agents' activities vague, which meant that, when Russia went to war with the Turks a decade later, confusion and apprehension prevented the smooth delivery of private aid to Russia's armies at the front.

Two weeks after the State Council confirmed the aid society's charter, the organizers met in the Ministry of State Domains to choose a chairman and Main Directorate for the

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<sup>203</sup> *Ustav sostoiashchego pod vysochaishim pokrovitel'stvom Ee Imperatorskogo Velichestva Gosudaryni Imperatritsy obshchestva popecheniia o ranenykh i bol'nykh voynakh* (St. Petersburg: V. Golovin, 1867), 2-17.

society on 18 May. In addition to the selection of Zelenoi as chairman, they also named A. K. Baumgarten and A. D. Bashmakov as deputy chairmen. The rest of the Main Directorate comprised of twenty-one high-ranking military officers, statesmen, famous doctors, and court favorites.<sup>204</sup> By no means a cross-section of Russian society, these men's talents and connections to state ministries ensured the aid society served its purpose. At the same time, by taking over membership in the Main Directorate, this group of bureaucrats and generals blocked women such as Sabinina and Frederiks from leadership of the organization they helped create. A published list of the two hundred founders of the society listed few women among the ranks of the organizers. This list included many nobles, generals, statesmen, and only a spattering of professionals. In its composition, the Russian Red Cross at the beginning resembled the French aid society, the *Société de Secours aux Blessés Militaires*, a nest of aristocratic privilege, but it differed in that many of the Russian organizers served in the tsarist bureaucracies or military.<sup>205</sup> Merchants, writers, and medical professionals were conspicuously absent from the ranks of the Russian aid society. For the next fifty years, outside critics would fault the Russian Red Cross for being too opaque and too closely associated with the bureaucracy and court.

This association also needed to address the “women's question” that Metropolitan Filaret had posed to the organizers. Sabinina felt the charter unjustly sidelined women and wanted to establish a Russian Women's Society similar to the German *Frauenverein* founded

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<sup>204</sup> The first Main Directorate was made up of Dr. F. Ia. Karel', Father Bazhanov, the Romanovs' priest, General-Adjutant Pos'et, State Councilor Morits, Councilor Nikol'skii, Dr. Naranovich, General-Adjutant Volkov, Dr. S. P. Botkin, Lieutenant General Rosset, S. S. Boronin, S. S. Rorbek, College Assessor Petlin, State Councilor Zubarev, Major-General Count Vorontsov-Dashkov, General Rot, Vice-Admiral Vozvodskii, State Councilor Ritter, College Assessor Golubev, College Assessor Baron Osten-Saken, General-Adjutant Baron Frederiks, and Colonel Olsuf'ev. See *K dvadtsatipiatiletiiu*, ed. N. Almazova, 17-18.

<sup>205</sup> For the composition of the early French Aid Society, see Caroline Morehead, *Dunant's Dream: War Switzerland and the History of the Red Cross* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 1998), 62.

in Leipzig in 1865. She envisioned that this women's society would be a national women's organization with peacetime roles fighting poverty, training nurses, caring for orphans, aiding after disasters, and teaching the population "moderation, thrift, and domestic skills." During wartime, the women's society would be subsumed under the Main Directorate to conduct relief. After receiving criticisms that this plan was too ambitious for tsarist Russia, Sabinina backed down and accepted a proposal by Zelenoi and Baumgarten to channel women's participation into women's committees.<sup>206</sup> Soon after, the St. Petersburg Women's Committee formed a warehouse located in the Ministry of State Domains. Managed entirely by women—most of whom were married to men on serving the Main Directorate—this warehouse became the first institution within the Russian Red Cross to begin accumulating dressings and supplies for war.<sup>207</sup> Sabinina and more than a few of the early members were frustrated with the charter's restrictions on female participation; one of the first alterations they made to the charter the next decade was to rewrite this provision.

## **Conclusion**

The Russian precedent for voluntary aid in war, the deployment of the Exaltation Society nurses in the Crimean War, succeeded because of a personal campaign within the Romanov court. Equally important to the foundation of the Russian Red Cross were related developments in the West. Dunant's and Moynier's ambitions to mobilize civilians toward aiding the wounded took hold across Europe in the decade following the Crimean War, and Russia could not stay out of this movement for long. Private aid societies, if properly trained and deployed, proved their value in Prussia's wars of the 1860s. When the Russian military

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<sup>206</sup> *K dvadtsatipiatiletiiu*, ed. N. Almazova, 18-19.

<sup>207</sup> RGVA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 18-19; *K dvadtsatipiatiletiiu*, ed. N. Almazova, 23-4.

informed its officers on the pages of *Voennyi sbornik* that it now possessed a national aid society, the author admitted that the Italian, American, and Prussian wars had shown the value of “the participation of society, not only in monetary and material donations, but also in direct [relief] activities.” Miliutin may have eyed this movement as impractical or intrusive, but he could not prevent certain Russians from believing that they needed such organization or stop the movement at court to found a national aid society. After all, everyone including the military blamed the medical failure in the Crimea on shortages of supplies, personnel, and corruption.<sup>208</sup> Still, the popular demand for a private aid organization was quite small. As in the Crimean War, it took a careful effort by a group of well-connected subjects to entice the dynasty to permit a state-chartered, private Red Cross organization to take root in Russia.

During the next decade, the Russian Red Cross evolved from a group of founders with a charter to an empire-wide, state-supported institution that conducted relief work for Russia’s soldiers and civilians at home. This organization also intervened on behalf of humanitarian and Slavophile causes abroad, such as the Balkan uprisings against the Turks in the 1870s. The 1860s saw numerous voices contribute to a discourse on how to organize an aid society for Russia and what causes to champion. This organization’s initial purpose was to mobilize civilians for war, women in particular, a task that Elena Pavlovna began during the Crimean War. As one introduction to the Russian Red Cross’s charter stated:

The Russian people are aware of their obligation to care for those who sacrifice life and health for their defense and honor. With joy they enter a union with the goal of not only satisfying Christian charity and compassion but also of fulfilling their holy duty to the defenders of the Russian land and to Russian soldiers. Russian women, of course, enter this

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<sup>208</sup> “Obshchestvo popecheniia o ranenykh i bol’nykh voynakh,” *Voennyi sbornik* (July 1867): 108. This article was reprinted in *Russkii invalid*, the newspaper of the Russian military, see “Obshchestvo popecheniia,” 108, note 1.



union with joy, which gives them the capability of participating in the defense and protection of the fatherland, all the more so as this concern is a truly a women's task.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 111.

### **CHAPTER 3 – THE RUSSIAN RED CROSS DURING ITS FIRST DECADE**

The Russian Red Cross faced two questions following its chartering in May 1867 and the state's recognition of the Geneva Convention in September of the same year. First, even though tsarist generals still harbored suspicions about how to employ civilian aid societies in war, Russia had committed itself to this aspect of the humanitarian movement in 1867 and had to determine plans for using civilian relief workers in war. Second, no one knew how to develop a wartime relief society in peace. What activities should the Russian aid society pursue to advertise its mission, expand its endowment, and convince women to become nurses? Russians looked abroad for answers to these questions, and they sent delegates to a series of international conferences in the 1860s and 1870s to learn more about how to deploy a national aid society in war. The decade from the Russian Red Cross's founding to the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 was largely a period of confusion for this organization. Activists struggled to generate interest in a wartime aid society during periods of peace, and this challenge would vex the Russian Red Cross throughout its existence.

In 1869, Russia dispatched General A. K. Baumgarten and doctors Kh. Ia. von Giubbenet and P. A. Naranovich to the Second International Conference of Aid Societies in Berlin in 1869, a congress that raised the question of how aid societies from neutral powers might provide medical assistance to warring nations. As the Russians articulated, neutrality might only be preserved in wartime if a committee composed entirely of nonbelligerent

powers doled out relief to the needy.<sup>210</sup> This critique should not be surprising. Tsarist Russia possessed tremendous manpower resources but industrial underdevelopment and shortages of medical personnel burdened its armies. Also, Russia had also recently waged war with Britain, France, and Turkey, while the neutral observers Austria-Hungary and Prussia remained inactive. As a latecomer to the Geneva Convention, the tsarist state wanted to ensure that it would receive aid from neutral powers if it went to war in the future. And the Russians believed they were at the forefront in the international movement to limit the harmful effects of warfare. The 1868 St. Petersburg Declaration convinced European powers to ban explosive bullets under a certain size because they caused needless suffering. Most of the European delegates at the 1869 Berlin conference, reluctant to relinquish their authority to a committee of five civilians in Geneva, ignored Russia's position and endorsed the principle that a nonbelligerent nation could assist warring countries' aid societies.<sup>211</sup> Geneva would not be the middle man to ensure that each belligerent in a conflict received equal foreign aid. In the decades that followed, Russia would receive little help from foreign aid societies when it made war against the Ottoman Empire or Japan, both conflicts that Europeans generally blamed Russian imperialists for starting. At the same time, Russia invested little in foreign conflicts in which it did not have a vested interest in backing one side.

The Prussians' other point of contention in 1869 is far more relevant for the discussion here. Prussia wanted aid societies to work in concert with the central military authorities and limited their role to support in the rear only. This idea won little sympathy

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<sup>210</sup> Hutchinson, *Champions*, 94.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 89-92.

from the other nations at the Berlin conference, many of which believed too much interaction between aid societies and militaries deprived the former of independence, altruism, or flexibility. On this point, Prussian militarism lost, but independence for the aid societies led to a third question: What should these organizations do in peacetime? One Prussian delegate, Dr. Brinkmann, suggested that societies prepare themselves for war by struggling against epidemics, hunger, and natural disasters, and he saw female nurses as the perfect agents to carry out these campaigns. This proposal found both supporters and objectors among the delegates. The French feared that their aid society would expend all of its resources on peacetime endeavors and be unprepared for war, but other representatives believed public hygiene might be a cheap and worthwhile activity in which to partake.<sup>212</sup> Russia's delegate, von Giubbenet, objected to the idea of peacetime humanitarianism, fearing public health would waste resources and make the wartime aid society responsible for an impossible task in the tsarist empire.<sup>213</sup> Von Giubbenet's proposal won widespread support, and the delegates committed the movement to regarding war work as the *raison d'être* of the Red Cross.<sup>214</sup> Russia later would turn about-face on the issue of peacetime relief in response to pressures within the Red Cross to do more to spread its mission to the public in the wake of the Franco-Prussian War. During these early years, however, the Russians had little clue how to conduct wartime relief until the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71 provided an example of what was possible in an autocratic state.

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<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, 97-99.

<sup>213</sup> RG VIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 97-98; Hutchinson, *Champions*, 99.

<sup>214</sup> Hutchinson, *Champions*, 101.

The next two chapters explore how the Russian Red Cross evolved from a charter to a national organization dedicated to protecting the health of Russia's soldiers and civilians during the nine years from its foundation in 1867 to the uprising of Balkan Christians in 1875. The Red Cross in this era expanded its numbers of chapters, but it struggled to increase its endowment or draw medical professionals to its ranks. With limited private capital to draw from and an unclear peacetime mission, the Red Cross serves as means for identifying some of the possibilities and limitations for public initiative in reform-era Russia. To trace this development, an apt starting point is not the Russian Red Cross itself, but what it most certainly was not, the United States' Sanitary Commission (USSC), an institution Russians admired yet acknowledged was probably impossible for tsarist society to create or the autocracy to tolerate.

### **The United States' Sanitary Commission**

The Crimean War initiated the question of how to employ civilian relief workers to military conflict, but the American Civil War demonstrated to European observers what civilian support for war would look like in the wars of the future. Russian commentators on the American Civil War recognized that there was something different about this conflict: The North and the South fought over competing ideologies. Ideology, coupled with the popular support needed to sustain it, had enabled both the North and the South to mobilize tremendous resources for war. Russian commentators knew that the application of military force more efficiently might avoid a repetition of the defeat in the Crimean War; however, as reformers recognized, opening the door toward popular participation in war came at a political cost. Free and voluntary participation in military conflict led civilians to demand a

voice politics, and the Russians needed to find a way to sharpen one edge of this sword while blunting the other.

Founded in 1861 to provide material and medical support to Federal armies in the American Civil War, the USSC enjoyed unprecedented support from the Northern public and grew to become the largest voluntary association in United States by 1865. Russian knowledge of this society came primarily from Thomas W. Evans, a representative for the USSC in Europe and later dentist to Napoleon III, who traveled throughout Europe to solicit donations during the American Civil War.<sup>215</sup> The Main Directorate of the Russian Red Cross even hosted Evans at a meeting in January 1868.<sup>216</sup> Those Russian reformers who met Evans expressed a respect for American ingenuity and self-initiative in creating the commission, and they envied the American-sized sums of capital this organization raised from the public.

D. I. Zavalishin, a former naval officer and Decembrist, authored the first Russian work to celebrate the American national aid society in 1867.<sup>217</sup> Zavalishin believed the Russians should learn several lessons from the Americans. He emphasized that, in order for this institution to “satisfy the most pressing demands, private charity needed to operate independently from the bureaucracy.” In America’s case, this independence posed new problems. Lincoln’s army initially viewed the USSC as a group of amateurs who would inevitably create a “fifth wheel,” hindering the Union Army on campaigns. Support from the press and sound management by men such as Valentin Mott, a physician, and Frederick Law

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<sup>215</sup> Thomas W. Evans published an account on the USSC in French for European audiences. See Thomas W. Evans, *La commission sanitaire des États-Unis, son origine, son organisation et ses résultats, avec une notice sur les hopitaux militaires aux États-Unis et sur la réforme sanitaire dans les armées européennes* (Paris: É. Dentu, 1865).

<sup>216</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1, l. 30.

<sup>217</sup> See D. I. Zavalishin, *Obozrenie deistvii raznykh obshchestv popecheniia o ranenykh i bol'nykh voinakh* (Moscow: T. Ris, 1867). This pamphlet is located in TsIAM, f. 16, op. 57, d. 199, ll. 71-77.

Olmstead ensured that the USSC won public approval and did not diverge from its mission. The USSC conducted careful statistical surveys on the sanitary conditions of Federal soldiers, which enabled relief workers to provide the supplies most desperately needed. In total, donations to the USSC reached several hundred million dollars, and the commission spent these monies outfitting 214 hospitals with 133,800 beds as well as numerous relief stations, sanitary trains, and ferries. Lastly, the USSC informed relatives of wounded soldiers when their sons had perished. This task strengthened the bonds between the subject and the state, or as Zavalishin put it, “this attention by the fatherland to the citizen, giving his life for his country, was extremely comforting for their relatives; it gave them the possibility of at least finding the place where those that gave their lives were buried.” Even after the war, the USSC continued its activities, transforming wartime hospitals into invalid homes and providing welfare for widows and orphans. The American example might be impossible to replicate in autocratic nations such as Russia, but Zavalishin believed members of the Red Cross should know the enviable precedent the Americans set in the Civil War. This pamphlet emphasized no European nation had approached the Americans in what was possible.<sup>218</sup>

Two years later, N. Geinats, a military doctor, translated Charles J. Stillé’s *History of the United States Sanitary Commission* into Russian and published selections from the work in *Voенно-медицинский журнал* (Military Medical Journal).<sup>219</sup> This lengthy essay repeated the idea that the American Civil War represented a new type of war that was rooted in political

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<sup>218</sup> TsIAM, f. 16, op. 57, d. 199, ll. 71-77

<sup>219</sup> Originally this work was published as Charles J. Stillé, *History of the United States Sanitary Commission being the General Report of its Work During the War of the Rebellion* (Philadelphia: J. Lippincott, 1866). The Russian editions of this work were published as Charles J. Stillé, “Istoriia sanitarnoi kommissii Soedinennykh shtatov,” N. Geinats, trans., *Voенно-медицинский журнал*, pts 1-4 (January 1869): 1-24; (February 1869): 110-38; (March 1869): 184-216; (April 1869): 258-96, and idem., *Sanitarnaia kommissiia Soedinennykh shtatov severnoi ameriki vo vremiia mezhdusobnoi voiny 1861-65 gg. Istoricheskii ocherk* (St. Petersburg: Iakov Trei, 1869).

ideology and conducted according to public opinion.<sup>220</sup> Popular participation in the war effort benefitted army and society in that it enabled the public to support the state in its responsibility for caring for the army.<sup>221</sup> The British had experimented with these ideas before in the Crimea, but the Americans took this level of participation to an entirely new level. Stillé emphasized the female role in raising funds and volunteering for the USSC, which he claimed was prompted by a combination of domestic virtues peculiar to the fairer sex and the widespread participation of American women in charitable activities before 1861.<sup>222</sup> The USSC also took precautionary measures such as commissioning scientific works on military sanitation to instruct American doctors in the Union Army, many of whom, the work implied, had little experience with military medicine.<sup>223</sup> USSC agents, who numbered between 150 and 700, inspected military hospitals to inquire of their material needs.<sup>224</sup> Finally, Stillé's survey emphasized that the USSC's purpose was to supplement but not replace the government's sanitary facilities. For Russian readers, American citizens did not merely demand special care for their wounded from the state; instead, a free people delivered this aid on their own.<sup>225</sup>

The question that vexed the Russians the most was how to accomplish this task in an illiberal autocracy. Russian conservatives wanted to mobilize private resources without surrendering decisions on how these resources would be spent. In a speech to the Kievan

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<sup>220</sup> Stillé, *History*, 18.

<sup>221</sup> Idem, "Istoriia," *Voенно-медицинский журнал* (January 1869): 8.

<sup>222</sup> Idem, *History*, 170-71; Idem, "Istoriia," *Voенно-медицинский журнал* (March 1869): 185-87.

<sup>223</sup> Idem, "Istoriia," *Voенно-медицинский журнал* (February 1869): 110-11, 120.

<sup>224</sup> Idem, "Istoriia," *Voенно-медицинский журнал* (April 1869): 291-92.

<sup>225</sup> Idem, "Istoriia," *Voенно-медицинский журнал* (March 1869): 198.



Association of Doctors in 1868, von Giubbenet repeated the concern that the increased scale and frequency of modern warfare necessitated that private aid societies assist the wounded. The first author in this discourse to use the term “civil society (*grazhdanskoe obshchestvo*),” von Giubbenet believed civilian assistance was needed to supplement Russia’s traditional strength: its endless supply of “healthy conscripts.” In the modern era, “civil society has come to recognize that if it sends its sons to battle, then it is obligated to not commit them to hemorrhaging blood from wounds or dying torturous deaths from hunger and thirst.”<sup>226</sup>

Von Giubbenet argued that modern warfare had prompted the formation of aid societies, such as the Exaltation Society, Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolaevich’s special committee to collect sanitary materials for the navy, and Florence Nightingale’s nursing brigades. These efforts were all admirable, von Giubbenet admitted, but the USSC surpassed all of the above in its ability to deliver aid, even if it received a cold shoulder from the American government and Union Army. The press and public opinion were crucial for the USSC to overcome official resistance, and he noted that the Russians encountered similar doubts from generals in the Crimean War. But Russia’s political structure and social landscape were not those of America. Russia, like Germany, had created its own national aid society under the patronage of the empress in peacetime. The leadership might support the Red Cross, but the educated public remained indifferent or hostile to this kind of patriotic venture. He continued, “In Russia, in all probability, barely one-hundredth of the population even knows about the existence of these societies: otherwise donations and offerings for this good and Christian pursuit would come in completely different sizes.”<sup>227</sup> Russia wanted what

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<sup>226</sup> Kh. Ia. Fon-Giubbenet, *Slovo ob uchastii narodov v popechenii o ranenykh voynakh i neskol'ko vospominanii iz Krymskoi kampanii* (Kiev: Universitetskaia tipografiia, 1868), 7.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-10, 13-14.

foreign nations possessed, but there appeared little clue how to achieve this goal in peacetime when educated society remained uninvolved in this project.

A second work from this same year, penned by the military physician Fedor Zatler, also sought to win support for private aid. This work, a small volume priced to sell at twenty kopecks, emphasized the changes to the relationship between society and army that resulted from universal military conscription in Europe.<sup>228</sup> Russia at this time did not have universal conscription, and no one was sure whether or not the Ministry of War would succeed in pushing through this reform. Still, Zatler believed that the introduction of universal conscription changed the public's view of military service. With military service obligatory for each subject, soldiers now served for the love of their fatherland. Therefore, any soldier donating his life and health for his country "receives the right to demand that if he is wounded, he will receive all measures that science and experience have at their disposal to save his life and restore his health."<sup>229</sup> Zatler briefly recounted the Prussian and Austrian experiences in the Schleswig-Holstein War before providing a lengthy description of the USSC. In America, civilian society refused to limit its role to sewing bandages and collecting monies. Instead, the USSC established its own hospitals according to innovative designs and supplied these facilities excellently. Zatler did not delve into the political relationship between the USSC and the state, or how Russia might apply these lessons, but he did believe

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<sup>228</sup> See "Rech' o tseli Obshchestva popecheniia o ranenykh i bol'nykh voynakh, sostoiashchego pod avgusteishim pokrovitel'stvom gosudaryni imperatritsy Marii Aleksandrovny, chitannaia v zale universiteta sv. Vladimira, 15 sentiabria 1869 goda," in *Gosudarstvennyi kantsler Graf Nikolai Petrovich Rumiantsov: Biograficheskii ocherk*, A. Ivanovskii, ed. (St. Petersburg, 1871), 115.

<sup>229</sup> F. Zatler, *Uchast' ranenykh i bol'nykh vo vremia voiny* (St. Petersburg: Tovarishchestvo Obshchestvennaia pol'za, 1868), 6-7.

that, as a result of this organization, American soldiers had superior sanitary equipment and the Union was able to reduce casualties.<sup>230</sup>

The American examples provided the blueprints for the activities that the Russian Red Cross might perform in the future. The size and scale of the USSC won the admiration of the Russians, who hoped that their own relief organization might evolve into an organization of similar breadth as the cultural level of the population increased, but two other lessons remained crucial. The Russian Red Cross needed to inspire civilian society to fund it and volunteer as medical workers, which was difficult in times of peace, and the USSC's independence gave it leeway to ensure that government services fulfilled their duties. The second lesson seemed impossible for an autocracy that refused the educated public a role in matters as important as war making or oversight of government institutions. As the 1870s progressed, the tsarist state succeeded in educating Russian readers about the Red Cross and its potential to intervene in crises, but, at the same time, the autocracy failed to keep public opinion from swaying how the Red Cross would be used and what consequences these endeavors would have on foreign policy.

### **The Russian Red Cross's Early Activities**

Once Alexander II approved the Red Cross's charter in May 1867, the Main Directorate began meeting almost weekly at the Ministry of State Domains. One of this organization's most pressing tasks was to spread news of its formation throughout Russia to solicit members and create provincial chapters. At a meeting on 27 May, members of the Main Directorate heard reports that they had sent 1,025 circulars on the Red Cross and 9,000 copies of the charter to provincial governors, mayors, members of the nobility, chairmen of

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid., 45-55.

city and provincial zemstvo boards, and prominent community members. Additionally, they published accounts of the organization in newspapers and periodicals that aligned with the political sympathies of the founders.<sup>231</sup>

This initial drive prompted tsarist subjects to form eight provincial committees by the end of the year, but delays remained in Moscow.<sup>232</sup> All provincial chapters were required to send 10 percent of their funds to the Main Directorate. Of the 90 percent that remained with provincial committees, two-thirds of the endowments were to remain untouched in anticipation of war, and the remaining third spent to help wounded or crippled veterans.<sup>233</sup> Moscow had numerous individuals who sympathized with this organization—one source listed up to 190—but it took a while for Russia’s second capital to embrace this organization. Even petitions by willing Muscovites to Prince V. A. Dolgorukov, the governor-general of the province and an important figure in Russian associational life, proved unsuccessful at first.<sup>234</sup> Headway was difficult in other provinces, often because the zemstvos were occupied with more pressing concerns or because they regarded aid to soldiers as a second-rate activity in peacetime.<sup>235</sup>

Despite the early frustrations, the Red Cross expanded its membership quickly across the empire. A published report from the Red Cross’s congress of 19 May 1869 listed 40 provincial committees, 26 women’s committees, 40 county boards, around 7,500 members,

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<sup>231</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 1-2.

<sup>232</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 3-4.

<sup>233</sup> Beliaeva, “Rossiiskoe obshchestvo Krasnago Kresta,” 64-65.

<sup>234</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 4-7.

<sup>235</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1, l. 7.

and a capital of approximately 170,000 rubles.<sup>236</sup> By then, the largest and most active provincial committees existed in the empire's principle cities: St. Petersburg, Moscow, Warsaw, Odessa, and Kiev. St. Petersburg raised by far the greatest amount of revenue, taking in 63,313.85 rubles in the year 1868, while Odessa came in second place with 14,194.60 rubles.<sup>237</sup> Thirty-one of the provincial committees existed in European Russia, while peripheral parts of the empire such as the Caucasus had four, Siberia added another four, and Tashkent even formed a committee to aid the forces stationed in Turkestan.<sup>238</sup>

The women's committees played the most active role in fundraising, collecting on average twice the number of rubles as the provincial and county chapters.<sup>239</sup> For example, the Franco-Prussian War prompted a windfall of donations; in 1871, 126 local chapters raised a total of 226,332.44 rubles, but the empire's 29 women's committees raised 80,546 rubles on their own.<sup>240</sup> St. Petersburg and Moscow each had multiple women's committees, while another fourteen provincial cities, ranging in size from Kiev to Tula and Irkutsk, each possessed a single board of this type.<sup>241</sup> In the capital, the women's committees were headed by the elite founders of the society, women such as Baroness Frederiks, Princess E. M. Ol'denburgskaia, Countess E. F. Tizengauzen, Countess E. N. Geiden, and others. Although their members were often well connected and ardent in their work, the women's committees

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<sup>236</sup> For the report, see *Otchet glavnogo upravleniia obshchestva popecheniia o ranenyykh i bol'nykh voynakh, sostoiashchego pod Vysochaishim pokrovitel'stvom Gosudaryni Imperatritsy, za 1868 god* (St. Petersburg: Voennaia tipografiia, 1869), 6.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, 41-42.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>239</sup> *Osnovanie Rossiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, vol. 1, 21.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>241</sup> *Otchet glavnogo upravleniia*, 15-16.

retained a subservient role to the provincial committees in the first draft of the charter. Not until 1873, six years after Filaret died, did the Red Cross's leadership rewrite the charter to permit women to serve with men on the provincial committees. Even after this change, few women elected to dissolve the women's committees and join the provincial committees. By the Russo-Turkish War, less than one quarter of the provincial committees had female members.<sup>242</sup>

Funds for the Red Cross came from two sources. Membership dues from the roughly seven thousand members brought in around fifty thousand rubles per year early on, and this sum grew each year. However, it seemed that many members failed to pay their dues, and this problem worsened as the decade progressed.<sup>243</sup> Large private donations, the second source of revenue, often came from Romanovs and other elites, while military commanders or units themselves made often made smaller donations.<sup>244</sup> Additional income derived from collection boxes placed in churches and public places. During the seven-year period from 1868 to 1875, the St. Petersburg collection points took in over forty-two thousand rubles. Later they followed a British example and began kopeck drives in the countryside that sought a small donation from each member of the village. Viatka Province, which had one of the most active provincial committees, conducted kopeck drives that collected several thousand rubles per year.<sup>245</sup>

The Red Cross's Reserve Fund grew to over half a million rubles by 1876. The Franco-Prussian War and famine-relief campaigns of 1874 seemed to have prompted the

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<sup>242</sup> *Osnovanie Rossiskogo obschestva Krasnogo Kresta*, vol. 1, 19-22.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>244</sup> RGVA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 3.

<sup>245</sup> *Osnovanie Rossiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, vol. 1, 98, 103-5.

greatest interest, if the growth of the endowment is used as a criterion for measuring enthusiasm. Even though the records are incomplete, the following charts exhibit these trends:

**Table 1. Donations to the Main Directorate in St. Petersburg, 1867-1875**

Year	Funds Raised
1867	28,995.02 rubles
1868	37,756.81 rubles
1869	23,833.11 rubles
1870	29,792.21 rubles
1871	132,727.33 rubles
1872	No records
1873	122,130.01 rubles
1874	No records
1875	51,771.93 (incomplete record)
Total for 1867-1875	427,006.42 rubles

*Source: Osnovanie Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta, vol. 1, 109.*

Besides St. Petersburg, the most successful provincial committees at fundraising were those in Warsaw, Moscow, Viatka, Tambov, Kiev, Odessa, Kharkov, Tula, and Vladimir. Yearly donations appear to have been based on the wealth of the province and the zeal of its members. For example, populous St. Petersburg raised 8 kopecks per resident, Odessa raised about 5 kopecks per resident, the Amur region raised more than 3 kopecks per resident, but Warsaw managed only about 1.5 kopecks per resident.<sup>246</sup> This income made the Red Cross a wealthy charity in tsarist Russia, especially because the organization spent little during its first years of peace.

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<sup>246</sup> Ibid., 111.

**Table 2. Main Directorate Expenditures, 1867-1875**

Year	Amount
1867	2,462.51 rubles
1868	4,437.98 rubles
1869	7,181.94 rubles
1870	56,259.45 rubles
1871	91,918.48 rubles
1872	No records
1873	169,555.93 rubles
1874	12,322.35 rubles
1875	41,601.51 rubles
Total	384,739.96 rubles

*Source: Osnovanie Rossiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta, vol. 1, 112.*

Expenditures during the first seven years remained relatively low, with the exception of outlays for relief work during the Franco-Prussian War. Provincial committees, with fewer resources from which to draw, spent far less during this period, but expenditures increased during the 1870s.<sup>247</sup> Most expenses for the society went to publishing reports, paying clerks and guards, manufacturing and placing collection boxes, and preparing examples of bedding and dressings to be sent to the provincial committees.<sup>248</sup> The establishment of a nursing community might have posed a major investment for a provincial or women's committee, but there were very few of these set up during the first decade of the Red Cross's existence. Had Russia found itself at war during this period, the society's endowment would have been far too meager to provide substantive relief for long. Still, when compared to most private charities in tsarist Russia, the Red Cross's endowment seemed impressively large and grew at a significant rate.<sup>249</sup> Organizers hoped that expanding the national relief society's footprint

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<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>248</sup> *Otchet glavnogo upravleniia*, 18.

<sup>249</sup> Adele Lindenmeyr provided a limited view of the sizes and expenditures of Russian charities at the turn of the century. If we use these statistics as a starting point, the Red Cross would be in the top ten percent (and



throughout Russia and broadening its mission to include new types of activities would win more donations in the coming years.

### **Press and Advertising**

From its beginnings, the Red Cross recognized that accountability to the public encouraged frequent donations, and advertising was needed to increase membership. In 1867, Chairman Zelenoi asked several newspapers to publish a newsletter for the society. The editor of *Moskovskie vedomosti*, M. N. Katkov, announced that he would publish all of the society's protocols for 250 rubles per year, and the editors of *Russkie vedomosti* agreed to perform the same task for double the price, but the Main Directorate was not keen on these offers.<sup>250</sup> Rather than outsourcing their publications to newspapers, many members of the Main Directorate thought that they should have their own newsletter. The members of the Moscow Provincial Committee offered to print a bimonthly newsletter, but the Main Directorate did not want this publication to be controlled by the Moscow chapter and refused the bid.<sup>251</sup>

Not until 1870 did the Red Cross began publishing its own journal, *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenykh i bol'nykh voynakh* (Herald of the Aid Society for Wounded and Sick Soldiers). Edited at first by S. V. Maksimov, this journal appeared monthly for its first seven years. After several issues, the Main Directorate replaced Maksimov with Dr. I. V. Bertenson, Pirogov's student and biographer, who edited the newsletter for the next six years. In 1876, the editorship went to A. D. Marsikani, another

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likely far higher) of all Russian charities in terms of capital assets and yearly expenditures. See Lindenmeyr, *Poverty is Not a Vice*, 239.

<sup>250</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1, l. 53.

<sup>251</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1, l. 60.

military doctor. The cost of printing during the first decade ran slightly over a thousand rubles per year, and most of this cost was for paper and ink, since the Second Section of the Imperial Chancellery printed the newsletter for free. To publicize the Red Cross's activities, the board sent issues of *Vestnik* to all provincial chapters, Russian medical societies, governors' offices, zemstvo boards, and peace courts.<sup>252</sup>

The *Vestnik* reported the progress the Red Cross had made and never became professional publication. This distinction surely suited the needs of the autocracy and men running this organization. Copies of the *Vestnik* provided detailed summaries of all of the organization's activities, campaigns, and funds. They included translations of important European works on military sanitation and comprehensive reports on foreign Red Cross societies' projects. What this publication would never become, however, was a trade journal for Russian nurses or Red Cross workers. The editors of the *Vestnik* removed any mention of politics or criticism of the Red Cross. They reprinted summaries of the transcripts from international conferences on warfare and humanitarianism, but this journal did nothing to promote a similar discussion within Russia. The *Vestnik* seems to have been designed to convince Russian donors that their monies were well spent. This publication tells us lots about what the Red Cross did in tsarist Russia, but it provides little clue as to what the participants in this organization thought of their labors.

The Red Cross also sought to raise funds and spread its message by publishing brochures and pamphlets. They produced and sold copies of Zatler's essay "The Fate of the Wounded in War" and von Giubbenet's brochure titled "On the people's participation in

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<sup>252</sup> *Osnovanie Rossiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, vol. 1, 37-38.

aiding wounded and sick soldiers and memoirs from the Crimean campaign”<sup>253</sup> The Viatka provincial committee even drafted a brochure designed for literate peasants.<sup>254</sup> Planners viewed national minorities in the Western borderlands as ideal candidates for membership. A report from 7 October 1874 suggested that the Russian Red Cross should produce written materials in German to solicit donations from non-Orthodox colonists in the Baltics, Volga provinces, and Ukraine. The Protestant population of Russia, this report noted, was “extremely wealthy and industrious,” and involvement of these populations held further importance because they “often live in areas close to the theater of war.” The Main Directorate apportioned over three hundred rubles toward producing German-language booklets and sent copies to Lutheran churches in these areas.<sup>255</sup>

This propaganda worked, convincing local elites, zemstvo members, and even Orthodox clergy to establish provincial chapters. The more difficult task proved transforming enthusiasm into nursing orders, the society’s peacetime goal. During the first decade of its existence this organization struggled to attract medical personnel.

### **Nurses**

In the 1860s, few women in Russia possessed the education and desire to make a career of nursing, especially in dirty hospitals during the mundane periods of peace. But the need for talented nurses was great. Military planners estimated that Russia must be prepared to accommodate eighty thousand wounded and sick soldiers in the case of war. If the Ministry of War’s norm was to assign six nurses to every two hundred patients, then the Red

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<sup>253</sup> *Otchet glavnogo upravleniia*, 32-33; 37-38.

<sup>254</sup> *Osnovanie Rossiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, vol. 1, 36.

<sup>255</sup> RGVA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 19, ll. 135-36; *Osnovanie Rossiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, vol. 1, 36.

Cross needed to have 2,400 nurses at hand, a number that exceeded the total nurses in the Crimean War by tenfold.<sup>256</sup> It would take the Red Cross decades to train this many women, in a large part because the nursing societies insisted that Sisters of Mercy should be elite and they should not be personally remunerated for their labors.

The Red Cross received a break when the Ministry of War granted nurses the right to work in military hospitals on 5 June 1868. As noted earlier, this privilege had been given to Exaltation Society nurses in January 1863, but now the Ministry of War expanded this program to include larger numbers of women in the future. In addition to this endorsement from the Ministry of War, the Main Directorate received a letter from Dr. V. A. Milliot expressing support from the Russian medical community. Milliot promised that Russian civilian doctors would work with the Red Cross to enable it to widen its activities. In response to this positive report, the Main Directorate sent a circular to provincial chapters informing them to begin cooperating with local medical societies.<sup>257</sup> These measures, however, made little headway in attracting medical professionals during the Red Cross's formative years, and the insufficient number of trained nurses and doctors caused planners to fear that they would not fulfill their mission if war broke out.

Nursing societies succeeded in the largest cities only under the management of exceptional patronesses with elite connections. For example, N. B. Shakhovskaia and the Moscow Women's Committee founded the community Assuage My Tears (*Utoli moia pechali*), which had twenty nurses in 1870. Generous donations from Moscow elites enabled the community to establish its own orphanage and a three-hundred-bed hospital in the

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<sup>256</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1, l. 133.

<sup>257</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 77-78.

Lefortovo neighborhood. By 1875, Assuage My Tears had one hundred nurses who worked in Moscow's hospitals and traveled outside the city for special projects.<sup>258</sup>

The second major society established during this decade was St. George Community (*Georgievskaiia obshchina*) in St. Petersburg. Founded by the empress, Princess E. M. Ol'denburgskaia, and Countess E. N. Geiden with the participation of the five St. Petersburg women's committees in 1869, this community drew its first members from the Exaltation Community. S. P. Botkin, one of Russia's most famous physicians, served as the community's head doctor and chief instructor, a position for which he received payment. Other famous medical professionals in the capital, such as Dr. Levkovich and Dr. Bystrov, provided gynecological and pediatric expertise in special cases. The nurses, in accordance with common practice, did not receive salaries for their services at the community's headquarters, but they did get free housing, food, clothing, and small stipends for travel.<sup>259</sup> Additionally, the nurses were permitted to work part-time for pay in private homes. Many patients visited the community from the beginning: Over seventeen thousand visitors sought medical consultations in 1871, and nearly twenty-nine thousand in 1872.<sup>260</sup> Mortality rates among patients hospitalized at the community were high because most patients arrived in rough shape. The number of nurses in this community remained small because, it seems, there were few educated women who wanted this lifestyle; in 1872, the community only had twenty full members, but size did not prevent them from adding feldsher courses in 1872 and an orphanage in 1873. Word of the St. George Society's activities spread beyond the capital,

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<sup>258</sup> "Otchet," *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenykh i bol'nykh voiakh* (May 1871), 3; *Osnovanie Rossiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, vol. 1, 129-30.

<sup>259</sup> "Otchet," *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenykh i bol'nykh voiakh* (April 1871), 4-5.

<sup>260</sup> RGVIA, f., 12651, op. 1, d. 13, l. 41.

since a few women from Kaluga, Tambov, and Tula sought training at its hospital.<sup>261</sup> By the 1880s and 1890s, this society treated tens of thousands of patients per year.<sup>262</sup> The success the nursing societies enjoyed in Russia's largest cities was much more difficult to replicate in the provinces.

A report on a project to found a nursing society in Novgorod illustrates the challenges local elites faced when they tried to establish nursing communities in provincial cities. Novgorod's nursing society celebrated its opening on 17 July 1873 at a ceremony hosted by the provincial governor. Local members of the Red Cross had wanted to establish a nursing community three years prior, but they had failed to entice any candidates to train as nurses. Later, salaries attracted six women to begin the training process. Of Novgorod's six nurse-trainees, four were nobles, one belonged to the clerical class, and one was the daughter of a soldier. Three of the women were in their late thirties, while the younger three were in their earlier twenties, and all were either widowed or unmarried. The provincial committee rented a two-story building near the military and zemstvo hospitals to house the nursing community. The author of this report expressed dismay that it took so long for Novgorod to establish a nursing community, but the upside was that, in the future, the city might use nuns from nearby monasteries, of which Novgorod had several. Female monasteries had to provide nuns with food, clothing, and shelter, so their employment as nurses caused less of a financial commitment to the Red Cross.<sup>263</sup> Small, poorly funded nursing communities were

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<sup>261</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 14, l. 41.

<sup>262</sup> *Osnovanie Rossiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, vol. 1, 134-37. For more, see also the brochure *Istoricheskii ocherk obshchiny dester miloserdiia sv. Georgiia v S.-Peterburge za dvadtsatipiatiletie (1870-1895)* (St. Petersburg: M. Mekushev, 1895). This source is located in RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 654.

<sup>263</sup> "Iz Novgoroda pishut v 'Golos'," *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenykh i bol'nykh voynakh*, (July 1873): 22-23.

the norm (if they existed at all) in provincial Russia during the first decade of the Red Cross's existence.

For most provincial boards, the greatest challenge to establishing a nursing community was locating funding for these projects. Assistance from the Church and zemstvos was almost always a must, but the Church was often reluctant to help the Red Cross, and the state restricted zemstvo budgets. Some Red Cross activists believed that converting monasteries into hospitals and nunneries into nurse training centers presented a tempting way to reintegrate Orthodox monasticism into Russian social life and erase some of the most harmful of Peter I's reforms.<sup>264</sup> In most cases, the Orthodox Church refused to answer outside calls to restructure monasteries. Nunneries, for example, cited rules in their charters that forbade the nuns from fraternizing with men within their walls.<sup>265</sup> In only a few cases did the Orthodox Church allow doctors to train nuns. The Kazan Provincial Committee, for example, initiated a program with the help of the Bogorodichnii Women's Monastery, which agreed to provide five nuns to train as nurses in the local military hospital.<sup>266</sup> The women's community at the Rozhdestvo Bogoroditsa Cathedral in Vologda promised to educate thirty of its members to care for the wounded, and Mother Nansiia, the abbess of the Voznesenskii Monastery in Moscow, committed to training twenty-five Moscow nuns as nurses. These nuns, the program envisioned, would earn one hundred rubles a year working in city's hospitals. In reality, very few of Russia's nurses came from the Orthodox nunneries;

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<sup>264</sup> Peter I "freed" the Russian Orthodox Church from many of its social and charitable functions. His anticlerical measures removed responsibility for these duties from Orthodox monasteries and gave them to newly-formed state institutions. This project enjoyed little to no success because state hospitals, schools, poor houses, and foundling homes were few and far between in eighteenth-century Russia. See: "Rech'," *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenykh i bol'nykh voynakh* (September 1872): 8-9.

<sup>265</sup> *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenykh i bol'nykh voynakh* (November 1872): 12.

<sup>266</sup> *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenykh i bol'nykh voynakh* (February 1872): 6-7.

most nurses were lay members of the quasireligious nursing orders (*obshchiny sester miloserdiia*).

Secular authorities sometimes provided limited assistance in helping to set up nursing orders. Women's committees in Poltava, Viaz'ma, and Podolsk offered stipends to attract candidates, and the zemstvos proposed to house and train the women in their own hospitals. In Kharkov, the Ministry of Education permitted the university to train nurses in its surgical clinic in 1871. In total, the nursing communities produced far too few trained women during the 1870s to satisfy Russia's needs. An official history of the Russian Red Cross blamed shortages of funds as the greatest factor limiting the success of these endeavors.<sup>267</sup> An author in the society's *Vestnik* believed that the shortage of nurses resulted from a lack of press and upper-class women's disdain of peacetime nursing as a dirty trade for the uneducated. Only a small portion of nurses viewed care for the sick "not simply as work, but as the citizen's duty or Christian service."<sup>268</sup> In total, the Russian Red Cross could only count nine fully operating nursing communities with 186 trained nurses by 1875.<sup>269</sup>

To address the shortages of nurses, the Main Directorate created a special committee of doctors in 1869 to discuss how to attract and train female nurses from the upper orders of society. Meeting notes indicate that this committee encountered dissension from one female member of the St. Petersburg Women's Committee, Countess E. N. Geiden, who offered that women from the military caste be recruited as nurses because they were already accustomed to military discipline and habits (*voennyi byt*). Because of these women's low social status,

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<sup>267</sup> *Osnovanie Rossiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, vol. 1, 126.

<sup>268</sup> "Obshchina sester miloserdiia sv. Gerogiia v S. Peterburge," *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenyykh i bol'nykh voynakh* (June 1872): 6.

<sup>269</sup> *Osnovanie Rossiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, vol. 1, 147.



Geiden believed they were ideal for the difficult tasks of hospital work, a prejudice that Florence Nightingale also shared. Geiden suggested that the local committees fund salaries for the nurses, but the Main Directorate members split over whether the provincial committees would be able to raise funds year in and out. She proposed that they construct a special ward in the Second Infantry Hospital, where nurses and students from the Medical-Surgical Academy would undergo practical training.<sup>270</sup> Geiden's suggestions did not sit well with the doctors on the special committee, who believed that paid nurses were unreliable and the ideal nurses were educated, preferably noble, volunteers such as Bakunina in the Crimean War:

According to the opinion of the committee, the thought of training women from the lower estates, such as soldiers' wives, burgher women, and peasants for the most common hospital tasks, with the goal of training these women to be sanitary workers in wartime, presents a significant hardship for the Society, such that the women who belong to these estates are more predisposed to care about their salaries and how they can feed their families.<sup>271</sup>

Soldiers' wives were deemed unreliable because they were likely to follow their husbands' regiments instead of remaining at medical facilities in the rear. Furthermore, the Ministry of War had limited active-duty soldiers' ability to marry by a decree on 17 June 1866.

Therefore, the commission believed, the number of soldiers' wives, which Geiden viewed as talent pool from which to recruit nurses, would disappear quickly.<sup>272</sup>

Service requirements for nurses presented a second vexing problem for the Main Directorate. Organizers hoped that the nursing courses would produce many trained nurses

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<sup>270</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1, ll., 81, 110.

<sup>271</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op., 1, d. 1, ll. 110-11.

<sup>272</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 111-12.

spread throughout the country, but there was no consensus on how to ensure these women performed their duties as nurses. Since nurses were not in the military, the state placed no legal obligation on them to perform wartime service; since the Red Cross was outside the auspices of the Orthodox Church, lay nurses had no religious commitment to fulfill; and, without salaries, there was little incentive besides patriotism to keep women in nursing. This question worried Red Cross officials because the failure to deliver nurses to the army upon the outbreak of hostilities was no way to endear the Ministry of War to the idea of private aid in war. However, as planners pointed out, demanding service in wartime by legal requirement or paying nurses for their services went against the spirit of volunteerism that nation relief organizations supposedly epitomized. N. I. Miller, one member of the Main Directorate, complained that Russia already suffered from too many doctors forced into state service in exchange for free education. These state employees showed little love for the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which they viewed as the autocracy's obstacle to the development of a free medical profession in Russia.<sup>273</sup> The question of salaries for nurses worried advocates who believed that the nurse's calling should be based on selfless patriotism. If nurses demanded and received payment for wartime services, then nursing might develop as a free profession in Russia, and thus it contrasted with the physician's craft, which was tightly controlled by the state, as several doctors argued.<sup>274</sup> In the end, members of the Main Directorate concluded that there was no one way that the society could compel women to serve besides relying on the trust and commitment of the nurses.<sup>275</sup>

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<sup>273</sup> Frieden, *Russian Physicians*, 313-320.

<sup>274</sup> RGVA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1, l. 147.

<sup>275</sup> RGVA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1, l. 150.

Consensus over the curricula of nurses' training courses was easier to reach. Some of the best medical minds in the empire, doctors and professors such as S. P. Botkin and others, set up a standard curriculum for a nursing course in 1875. Graduates of this course received training and a title similar to physician's assistant (*lekarskaia pomoshchnitsa*). Writing to the *Vestnik*, A. P. Val'ter, a military doctor, distinguished between the nurses or Sisters of Mercy in the Red Cross and bedside attendants (*sidelki*). Bedside attendants were needed to comfort the sick and clean the wards, but these were tasks that any women in tsarist Russia could fulfill. Nurses, conversely, possessed an education that enabled them to perform medical procedures and care for the wounded.<sup>276</sup>

Early discussions of training male nurses or Brothers of Mercy (*brat'ia miloserdiia*) failed to win support from the Ministry of War or attract male volunteers. The Main Directorate flirted with the idea of training monks in this capacity, an idea the Orthodox Church ignored, and the Ministry of War viewed male volunteers at the front as unnecessary, because the Great Reforms had increased the number of stretcher bearers to two hundred per division, a number in line with Prussian military norms, the most sophisticated in Europe.<sup>277</sup> In sum, when the Russian Red Cross dispatched medical brigades to intervene in the Balkan wars of the late 1870s, men volunteered as orderlies and agents, but plans to create reserves of male aid workers never got off the ground due to lack of enthusiasm and funds. The difficulty of attracting and retaining talented nurses during peacetime vexed the Red Cross in tsarist Russia up until the outbreak of the First World War.

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<sup>276</sup> A. P. Val'ter, "K voprosu o zhenskoi ukhode za ranenymi," *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenym i bol'nykh voynakh* (January 1873): 5.

<sup>277</sup> *Osnovanie Rossiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, vol. 1, 150.

## **Feldshers and Doctors**

Acquiring the services of feldshers (paramedics) and doctors proved another difficulty for the Red Cross. Russia suffered from shortages of these professionals in the Crimean War, and Miliutin devoted attention to increasing the number of doctors and feldshers in the military medical corps as part of his reforms.<sup>278</sup> At one point, members of the Russian Red Cross discussed hiring 50 surgeons and 120 female feldshers to create a permanent medical staff, but the peacetime costs of paying these workers appeared prohibitive. Moreover, civilian facilities to train feldshers were already overtaxed, so any complement of feldshers would take years to create.<sup>279</sup>

At first, the Main Directorate instructed provincial committees to solicit support from the zemstvos in training or supplying feldshers. Only two provincial committees, Vladimir and Kostroma, convinced the zemstvos to train feldshers for the Red Cross in provincial medical centers.<sup>280</sup> Facing a critical shortage of feldshers, Empress Maria Aleksandrovna and the St. Petersburg Women's Committee founded a feldsher school for nurses in 1872. This course attracted twenty-four students at first, but only seven were women. Over the next three years, 111 students began this course, but only 14 finished, hardly an impressive number. Later in the decade, a few provincial committees and nursing societies established medical courses to train nurses in the feldsher trade. Saratov opened a feldsher school in 1873, and the Mariinskaia Community in Moscow also established a women's feldsher

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<sup>278</sup> Critical attention to the military medical corps began immediately after the Crimean War, and reforms continued throughout the 1860s and 1870s. For brief survey of the changes to command structure of the military medical corps and the enlargement of medical personnel in the ranks, see P. F. Gladkikh and O. A. Kriuchkov, *Ocherki istorii otechestvennoi voennoi meditsiny*, vol. 2, 42-55.

<sup>279</sup> GIM, f. 17, op. 1, d. 481, l. 95.

<sup>280</sup> *Osnovanie Rossiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, vol. 1, 116-17.

course, but shortages of funding and biases against women practicing a traditional male craft prevented this program from taking off in the 1870s. The problem, it seems, was that the Mariinskaia Community housed its female feldsher course in a military feldsher school for men, and conservatives viewed this mixing of the sexes as “a serious obstacle to success in academic affairs.”<sup>281</sup>

To address problems with the women’s feldsher courses, the Main Directorate again asked some of the empire’s best medical minds, men such as S. P. Botkin and I. V. Bertenson, to assess current problems with training women in male feldsher courses. The committee retreated from the ambitious goal of introducing female feldsher courses throughout the empire and focused on building up the programs established by the St. Petersburg Women’s Committee and the Georgievskaiia Community.<sup>282</sup> These professors of medicine devised a comprehensive course for female feldshers that included practical training in surgery, medical procedures, and medicines, as well as abstract scientific subjects such as biology, physics, Latin, and chemistry. Academically ambitious, these courses suffered from poor graduation rates. The number of candidates studying in the St. Petersburg Women’s Committee’s course grew from nineteen in 1873 to sixty-four in 1875, but only fourteen women graduated. Programs sponsored by the Georgievskaiia Society and provincial committees in Vladikavkaz and Saratov attracted fewer candidates and suffered similarly high attrition rates.<sup>283</sup> Desperate for graduates, the Main Directorate decided to draw from its wartime reserves to pay stipends for these women’s education and living expenses.<sup>284</sup>

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<sup>281</sup> Ibid., 117-21.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid., 120-21.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>284</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 19, l. 188.

Despite these measures, the Red Cross enjoyed little progress in training a cohort of feldshers, and aid workers lamented this shortage during the Russo-Turkish War.

If feldshers were costly, doctors were even more difficult to hire. The Main Directorate initially shot down a plan by the Warsaw Provincial Committee to pay stipends to students at the Medical-Surgical Academy in exchange for a term of service after they completed their studies. The Ministry of Internal Affairs already employed a similar project to procure the services of civilian doctors, but, as N. I. Rozov mentioned, the state never recuperated the cost for the educational stipends from the young doctors.<sup>285</sup> If the state found itself unable to make medical education profitable, then a private charity would have little chance of recouping this expense. The state and military likely viewed any attempts by the Red Cross to lure away its doctors with suspicion. Even though the tsarist state had made progress during the Great Reforms in increasing the number of graduates at the empire's medical schools, tsarist Russia lagged behind all European powers in the ratio of physicians to subjects. Indentured to the military or other state ministries, the autocracy resisted letting its physicians leave their posts for service in a wartime aid society during a period of peace.

In 1870s, General M. N. Annenkov, the father of Russian military railroads, conducted a survey of the Red Cross's activities during the first three years of its existence. He noted, "in the case of war, there would be no shortages of monetary and material donations, but the capital collected up to this point would provide benefit without training competent surgeons, feldshers, and nurses beforehand." In view of this shortcoming, Annenkov proposed they decentralize the women's committees and provincial chapters by enabling them to spend up to 90 percent of their donations and membership fees on hiring

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<sup>285</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 131-32.

and training personnel. Autonomy and greater funds, Annenkov hoped, would spark enthusiasm.<sup>286</sup> These recommendations inspired no change in policy, but Annenkov's concern motivated the Main Directorate to petition the government to lend physicians in case of war.

With most civilian doctors employed by the Ministry of Interior during this period, the state controlled the wellspring of medical talent that the Red Cross needed to fulfill its mission. The Main Directorate requested that the state provide the Red Cross with doctors and recognize relief work as part of physicians' mandatory term in state service. In exchange, the Red Cross agreed to grant these doctors free membership and provided some students with stipends for their work. The Ministry of Interior, which had succeeded in raising the number of physicians in its employ during the 1860s and 1870s, turned down both offers with a decree on 13 January 1876. The Main Directorate then solicited volunteers to serve in case of war, but four provincial committees were able to obtain commitments from only eighty-five doctors, and all but nine of these physicians demanded compensation, numbers that were not encouraging for an organization with an expensive mission and few resources.<sup>287</sup>

The quest to attract medical students with stipends did not go smoothly either. P. P. Zablotskii-Desiatovskii devised a plan in 1873 to pay students from the Medical-Surgical Academy or universities 325 rubles per year and cover fees for tuition. In exchange for the stipend, the young doctors committed to working in the Red Cross's nursing schools and barrack hospitals for two years. The doctors also had to promise to return if war broke out

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<sup>286</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1, l. 167.

<sup>287</sup> *Osnovanie Rossiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, vol. 1, 113.

during the next ten-year period. This program failed to gain much support from medical students who felt they could earn higher salaries in state or zemstvo service. The number of medical students that volunteered to work for the nursing communities in St. Petersburg ranged between four to eight students during the first half of the 1870s.<sup>288</sup>

When Russia intervened in the Balkans at the end of the 1870s, the Red Cross hastily contracted civilian and retired military doctors to fill the ranks of its medical detachments, and they succeeded at this task. Patriotic physicians and nurses appeared from the woodwork in wartime, but the Red Cross's limited funds prevented it from creating a permanent staff of medical professionals in peacetime. This deficiency restricted the organization's ability to reach out to the Russian military and population during the first decade.

### **Conclusion**

In 1873, the Main Directorate solicited member N. V. Isakov to conduct a report on the organization's inventories and wartime capacities. A well-known figure in associational life in St. Petersburg, Isakov belonged to Miliutin's circle of reformers and oversaw the reforms of military secondary education. This report found that the Red Cross was woefully unprepared for wartime relief. Isakov noted that the inventories of supplies were inconsistent and did not correspond with the needs of the army: "The committees collected supplies of hospital items in undefined amounts, depending on the irregularity of donations and without any coordination," and "this irregular acquisition of materials was fruitless and should not be allowed." He concluded: "Clearly the system of constant acquisition has not fulfilled the society's various tasks" and "the sums [of capital] that the society possesses are an insignificant sum in comparison with the sums that the state will need for war." With sums of

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<sup>288</sup> Ibid., 114-15.



capital too small for wartime relief, Isakov recommended that they refocus on training nurses and medical personnel. He also believed that the Main Directorate must take a greater role in directing the provincial societies to outfit standardized field hospitals. Lastly, the Red Cross must seek assistance from the zemstvos to subsidize the salaries of nurses during peacetime, a cry for professionalization of nurses.<sup>289</sup> This critique drew attention to the basic problem hindering the Red Cross at the time: Peace encouraged to lethargy. An official history of the Russian Red Cross recorded that nobles and educated individuals in the provinces far too often displayed indifference to the organization's mission or activities: "Yearly reports by these institutions were boring and colorless; a general meeting might attract only five or six of the most punctual members."<sup>290</sup>

But this picture also obfuscates some of the progress the Russian Red Cross made during its first decade. True, the Russian Red Cross enjoyed neither American popularity nor German state support, being conceived in peacetime, but not all of its campaigns during the early 1870s failed to attract attention. War has a tendency to turn indifferent populations toward national aid societies, and even a foreign war excited Russian humanitarians to travel abroad to serve the wounded. Germany's successes in the Franco-Prussian War caused Russians to pay renewed attention to their military and national aid society. Prussian achievements in military sanitation demonstrated to Europe what a well-organized military and society might accomplish if they worked together. Universal conscription enabled Helmuth von Moltke to amass Napoleonic-sized armies more quickly and cheaply than had been previously imagined. None of these lessons were lost on Russia.

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<sup>289</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 19, ll. 68-74.

<sup>290</sup> *Osnovanie Rossiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, vol. 1, 179.

The next chapter discusses how, in the context of renewed conflicts in the 1870s and Dmitrii Miliutin's greatest military reform, the introduction of universal conscription in Russia in 1874, the Red Cross experimented with different missions to win support from the educated society, the masses, and the military. The Red Cross privileged publicity in these endeavors because it believed that the educated public had to see Russia's national relief organization in action to convince tsarist subjects to lend donations and support to this association.

## CHAPTER 4 – THE FRANCO-PRUSSIAN WAR, UNIVERSAL CONSCRIPTION, AND THE RUSSIAN RED CROSS, 1870-1875

The Franco-Prussian War showed Europe how military sanitary services, when properly organized, could drastically reduce losses from infectious diseases, the greatest calamity to armies on campaign prior to the modern era. This conflict also demonstrated the possibilities and limitations of private aid's use in war. France revealed to everyone how not to organize a national aid society, but Prussia's successes did not necessarily come as a result of its excellent Red Cross. Instead, Prussian sanitary achievement was as much the result of military reform as it was the consequence of public fervor for the troops.<sup>291</sup> For Russian observers, however, the Prussians possessed a wartime medical system to emulate, and an integral component of this medical system was organized private aid.<sup>292</sup>

The Franco-Prussian War demonstrated that the French *Société de Secours aux Blessés Militaires des Armées de Terre et de Mer* (hereafter *Société de Secours*) was unprepared for war in 1870. At the beginning of the conflict, the *Société de Secours* committed itself to sending mobile ambulances to the front under the direction of Professor Léon LeFort, a competent medical professional. But LeFort's expertise offended many of the aristocrats who funded the *Société de Secours*, so they ousted him shortly after the war's outbreak. Henceforth, improvisation, poor supply, and aristocratic pretensions undermined this organization's performance in the war. Without adequate instructions on where to

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<sup>291</sup> Hutchinson, *Champions*, 126.

<sup>292</sup> See A. Shmidt, *Frantsuzsko-Germanskaia voina 1870 goda: zamteki po voenno-sanitarnoi chasti* (Warsaw: Tipografiia okruzhnogo shtaba, 1871), x-xix.

deploy, most sanitary brigades went to the wrong places or fell into Prussian hands. France's first experience with private aid might have cursed the project throughout Europe had its adversaries not presented the opposite picture.

Following the precedents from the previous two wars of German unification, the Prussians incorporated private aid societies into wartime sanitation plans. Unlike past conflicts, when German commanders tolerated aid societies operating independently at the front, the Prussian general staff confined these workers to rear facilities in 1870. This change was possible because, prior to the war, the Prussians created the position of surgeon-general (*Generalstabarzt*) in charge of all medical services and separated this service from the army's regular command. Aid societies entered the plans as auxiliaries of the military medical services in the rear, and all private brigades operated under the oversight of a crown-appointed inspector general, who coordinated with the Ministry of War. The Prussian Red Cross in this conflict benefitted from a clear chain of command and state oversight. The Prussians also welcomed foreign assistance from member states of the Geneva Convention.<sup>293</sup>

The Russian contribution to international relief in the Franco-Prussian War was little more than "a drop in the ocean" as Kiev Professor A. P. Val'ter wrote to Russian Red Cross's journal. In terms of Russia's monetary commitment, he was not far from the mark. Donations to the Main Directorate totaled 1,130 rubles for wartime relief.<sup>294</sup> In contrast to the Russians, the British raised more than one million rubles for relief work through penny drives, opened a two-hundred bed hospital in Versailles, and sent nearly 250 surgeons to the

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<sup>293</sup> Hutchinson, *Champions*, 117-21.

<sup>294</sup> *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenyykh i bol'nykh voynakh* (November 1871): 4.

theater of war.<sup>295</sup> But the Russians refused to sit by indifferently as two of Europe's largest powers warred. As a member of the Geneva Convention, the Russian relief organization dispatched a handful of doctors to treat the wounded. When medical observers returned home, they quickly published reports outlining what worked well with the Prussian military medical services and how to apply these lessons to Russia.

The Franco-Prussian War compelled the Russian Red Cross to review its commitment to aiding the wounded and question its relationship with the military and civilian society in the 1870s. If anything, Germany's accomplishments on the battlefields and in the lazarettos convinced the Russian aid society that to exist as a list of names on paper and a series of paltry accounts in state banks hardly prepared the empire for modern warfare. As the 1870s progressed and Europe digested what had happened between Berlin and Paris, the Russian Red Cross expanded its peacetime activities.<sup>296</sup> When a new crisis in the Balkans threatened Europe's security later in the decade, Russia felt confident that it possessed the experience, resources, and license to intervene in a foreign conflict. Additionally, the Geneva Convention's mandate to provide assistance to the wounded in conflicts between member states gave Russian Pan-Slavists a pretext to draw the tsarist empire into a war with the Ottoman Empire in 1877, a process in which humanitarian impulse masked imperial aggression.

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<sup>295</sup> Val'ter, "Pis'mo v redaktsiiu," *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenyykh i bol'nykh voynakh* (January 1871): 2.

<sup>296</sup> "K voprosu o regulirovanii otnoshenii chastnoi pomoshchi k administratsii," *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenyykh i bol'nykh voynakh* (March 1871): 2.

## The Russian Red Cross and the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71

Because Russian doctors volunteered to treat the wounded in the Franco-Prussian War, Red Cross advocates viewed this war as a great opportunity to learn how to mobilize philanthropy for war. In July 1870, the Main Directorate initiated plans for activities in case war broke out between France and Prussia. Acknowledging that its primary purpose was to care for Russia's sick and wounded, the tsarist relief organization pledged to assist the International Committee in case of a war between Geneva Convention signatories and set up a special committee to oversee aid delivery to Basel. A. A. Zelenoi, the aid society's chairman, petitioned Pirogov to serve as the Russian representative in Basel. Should Pirogov refuse this assignment, Zelenoi named Professor von Giubbenet the alternative.<sup>297</sup>

Pirogov initially declined the Red Cross's request, so the Main Directorate budgeted 26,375 rubles for von Giubbenet's team of twenty-three surgeons to operate in the theater of war for three months.<sup>298</sup> The first sixteen members of this group traveled to Germany in August, but Prussian military authorities interfered with the mission so much that von Giubbenet wrote to St. Petersburg at the end of the month requesting they send no more physicians.<sup>299</sup> In total, the Russians dispatched thirty doctors and sixteen transports of supplies to France and Prussia between 15 August 1870 and 15 February 1871. The total cost of the Russian effort came to 54,177 rubles, a small commitment compared to those of European rivals.<sup>300</sup>

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<sup>297</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 202-4.

<sup>298</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1, 1, 208.

<sup>299</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 219-20.

<sup>300</sup> *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenyykh i bol'nykh voynakh* (May 1871): 4; Idem., (July 1871): 7; *Rossiskoe Obshchestvo Krasnogo Kresta sostoiashchee pod Avgusteishim pokrovitel'stvom ee imperatorskago*

Prussian military authorities greeted foreign doctors with a “cold, even repulsive reception,” demanding that foreign volunteers undergo a two-week probationary period before being assigned to a hospital in the rear.<sup>301</sup> The Russians sent their most talented surgeons. Most were Baltic Germans who trained in the universities of Dorput and Berlin, but the Prussians deigned their Eastern neighbors were little more than “lazaretto tourists.”<sup>302</sup> A few Russian surgeons, such as Doctors Morits and Marsikani, found independent positions in lazarettos because they had personal connections with their former German mentors, but most felt the Prussians refused to recognize their guests’ talents. And the Prussian authorities gave other private aid groups, such as the Johanites, privileged appointments because they were German, even though the Geneva Convention supposedly lent foreign workers equal status in war zones.<sup>303</sup> Inconsistent policies and ethnic preference irked the surgeons from the East.<sup>304</sup>

By September 1871, Pirogov had changed his mind and accepted the invitation to conduct an official report on private aid facilities in Germany. Elena Pavlovna acquired letters from Queen Augusta of Prussia granting Pirogov and his assistant, I. V. Bertenson, permission to conduct the survey. When these two arrived in Berlin, they met bureaucratic difficulties in obtaining Red Cross armbands, and it took a personal visit to Queen Augusta to

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*velichestva gosudaryni imperatritsy Marii Feodorovny: Ocherk vozniknoveniia i deiatel'nosti Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta* (St. Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1913), 32.

<sup>301</sup> “Zametki o deiatel'nosti russkikh vrachei za granitse, vo vremia Franko-prusskoi voiny 1870 g.,” *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenykh i bol'nykh voynakh* (February 1871): 7.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*, 7; “Zapiska,” *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenykh i bol'nykh voynakh* (May 1871): 8.

<sup>304</sup> “Zametki,” *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenykh i bol'nykh voynakh* (February 1871): 9-10.

obtain the necessary permissions from the Ministry of War.<sup>305</sup> During the next five weeks, Pirogov and Bertenson visited up to seventy Prussian medical facilities.

Pirogov drew several important conclusions from this war, all of which shaped the discussions on private aid's purpose in Russia in the 1870s. Since Russia was burdened by lower levels of material and cultural development than its Western neighbors, Pirogov argued that the Red Cross had to be much more than a charity to benefit wounded soldiers. Coupling the Red Cross's wartime mission to the intelligentsia's calling to better Russia, he dreamed this organization would treat peasants in peacetime and encourage educated society to improve the empire's welfare. Inspired by Prussian efforts in peacetime to prepare for war, Pirogov questioned how similar activities might reshape the relationship between state and society in Russia.

Pirogov believed the argument that modern warfare harkened a new type of civilization that required private aid. He reiterated how the Russians invented wartime private aid during the Crimean War, although Florence Nightingale's project, while "not as organized as ours," more effectively reduced mortality in British camps. Public opinion in Britain, Pirogov surmised, provided the secret to Nightingale's success, a force that remains "unthinkable" in Russia, and which inspires "fervent participation in public affairs." The key to enabling a national relief organization to flourish in Russia, he ascertained, was not the German model, by which elites at court forced it through the "administrative stronghold." Instead, these organizations should act in peace and war according to their own initiative,

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<sup>305</sup> N. I. Pirogov, *Otchet o poseshchenii voenno-sanitarnykh uchrezhdenii v Germanii, Lateringii i El'zase v 1870 godu, predstavlennyi akademikom N. I. Nirogovym Obshchestvu popecheniia o bol'nykh i ranenyykh voynakh, sostoiashchemu pod pokrovitel'stvom Ee Imperatorskogo Velichestva Gosudaryni Imperatritsy* (St. Petersburg: Obshchestvo popecheniia o bol'nykh i ranenyykh voynakh, 1871), 1-2.



since “needless dependence kills private aid at the first moment.”<sup>306</sup> The Russian Red Cross took steps to follow this advice in the 1870s. Even though many of its members were statesmen and the Main Directorate in St. Petersburg exercised considerable control over local chapters’ self-initiative, the Russian Red Cross never intended to be a state agency, and this separation from the government, Pirogov believed, gave this organization an opportunity to expand its operations to transform Russian health care.

Following the Prussian example, Pirogov stressed the need to prepare for war in peacetime. He believed “our societies should . . . appear on the battlefield with full complements—lazarettos, doctors, nurses, and orderlies (*sanitars*)—or not at all.” Only independent sanitary brigades served their function without burdening the military. To outfit and train these brigades, the Main Directorate needed money, and to raise these funds they needed to attract participation from all levels of Russian society. Pirogov lamented that he had heard that in one province members of the Red Cross tasked the zemstvo police with collecting donations. When the police seek donations, they give this organization a “compulsory character” (*obiazatel’nyi kharakter*).<sup>307</sup> Pirogov wanted the Red Cross to better Russia by expanding the opportunities for private initiative, an enterprise that would encourage the educated classes to work with the masses on common projects, and the police were not the instrument to attract peasants’ support for a charitable association led by elites. Most of all, this society must advertise its mission by conducting peacetime public health campaigns.

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<sup>306</sup> Ibid., 9-10, 20, 27.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid., 141-42.

In the report, Pirogov discussed at length the use of temporary hospitals or lazarettos, an innovation he experimented with in the Crimean War. Burdened by its size, muddy roads, northern climate, and few doctors, Russia could overcome these physical handicaps by building temporary hospitals in tents, wattle huts, or wooden barracks throughout the country because of the lower cost and superior sanitary qualities this type of facility presented.<sup>308</sup> Temporary structures could be torn down or disposed of after short periods of time to prevent the lingering presence of miasmas. And, unlike Westerners, Russians had no problem with tents due to their nomadic character.<sup>309</sup> Russia may have been backward, but the low standards of its peasants meant no one expected material comforts in a hospital. “You do not make palaces for the ill when the healthy live in shacks,” he professed.<sup>310</sup>

Pirogov hoped that educated society, the state, and zemstvos would support his project to spread lazarettos throughout the countryside to treat the sick and train nurses. This niche in Russian health care would ensure the Red Cross’s longevity and also garner increased membership and donations. Additionally, by opening Russian health care to private initiative, Pirogov hoped to expand the opportunities for associational life in Russia. He concluded that the common Russian peasant or burgher needed to see the Red Cross in action before he would support it. The “American example” provided a model to emulate because the USSC refashioned itself following the Civil War to participate in disaster relief, public health education, and civilian medical services. For Pirogov, the Russians should assume that the needed donations would appear in wartime so long as tsarist subjects knew of the Red

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<sup>308</sup> Pirogov introduced this idea in a letter to the Main Directorate in September 1870. See RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 222-27.

<sup>309</sup> Pirogov, *Otchet*, 39-40.

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

Cross and its capabilities. Rather than hoarding monies and materials in peacetime, Red Cross planners must direct immediate activities to satisfying “the vital needs of the masses.”<sup>311</sup> These ideas did not fall on deaf ears, and Russian Red Cross became much more willing to experiment with new types of activities after 1871.

Other witnesses to the Franco-Prussian War reached similar conclusions. Von Giubbenet agreed that wartime relief could not work without local initiative and that the Prussian military’s control of private aid societies stifled the development of civil society. He believed, in Russia, where the social conditions were not favorable because the people had little influence on the state, the Ministry of War needed to create these organizations, which the population would then fill. However, too much state interference created a paradox for Russia: “In order to awaken overall trust in civil society (*grazhdanskoe obshchestvo*), our aid societies should eliminate any official or bureaucratic characteristics.” How was the state to create a national relief organization and then hand over the reins to private individuals to manage? Von Giubbenet did not proffer an answer. He knew the Russian organization lacked popular support since the Main Directorate had sent little materials to France and Prussia, but he believed an aid society supported by all segments (*sloi*) of the population was not out of reach. The only way for this organization to prosper was if it were decentralized and independent from the state, he remarked.<sup>312</sup>

The Russian Red Cross also commissioned M. S. Sabinina and M. P. Frederiks, two nurses who had served in the Crimean War, to inspect the Germans’ private facilities in action. The resulting survey emphasized that both sexes were needed to optimize medical

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<sup>311</sup> Ibid., 144-48.

<sup>312</sup> Kh. Ia. fon Giubbenet, *Franko-Germanskaia voina 1870-1871 g. i russkaia mezhdunarodnaiai pomoshch’ ranenym i bol’nym voenam* (Kiev: I. A. Davidenko, 1871), 86, 96-97.

care in modern war. In Prussia, Sabinina stressed, men and women worked together to collect supplies and donations, to maintain lazarettos and conduct evacuations, and to look after the moral wellbeing of soldiers, but each sex had tasks that were more specific to its capabilities. Men served as doctors, managers, bookkeepers, guards, and orderlies, while women's talents best suited them to work as patronesses, fundraisers, seamstresses, and nurses. For Sabinina, the Prussian example undermined Filaret's prohibition of the sexes intermingling in the Russian Red Cross.

She likewise emphasized that the Prussians prepared for war in peacetime. The Germans established a beneficial legal relationship between the military and the aid societies, they trained women in peacetime sanitary courses, and they kept their skills honed with peacetime disaster relief. These activities have enormously expanded the size and endowment of these societies, and, despite protests that disasters dry up funds marked for wounded soldiers, the Prussian aid societies "remain convinced that aid to the people is aid to the army, since all in Prussia without an exception can be called on to defend the fatherland." Ultimately, since 1866, the German relief societies, Sabinina emphasized, had done much to provide an outlet for female talent: "This new field, which fully satisfies the mental and spiritual strengths of women, delivers them from colorless and useless existences, and finds in them diligent agents, sufficiently prepared to direct lazarettos and care for the wounded in wartime."<sup>313</sup>

To European general staffs, the Franco-Prussian War demonstrated the efficiency of universal conscription and the speed of railroad deployments, a military structure and a mobilization plan that escalated and accelerated warfare. To social reformers, this conflict

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<sup>313</sup> M. S. Sabinina, *Putevye zametki dvukh sester Krasnogo Kresta vo vremia poezdki za granitsu osen'iu 1870 g.* (St. Petersburg: Obshchestvennaia pol'za, 1871), 19-20, 133, 136.

revealed that modern warfare required the mobilization of large segments of the civilian population. Russian observers recognized that they needed to expand the Red Cross's capabilities and resources by engaging educated society with peacetime campaigns and soliciting help from the Ministry of War for instructions on how best to serve in case of war. In the years following the Franco-Prussian War, the Russian Red Cross embarked on new campaigns designed to draw more supporters toward the organization and its missions. However, overtures to the Ministry of War for greater coordination and assistance fell on deaf ears prior to the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78.

### **Postwar Reforms of the Russian Red Cross**

The founders of the Russian Red Cross included no war plans in the organization's founding charter, and this question remained unresolved in the years following 1867. The Main Directorate solicited input on this question from the provincial committees, and eight submitted proposals to St. Petersburg for review. In the spring of 1870, the Main Directorate discussed these findings and presented summaries to the Ministry of War. Miliutin responded that any policies needed to be written with the Ministry of War's participation, so he named General M. N. Annenkov and several members of the military's Legal Committee to head this project. This group's work came to a sudden halt when France declared war on Prussia and General Annenkov, the military attaché to Prussia, departed for the front.<sup>314</sup>

Once initial reports from Prussia reached St. Petersburg in December 1870, the Main Directorate created another special committee with the Ministry of War to revise the society's charter. This time Miliutin added several military doctors to the group, a few of whom had volunteered in Prussia. Negotiations between the military planners and the Red

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<sup>314</sup> *Osnovanie Rossiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, vol. 1, 29-30.

Cross broke down over Miliutin's demands that all private aid must be subordinate to generals and army medical inspectors, a policy that came directly from Prussia. The Minister of War also insisted that the Red Cross's monies and materials be placed at the disposal of army commanders. These demands infringed on the Red Cross's freedom to act independently, an original component of Dunant's vision for private aid in war, a right guaranteed in the Russian organization's 1867 charter, and necessary component of Pirogov's vision for the aid society.<sup>315</sup>

Recent experience convinced some advocates of private aid that civilian medical staff needed unfettered access to battlefields because, in France, the wounded remained where they had fallen for up to four days before stretcher bearers reached them.<sup>316</sup> And the Red Cross's resources were private property, not plunder for the military's taking.<sup>317</sup> Men such as Pirogov had seen the way the Russian army treated its wounded during the Crimean War and expressed little faith that commanders would use privately-raised funds for their intended purpose. A. D. Bashmakov, another supporter of private aid, argued that too much state restriction would "depopularize (*depouliarizirovat*)" this organization.<sup>318</sup> Still, Miliutin remained unbending: War plans must follow the Prussian example, by which, all private aid was confined to the rear and under the army's control. The Russians failed to resolve this debate during the 1870s, and it affected relations between the military and the Red Cross during the Russo-Turkish War.

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<sup>315</sup> See Articles 79 and 81 of the Russian Aid Society's 1867 charter. *Ibid.*, 30-31.

<sup>316</sup> "Otkrytoe pis'mo," *Vestnik obshchestva popечeniia o ranenikh i bol'nykh voynakh* (January 1875): 3.

<sup>317</sup> *Osnovanie Rossiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, vol. 1, 31.

<sup>318</sup> "Zapiska, chitannaia glavnoupolnomochennym obshchestva A. D. Basmakovym, v zasedanii glavnago upravleniia 12 apreliia, *Vestnik obshchestva popечeniia o ranenikh i bol'nykh voynakh* (July 1871): 8.

To improve the internal function of the Red Cross and accelerate its growth, the Main Directorate held a congress in 1872. Prior to this meeting, planners invited feedback from all provincial committees and women's committees; in total, fourteen provincial boards, two women's committees, and Frederiks and Sabinina submitted suggestions to the committee. These responses called on the Main Directorate to adopt many of the recommendations the Russian observers to the Franco-Prussian War published in their reports. At same time that the Ministry of War demanded the relief organization become more regimented and formalized like the Prussian organization, the rank-and-file sought to take a page from Pirogov's account and encourage self-initiative within the local chapters.

The most significant of these concerns centered on the sex divisions within the Red Cross. The Astrakhan committee asked that the organization cast away its strict division of sexes in its managing bodies. Metropolitan Filaret had insisted on these divisions when the original charter was drafted in spring 1867, but he perished shortly thereafter. With the metropolitan dead and buried, it seemed reasonable for Astrakhan's chapter to point out that the women's committees felt "superfluous or at best nominal." Astrakhan's proposal suggested that women be allowed to join provincial committees and men be allowed to join the women's committees. This change still enabled the provincial committees to "assign women to those activities which they were better able, such as forming nursing communities or preparing stores of clothing and dressings."<sup>319</sup> Poltava's chapter expressed similar discontent with the divisions between the sexes. They disliked the policy that enabled any male member of the provincial committees to attend sessions of the Main Directorate but permitted only one female representative from the women's committees to attend these

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<sup>319</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 11, l. 22.

sessions. The solution, they insisted, was to eliminate any references to gender or women's committees in the charter.<sup>320</sup>

Another group of concerns centered on the relationship between the provincial committees and the Main Directorate. Provincial members disliked how they had to solicit permission from St. Petersburg for any local initiative. Branch chapters, particularly from the empire's borderlands, wished to conduct aid work as they saw fit. For example, the Perm chapter decreed that the Main Directorate's habit of reassigning provincial boards' capital, property, and personnel violated the "independence of provincial committees to dispose of their resources" as they wished. The Main Directorate, they insisted, should only interfere with local organs in the case of war of dire necessity.<sup>321</sup> Ultimately, much of the provincial chapters' concerns involved money. Provincial committees final demand insisted on seeing detailed publications of how the Main Directorate divulged the funds in its care, especially because local organs raised much of this capital.<sup>322</sup>

The Main Directorate discussed these proposals and conceded to three it viewed as the most important. First, it rewrote the charter to make women equal to men in the provincial committees and enabled men to join the women's committees. It gave provincial chapters greater freedoms to spend their funds on local projects and prepare for war as they saw fit. And it revised the charter to permit local boards to conduct peacetime relief so long as they received permission from St. Petersburg before spending their wartime capital on

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<sup>320</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 11, l. 36.

<sup>321</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 11, l. 36.

<sup>322</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 11, l. 37.



peacetime projects.<sup>323</sup> The additions to the charter were finished by 19 November 1872, and the emperor confirmed the new charter on 9 February 1873.<sup>324</sup>

These reforms in the Red Cross's charter opened the door to peacetime relief work, but they did not encourage more women to take on leadership positions in the organization. The governing bodies of the Russian Red Cross always remained a male preserve. Still, St. Petersburg's loosening of controls enabled local committees to experiment with different types of initiatives designed to promote public welfare and win hearts, minds, and pocketbooks for the Red Cross.

### **Temporary Hospitals**

The Red Cross tried to attract support during peacetime by developing temporary hospitals and mobile lazarettos to treat peasants. Discussions at the society's 1872 congress in Moscow emphasized the need to transform Russia by improving access to medicine in provincial towns and villages. For members of this congress, the shortage of state-run medical facilities and cold attitude bureaucrats took toward patients undermined Russian health care. By 1870, the congress's transcript estimated, only two or three million Russians (out of a population of nearly eighty million) sought out doctors for medical care. The rest of the population relied on village quacks and spiritual healers. Consequently, the congress lamented, Russian mortality rates were shamefully high.<sup>325</sup>

Provincial clinics, managed by the Red Cross, provided one means for improving the peasantry's access to health care. Since this organization drew its membership and funding

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<sup>323</sup> RGVIA, f., 12651, op., 1, d. 11, ll. 92, 140.

<sup>324</sup> PSZ 48 (1873), no. 51874: 215-23.

<sup>325</sup> RGVIA, f.12651, op. 1, d. 14, 156.

from private sources, Pirogov and others hoped temporary hospitals would serve a dual purpose: sites for healing the sick and mending Russia's fractured relationship between state and society. With the Zemstvo Statute of 1864 only six years old, much of provincial Russia lacked any kind of medical facility, and barracks were cheap and easy to construct.<sup>326</sup> Furthermore, these facilities connected provincial government with the local elites, because provincial governors, landowners, zemstvos, clergymen, medical professionals, philanthropic societies, and common subjects all had a role to play in the clinic's upkeep.<sup>327</sup>

Early designs for the lazarettos came in two types: permanent shelters that could be winterized and operate year-round and mobile clinics based in tents. Members of the St. Petersburg women's committees funded the first prototypes for these projects. After collecting blueprints of similar barracks from the American Civil War and the Franco-Prussian War, Empress Maria Aleksandrovna established the St. Petersburg Women's Lazaretto Committee in October 1870 to create prototypes for Russia. This special committee included Sabinina, Frederiks, Pirogov, and I. V. Bertenson, all key figures in the Red Cross. The first project constructed four barracks on land near a state hospital in Gatchina, a suburb of St. Petersburg, in December 1871. These designs were made of wood and cement, and varied slightly by size, cost, and whether they were winterized or not.<sup>328</sup> I. V. Bertenson

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<sup>326</sup> The tsarist regime created the zemstvos, local governing boards, in 1864. One of their major tasks was providing health care in rural Russia, and they did this by constructing hospitals and hiring doctors. In 1870, the effectiveness of zemstvo medicine was severely limited by budgetary constraints and shortages of doctors. See Samuel C. Ramer, "The Zemstvo and Public Health," in *The Zemstvo in Russia: An Experiment in Local Self-Government*, eds. Terrence Emmons and Wayne S. Vucinich (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 279-314.

<sup>327</sup> "K voprosu: priznaetsia li poleznym i prakticheskimi udoboispolnym ustroistvo pri mestnykh upravleniakh i komitetakh Obshchestva 'kadrovyykh' ili obratsovykh lazaretov, s pomoshch' zemstvo, gorodskikh obshchestv, meditsinskikh uchrezhdenii i chastnoi blagotvoritel'nosti," *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenyykh i bol'nykh voynakh* (June 1872): 7.

<sup>328</sup> *Osnovanie Rossiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, vol. 1, 156-59.

penned an academic study on these facilities in 1874, which argued they met all of the organizers' goals: The barracks were sanitary, warm, well ventilated, and cheap. Records from 1872 and 1873 showed a decrease in the fatality rate of typhus patients when they were moved from the main, brick hospital building into the wooden barracks. Also, patients in the wooden structures suffered fewer cases of gangrene or other infections after surgery.<sup>329</sup> In May 1872, the St. Petersburg Women's Lazaretto Committee reported to the Main Directorate that it had established a school to train feldshers in a house near the summer barracks.<sup>330</sup>

With Pirogov and Bertenson's stamp of approval, the most active provincial committees began to construct barracks. In early 1872, the Odessa Provincial Committee requested permission to use ten thousand rubles from its wartime reserve fund to construct barracks, and the Main Directorate approved the request.<sup>331</sup> Also in this same year the Simbirsk Provincial Committee established a twelve-person mobile lazaretto. This facility traveled around the province during the summer treating peasants that lived far from zemstvo hospitals or clinics. The mobile clinic must have been useful because the Simbirsk Zemstvo helped subsidize its costs and the Main Directorate asked for reports to see how the facility could be reproduced elsewhere.<sup>332</sup> The Kiev Women's Committee worked with the city дума to construct two twenty-bed barracks. Saratov set up a similar facility that by 1875 treated

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<sup>329</sup> I. V. Bertenson, *Baraki S. Peterburgskogo damskogo lazaretnogo komiteta obshchestva popecheniia o ranenykh i bol'nykh voynakh, sostoiaushchego pod vysochaishim pokrovitel'stvom Ee Imperatorskogo Velichestva: Pervyi otchet za 1872 i 1873 gody* (St. Petersburg: Iu. A. Bokram, 1874), vi-viii.

<sup>330</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 246-48.

<sup>331</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 334-35.

<sup>332</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 371-72.

over eleven thousand ambulatory patients.<sup>333</sup> These public projects helped increase the Red Cross's membership in the provinces. For example, the Saratov Committee increased in size from 82 to 137 persons from 1871 to 1875 and earned support from the city dumas and zemstvos. Pirogov's prediction seemed to be coming true in that temporary medical facilities would draw greater support to the Red Cross.

The Main Directorate commissioned a study to determine how to use these barracks in war, which concluded that "people's wards" were excellent for war because of their inexpensive costs, ease to set up, and the fact they could be arranged along railroad lines.<sup>334</sup> During a prolonged conflict, the managers of the shelters would report to the military on the status of the patients and the number of free beds in each facility. The military governors in each province, in turn, would appoint officers to keep track of wounded soldiers and ensure they did not run off. The authors of this report stressed that "people's shelters must operate independently, and not be burdened by any kind of formalities in arranging or accommodating the wounded, who might be housed in homes, barracks, peasants' huts, tents, wattle shacks (depending on the year), so long as they observed adequate medical and hygienic conditions."<sup>335</sup>

During the 1870s, the Red Cross attempted experiments such as this one with limited success.<sup>336</sup> Projects to set up temporary or mobile clinics or wards show that the Russian Red Cross had come to view public health initiatives as a means of expanding membership and

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<sup>333</sup> *Osnovanie Rossiiskogo obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, vol. 1, 170.

<sup>334</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 14, l. 158.

<sup>335</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1, l. 265.

<sup>336</sup> An attempt to outfit a mobile lazaretto in Viatka Province failed in the summer of 1875 because the doctors grew tired of roaming the countryside. See *Osnovanie Rossiskogo obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, vol. 1, 175-76.

preparing for war, but budgets and membership rolls experienced little boon from these initiatives. Still, in 1877, when the empire went to war with the Ottomans, the Red Cross put this program to use and set up temporary hospitals along railroad lines going from Kishinev to Moscow.

### **Peacetime Disaster Relief**

Timely aid to civilians suffering from the consequences of natural disasters proved to be a far more successful method for winning supporters of the Red Cross. Prussia was the first nation to use disaster relief activities as a method for preparing aid personnel for war, and the American Red Cross's primary activity during the nineteenth century was assistance to communities ravaged by floods, storms, earthquakes, and fires. The Russians expressed initial reservations to this form of action because it appeared to be a tall commitment in large and underdeveloped empire, but the importance of advertising for the Red Cross opened the door to new activities in the 1870s. Despite fears from the pro-military faction in the Main Directorate, which claimed peacetime work would produce a perpetual drain on resources, an official history emphasized that disaster relief turned out to be relatively inexpensive and helped expand the organization's chapters in new areas and increase its membership.<sup>337</sup>

Although the sources fail to mention the Russian Red Cross leadership's intentions, the first attempt at disaster relief was probably a calculated experiment. On 16 January 1872 an earthquake destroyed the Caucasian town of Shemakhi. The Red Cross likely viewed Shemakhi as an ideal opportunity for intervention because the campaign would be visible and the costs limited. When news of the disaster soon St. Petersburg, the Main Directorate turned

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<sup>337</sup> Ibid., 272.

to provincial committees with instructions to collect donations and dispatched an agent to Shemakhi with twenty-two thousand rubles from the Romanovs' personal fortune to spend on relief.<sup>338</sup> Without precedent for this type of work, the agent, S. I. Kreslovskii, erred in distributing the cash appropriately. The Governor of Baku intervened by creating a commission made up of the head of the county (*uezd*), the justice of the peace, the inspector of schools, and respectable individuals from the Russian, Armenian, and Muslim communities to oversee the distribution of funds. By the time the relief campaign ended, the Red Cross had raised an additional 27,628 rubles for the victims in Shemakhi plus the original donations from the Romanovs. These funds provided medical care for 246 families and seed money to rebuild 419 homes and repair another 397 that were damaged.<sup>339</sup> Believing this campaign enjoyed success, the Red Cross attempted a more ambitious project soon afterward.

Beginning in 1869, yearly droughts struck the lower Volga provinces. For the first three years, the peasants of Samara managed on grain stores and assistance from the zemstvo, but by 1872 the zemstvo had exhausted its resources and petitioned the Ministry of Internal Affairs for six hundred thousand rubles.<sup>340</sup> The following year drought returned, and even though the Red Cross's charter contained no specific provision for famine relief, the Governor of Samara instructed the Samara Provincial Committee and Women's Committee to use 2,600 rubles previously earmarked for a nursing community to purchase food for the

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<sup>338</sup> *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenikh i bol'nykh voiakh* (February 1872): 8.

<sup>339</sup> *Osnovanie Rossiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, vol. 1, 53-54.

<sup>340</sup> "Otchet o deiatel'nosti Samarskago damskago komiteta Obshchestva popecheniia o ranenikh i bol'nykh voiakh po vosposobleniiu postradavshemu ot neurozhaia naseleniiu samarskoi gubernii," *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenikh i bol'nykh voiakh* (May 1875): 7.

peasants.<sup>341</sup> The local chapter justified this action as corresponding with the “Evangelical goals” of the society’s mission and to strengthen its bond with the people.<sup>342</sup> Word of this activity reached the Main Directorate, and the empress interjected that even though the charter had not foreseen this type of work, the Samara chapters should continue these efforts.<sup>343</sup>

To further endorse the project, the Main Directorate solicited donations to send food relief to Samara in the press and instructed neighboring provincial committees to assist with the relief efforts. Committees in Orenburg, Ufa, Kherson, Ekaterinoslav, and Bessarabia claimed they could not send materials to Samara because they needed to spend it on their own needy, suffering from the same droughts.<sup>344</sup> Some of the largest donations came from provincial committees in Viatka, Novgorod, and Saratov, all provinces where the Red Cross had established temporary hospitals. The Main Directorate named Count V. P. Orlov-Davydov as its agent and dispatched him to Samara to oversee relief work. By 1 June, Orlov-Davydov announced that the Samara Women’s Committee had fed up to ninety thousand souls.<sup>345</sup> Later reports revealed the Red Cross itself had raised nearly 500,000 rubles and fed more than 130,000 individuals.<sup>346</sup> Much of these funds came from the Main Directorate, but they also raised significant funds from the press and donations from private individuals and

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<sup>341</sup> “Otchet o deiatel’nosti Samarskago damskago komiteta Obshchestva popecheniia o ranenikh i bol’nykh voynakh,” *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenikh i bol’nykh voynakh* (February 1874): 12.

<sup>342</sup> *Osnovanie Rossiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, vol. 1, 246-47.

<sup>343</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 19, ll. 16-17.

<sup>344</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 19, l. 9.

<sup>345</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 19, l. 29.

<sup>346</sup> *Osnovanie Rossiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, vol. 1, 250-51.

charitable organizations.<sup>347</sup> The Main Directorate cited these donations, rather tangentially, as evidence that Russian society was prepared to provide mass support for national relief in wartime.<sup>348</sup> The society's newsletter confidently proclaimed, "These women's initiative gives us certainty that we will find help and compassion for our sick and wounded soldiers in the rear."<sup>349</sup>

During the campaign in Samara, the zemstvo distributed grains and fodder to impoverished peasants to replenish the region's agricultural production; alongside these efforts the Red Cross distributed food directly to the afflicted, giving preference to children, families without a male worker, and the elderly.<sup>350</sup> Orlov-Davydov found the initial relief system, set up by the women's committee, disorganized and suffering from "shortages of human intermediaries," which gave it a "dry, impersonal—even bureaucratic—character, removed from any sympathy for the impoverished." This system of relief failed to provide "moral support that encouraged and inspired [in the peasants] awareness of the necessity to try to prevent similar misfortunes in the future with their own efforts."<sup>351</sup> To overcome these shortcomings and making use of his mandate from the autocracy to get the campaign on track, Orlov-Davydov restructured relief work according to a hierarchical system that included both volunteers from the Red Cross and local government officials such as justices

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<sup>347</sup> "Otchet o deiatel'nosti Samarskago damskago komiteta Obshchestva popecheniia o ranenikh i bol'nykh voynakh po vosposobleniiu postradavshemu ot neurozhaia naseleniiu samarskoi gubernii," *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenikh i bol'nykh voynakh* (June 1875): 32-33.

<sup>348</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 19, ll. 80-81; 184-85.

<sup>349</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 19, ll. 303-4.

<sup>350</sup> "Otchet o deiatel'nosti Samarskago damskago komiteta," *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenikh i bol'nykh voynakh* *Vestnik* (February 1874): 12; *Osnovanie Rossiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, vol. 1, 250.

<sup>351</sup> "Otchet o deiatel'nosti Samarskago damskago komiteta," *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenikh i bol'nykh voynakh* (May 1875): 12.



of the peace. Relief workers fixed rations at one pood of grain per person, per month. At some point the governor of Samara attempted to alter these rations, and members of the local women's committee responded with complaints to Empress Maria Aleksandrovna. The empress settled this dispute by having Minister of Internal Affairs A. E. Timashev order the governor of Samara to give the women's committee the independence to determine the size and distribution of aid.<sup>352</sup> Trips around the province convinced Orlov-Davydov that shortages of livestock posed a serious threat, so he purchased over six hundred horses to distribute to the poorest families.<sup>353</sup>

When dividing tasks with the zemstvo, the Red Cross preferred the more public duty of providing food and material relief instead of the zemstvo's grain loans to peasants to restart planting. Over the next four decades, the Russian Red Cross played some role, large or small, in all of the empire's crop failures and famines. With smaller financial resources than the state, but a body of volunteers ready for when famine struck, the Red Cross often set up canteens in the villages and dispatched sanitary brigades to areas affected by epidemics. The Ministry of Internal Affairs and zemstvos more often concerned themselves with rebuilding agriculture through grants of seed and fodder to farmers and incentives for improving farming practices.

The year 1875 saw the Red Cross dispatch relief to several towns stricken by fires. On 25 May a fire destroyed the town of Morshansk in Tambov Province. Soon after Empress Maria Aleksandrovna voiced wishes to the Minister of Internal Affairs and General A. K. Baumgarten that the Red Cross send help. The Main Directorate then informed the Tambov

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<sup>352</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 13, ll. 86-87.

<sup>353</sup> "Otchet o deiatel'nosti Samarskago damskago komiteta," *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenykh i bol'nykh voynakh* (May 1875): 14.

Provincial Committee to mobilize the local women's committee to collect funds. Also, elites in the city of Morshansk established their own provincial committee and named the head of the local nobility, as its chairman. The Red Cross first sent supplies to Morshansk committee, and then the empress dispatched Senator A. A. Polovtsov as her personal agent in charge of operations in Morshansk.<sup>354</sup> The Main Directorate informed all organs of the Red Cross to begin taking special collections for the fire victims. The reason they held a special collection drive, similar to the campaign to relieve the Samara crop failure, was to ensure that relief for fire victims would not come from the regular endowment marked for wartime.<sup>355</sup> The Main Directorate also established a collection point for clothing and other goods at the Ministry of State Domains and advertised for donations in cash and kind in newspapers and on fliers posted around the capital.<sup>356</sup> The collection drives sparked the public's interest, and in eighteen days the Red Cross had gathered thirty-six thousand rubles in donations.<sup>357</sup>

Instructions from Maria Aleksandrova informed Polovtsov that he had thirty-two thousand rubles at his disposal and that the head of the Moscow Provincial Committee, Prince V. A. Dolgorukov, was sending all additional donations to Morshansk. Once Polovtsov arrived in Morshansk, he was to oversee the distribution of tents and other items that had already been dispatched from St. Petersburg. Money was not to be given out directly to the victims; instead Polovtsov was to give the poorest families clothing and monthly rations of food. The Main Directorate demanded that he provide frequent reports for

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<sup>354</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 19, ll. 218-19.

<sup>355</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 19, ll. 219-20.

<sup>356</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 19, ll. 217-18.

<sup>357</sup> *Osnovanie Rossiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, vol. 1, 260.

publication in the press on how he spent the money.<sup>358</sup> By September, Polovtsov had spent twenty-eight thousand rubles to establish a new hospital with the children's ward, a new parish school, and a shelter for forty-four families.<sup>359</sup> The head of the Assuage My Tears Community, Princesses N. B. Shakhovskaia, traveled with a group of nurses from to Morshansk, where they worked with sisters from the Tambov order to treat ill survivors.<sup>360</sup> Polovtsov also distributed small cash payments to 108 families with damaged homes, and several regiments of infantry moved to the town to assist with rebuilding. In August, the Tambov Women's Committee petitioned the Main Directorate for more aid because it believed that recovery work thus far would prove inadequate once cold weather arrived in autumn.<sup>361</sup>

The Red Cross also provided fire relief to Pułusk, Briansk, Rzhev, and Vol'sk. In total, the Main Directorate raised 106,499 rubles for fire relief in 1875.<sup>362</sup> Red Cross reports deemed these campaigns successful because outside donations funded them, and Morshansk and Briansk opened provincial committees as a result of their efforts. Similar to European Red Cross societies at the time, disaster relief was never the Russian national relief organization's primary mission. Still, the Red Cross participated in large and small disaster relief campaigns in Russia almost every year before the outbreak of the First World War.

In most cases, the Romanovs themselves either initiated these campaigns or made large donations to them. Russian society often followed the royal family's lead and offered

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<sup>358</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 19, ll. 224-27.

<sup>359</sup> *Osnovanie Rossiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, vol. 1, 264-66.

<sup>360</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 19, ll. 231-32.

<sup>361</sup> *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenikh i bol'nykh voynakh* (August 1875): 11; (September 1875): 14.

<sup>362</sup> *Osnovanie Rossiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, vol. 1, 272.

donations to these causes. Although limited in scope at first, the Red Cross's participation in disaster relief helps to explain why the autocracy was so willing to deny the zemstvos a larger role in tackling national problems. In each of the following campaigns, the Red Cross worked with the local zemstvos to restore stricken provinces and towns. But tsarist law prevented zemstvos from different provinces from uniting to confront large-scale calamities out of fears that the zemstvos together might pose a challenge to the state. This reluctance on the part of the autocracy to let the zemstvos undertake empire-wide projects, a policy that later came to frustrate many zemstvo activists, appears less perplexing when the perceived success of these campaigns is taken into consideration. For Alexander II, an empire-wide zemstvo organization to combat national problems would have been superfluous because the Red Cross had already proven that it could fulfill this role when acting alongside the state and organs of local government, as they had in Samara. From the perspective of an autocrat, it comes as little surprise that the Ministry of Internal Affairs, working in conjunction with the national aid society and zemstvos, provided the best opportunity to address sudden problems.

But the tendency for the autocracy to mobilize state agents for Red Cross work came at a cost as well. Once the autocracy became involved in directing disaster relief, Red Cross plenipotentiaries frequently ignored Pirogov's insistence on keeping the organization separate from the state and often used mandates from St. Petersburg to mobilize local government agents in these campaigns. When Red Cross workers disagreed with provincial governors' policies, as members of the Samara Women's Committee did, they could appeal directly to the empress for change. These tendencies undermined the Red Cross's mandate to operate independently from the state, and, even though this organization maintained it was

separate from the bureaucracy, local elites and members of the zemstvo came to view this agency as nothing more than a state-sponsored charity. This attitude would later spawn complaints that the Red Cross lacked adequate oversight, suffered from bureaucratic mismanagement, failed to serve the interests of Russian society.

### **Red Cross Aid to the Central Asian Expeditions of the 1870s**

In hopes of reasserting Russia's strength as a major power and to placate frustrations at home, the 1860s and early 1870s saw tsarist forces expand control over the khanates of Bukhara and Khiva in Turkistan. Also parts of East Asia fell within the tsar's control during this time. The Red Cross refused to remain inactive during these exciting pursuits for new lands and markets. Direct support for the troops was supposed to be the most exciting part of the Red Cross's mission, and members believed that they needed to participate publicly in wartime relief to keep educated society interested in the empire's national relief organization. Meanwhile, the Russian military had little knowledge of or experience with the empire's national aid organization. Hoping to earn the trust of the commanders and increase membership from Russia's military caste, the Red Cross provided assistance to troops during several campaigns in Central Asia during the 1870s. These experiments provoked no substantive changes in the Red Cross's size or mission, and the military's reaction to aid workers associating with soldiers disappointed many advocates of private aid in Russia. Still, the Red Cross viewed its participation in these campaigns as successful because the organization actually mobilized personnel and materials for wartime relief, even if few members of educated society knew of or cared about these endeavors.

In fall of 1870 the Russian military informed the Red Cross that it would dispatch forces to Urga (present day Ulan Bator) the following spring. This proposal excited the

Irkutsk Regional Committee, which solicited support to fund a sanitary brigade to accompany Russian troops. The Irkutsk Regional Committee succeeded in raising 1530.22 rubles from local merchants and Buryats as well as another 300 rubles from the Yenisei Provincial Committee, and it used these funds to purchase medical supplies and instruments to set up a temporary lazaretto. State Councilor O. Ia. Dubinskii oversaw the facility housed in several yurts with the help of two nurses and three soldier-orderlies from the Irkutsk Military Hospital. Bureaucratic delays and the extreme distances between Urga and European Russia prevented the supplies or staff from arriving until May 12, by which time some of the Russian troops had already fallen ill. Slowly, more patients arrived as the spring turned to summer, and Dubinskii's report mentioned they treated 91 soldiers out of a brigade of 657 over the next two months. The initial plan called for the Red Cross only to assist the military doctors embedded with the troops, but the military medical staff accompanying this mission seemed to lack the proper supplies and housing to outfit a hospital. As a result of the military's shortcomings, the Red Cross's mobile ambulance provided all of the hospital stays for Russian troops in Urga from May until November 1871. In total, they treated 112 soldiers for 1,399 hospital days in the lazaretto. Once the military opened a hospital in November, the Red Cross closed its facility and the staff returned to Irkutsk.<sup>363</sup>

A far more significant effort to deliver assistance to Russians in Central Asia occurred during the 1873 campaign against the Central Asian Khanate of Khiva. The stronger Khanate of Bukhara fell to Russian pressure in the 1860s, but Khiva proved more

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<sup>363</sup> "Pis'mo v redaktsiiu ot g. tovarishcha predsedatelia Irkutskago okruzhnago upravleniia," *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenyykh i bol'nykh voynakh* (September 1871): 6-7; "O sodeistvii, okazannom Vostochno-sibirskim upravleniem obshchestva popecheniia o ranenyykh i bol'nykh voynakh urginskomu otriadu," *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenyykh i bol'nykh voynakh* (September 1872): 16-17; *Osnovanie Rossiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, vol. 1, 186-87.

challenging due to its location amid a desert, which enabled Turkman militants to use it as a staging area for raids against Russian caravans in the area east of the Caspian Sea.<sup>364</sup> The Governor-General of Turkestan, K. P. von Kaufman attempted to pressure the local khan, Muhammed Rahim, with several armed incursions beginning in 1869, but the Turkman tribes felt no intimidation and even escalated tensions by seizing several Russian merchants as hostages. Von Kaufman, frustrated that the Russians' demonstrations of force had failed to bring Muhammad Rahim to his senses, invaded the khanate in 1873. In the face of overwhelming defeat, Rahim tried to avert an attack by freeing his hostages, but von Kaufman did not relent. On 29 May 1873 Russian troops seized Khiva, and Rahim fled into the desert. Von Kaufman temporarily replaced the khan with a divan, a governing council, made up of Russian officers and local elites. This divan abolished slavery in the khanate, signed a peace treaty with St. Petersburg that established Russian military and economic power in the region, and demanded two million rubles indemnity from the local inhabitants. Russia's conquest was swift and merciless. Even though the Red Cross's members accompanied the tsar's armies on this campaign, the Geneva Convention never entered von Kaufman's mind when dealing with non-Europeans. When the Youmuts, a Turkman tribe that measured wealth in livestock found themselves unable to come up with von Kaufman's tribute, the Russians massacred tribal members and slaughtered the livestock.<sup>365</sup> The Red Cross's reports from Khiva paid no attention to troops' behavior or the enemy's wounded. Agents in the field only faulted Russian soldiers for not recognizing the benefit of private aid

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<sup>364</sup> See Samuel Becker, *Russia's Protectorates in Central Asia: Bukhara and Khiva, 1865-1924* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 65-69.

<sup>365</sup> Becker, *Russia's Protectorates*, 74.

in war. Provisions for the enemy's wounded were probably as absent from the minds of Russian soldiers on an imperial offensive as they were in the later reports.

The best source for the Red Cross's participation in the Khiva expeditions comes from a report submitted to the Main Directorate in early January 1874. Von Kaufman, the Governor-General of Turkestan, addressed the meeting, where he expressed his heartfelt appreciation for the assistance and pointed out a few items that the state failed to provide adequate supplies of for the Russian soldiers. In charge of a force of 1,500 soldiers, von Kaufman possessed the needed numbers of tents and beds, but only two military doctors to treat patients. Similar to the USSC's surveys of Federal medical stores, the Main Directorate established a board to review what supplies von Kaufman's medics likely needed and procured these items. The initial delivery consisted of twenty-four puds of dressings as well as a sum of money that agents in Tashkent and Orenburg were supposed to spend on tea, sugar, and other items to raise the morale of sick soldiers.<sup>366</sup> Later, the Red Cross formed a sanitary brigade and dispatched it to Central Asia. This brigade included two doctors and four feldshers, whom the Red Cross paid. Doctor I. V. Grimm, a volunteer in the Franco-Prussian War, led the expedition. He was accompanied by four army feldshers and an active-duty sergeant for security.<sup>367</sup>

Grimm traveled from St. Petersburg to Saratov by railroad and then to Kazalinsk by postal road, where the supplies arrived on 25 February. He delivered medical supplies, foodstuffs, alcohol, and tobacco to the soldiers. Since, troops in Central Asia suffered difficulties finding potable water, the Red Cross agreed to purchase a water filter for 255

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<sup>366</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1, l. 311.

<sup>367</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1, l. 330.



rubles and send it to Tashkent.<sup>368</sup> Grimm believed the remarkable sanitary performance of the Khiva expedition was a testament to the benefits of training soldiers in military sanitation. While the desert climate helped reduce the dangers of miasmas and contamination from rotting corpses or human wastes, Grimm emphasized that the Russians paid proper attention to sanitation. Besides the helpful supplies, the Red Cross's participation in the campaign, Grimm believed was superfluous. He noted that soldiers had no knowledge of the Red Cross or its mission, and they viewed him as a camp follower, whose supplies were theirs to plunder.<sup>369</sup> Von Kaufman eyed the Red Cross favorably, but Grimm still recommended that information about the Geneva Convention and private aid societies needed to find its way into soldiers' manuals to avoid misunderstandings in the future.<sup>370</sup>

The Orenburg Regional Committee sent a second delivery of supplies to von Kaufman's troops and published a report on its assistance in *Voennyi sbornik* the next year with the intention of informing military readers of the Red Cross's purpose. Similar to Grimm, this caravan's agent, Ovodov, complained that most rank-and-file soldiers knew nothing of the Red Cross or its mission. Since the military had provided adequate medical personnel and supplies for the campaign, Ovodov found the Red Cross's primary contribution came in the form of non-medical items to enliven the troops. He gave out copies of *Vestnik evropy* (Herald of Europe) and *Voennyi sbornik* to the literate soldiers as well as postcards and writing utensils. The stores of tea, coffee, hardtack, and alcohol improved morale for everyone. As the report stated, since the Russians had an abundance of supplies

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<sup>368</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1, l. 315; 319-21.

<sup>369</sup> *Osnovanie Rossiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, vol. 1, 194-202, 220.

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.*, 194-202, 220.

for this mission, there was no harm in using the donated surpluses to benefit Kirgiz and Persian prisoners who suffered from medical ailments.<sup>371</sup>

Even if the Red Cross's contributions to the Khiva expeditions appeared superfluous, the efforts to outfit and man sanitary brigades indicated that this organization had committed to its mission in the years following the Franco-Prussian War. From Khiva, von Kaufman wrote the Main Directorate to thank it for the assistance, a remark the Red Cross published in its newsletter. Still, the Ministry of War, trusting in the reforms of its sanitary services, made no effort to integrate private aid into military plans or regulations during this period.<sup>372</sup> Red Cross planners hoped that empire's adoption of universal military conscription in 1874 would change educated society's and the army's attitudes to private aid. Discussions in the Red Cross's newsletter speculated that armies made up of conscripts from all social classes would compel tsarist subjects to embrace private aid, but the military reform of 1874 drew little response from educated society. Instead, conflict in the Balkans spurred tsarist subjects to embrace the Red Cross because the Geneva Convention's permission to deliver humanitarian aid in armed conflict gave the Russians an exciting entry into this conflict.

### **Universal Conscription Reform of 1874**

Invented by the French as part of the concordat with the masses established during the French Revolution, universal military conscription required all able-bodied males serve in the army in exchange for civil and political rights. This political and military innovation changed the relationship between state, army, and civilian subject in all nations where it was

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<sup>371</sup> "Kratkii ocherk deistvii obshchestva popecheniia o ranenikh i bol'nykh voynakh, vo vremia Khivinskoi ekspeditsii 1873 goda pri Orenburgskom otradi," *Voennyi sbornik* (July 1874): 151-58.

<sup>372</sup> *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenikh i bol'nykh voynakh* (July 1873): 7.

applied.<sup>373</sup> Gone were the early-modern, professional armies characterized by lifetime terms of service and a military caste far removed from civilian society. Instead, universal conscription turned militaries into schools for nation-building by assimilating various social estates and ethnic and regional identities into a unified whole.

In prereform Russia's case, the army compelled serfs to serve for long-periods of time, usually twenty-five years. This system provided a means of social control for the gentry and autocracy over the peasantry because for most male serfs entry into the army was a fate worse than death and recruitment deprived families of male laborers. The Great Reforms ended serfdom in Russia in 1861, so the army should likewise follow. Miliutin's 1874 reform called on conscripts from most social estates (*soslovie*) and ethnic groups to serve for terms that ranged from five to one years in the ranks. Following the stint in the army, conscripts returned home where they served for periods of up to fifteen years in the reserves.<sup>374</sup> Miliutin and his reformers varied the terms of service because they believed better-educated conscripts learned the soldier's craft more quickly and they recognized that removing talent from the Russian labor market harmed the empire's economy. Various exemptions and provisions for literate and educated soldiers drove Russians of all estates into primary and secondary schools in hopes of shortening service commitments. In Russia, like elsewhere on the continent, universal conscription changed the relationship between the army and society.

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<sup>373</sup> For a discussion on this policy in Russia, see: Robert Fred Baumann, "The Debates over Universal Military Service in Russia 1870-1874," Ph.D. diss. (Yale University, 1982); Joshua Sanborn, *Drafting the Russian Nation: Military Conscription, Total War, and Mass Politics, 1905-1925* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois Press, 2003). On conscription in other European nations, see: Eugene Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), chap. 17; Ute Frevert, *A Nation in Barracks: Modern Germany, Military Conscription and Civil Society*, trans. Andrew Boreham and Daniel Brückenhaus (Oxford: Berg, 2004).

<sup>374</sup> For a full description of the terms of service Miliutin's 1874 reform introduced and the Russian general staff's reasoning behind the various terms of service, see Robert Fred Baumann, "The Debates," chapters 4-6.

Service in the Russian army could no longer be a death sentence for short-term conscripts. Alongside universal conscription, Miliutin introduced improvements in every facet of military service: Everything from food rations to education to medical care to punishments improved for the Russian rank-and-file.

Therefore, it should come as no surprise that some Russians imagined the Geneva Convention and the introduction of private aid to war as vital components toward facilitating universal conscription. Russian observers knew that private aid encouraged the civilian population to help protect conscript soldiers from harm, an important innovation because the military sought to return as many conscripts as possible back to their villages in working condition. Also, in Russia's case, by giving society a limited role in the protection of soldiers' health, the state shifted some responsibility for this burden onto society.<sup>375</sup>

The first hint of the relationship between universal conscription and private aid in Russia appeared when Lieutenant General I. E. Gangardt, the future military governor of Bessarabia, wrote a letter to the Red Cross's *Vestnik* summarizing the changing strategic landscape and structural weaknesses of tsarist Russia immediately following the Franco-Prussian War. This letter appeared before the State Council implemented the 1874 conscription reform, but numerous committees within the Ministry of War and Council of Ministers were already debating this issue in 1871, so most reformers knew change was coming.<sup>376</sup> Gangardt noted that recent events on the continent revealed that "we await conscription, a widening care for the sick and the wounded, and a resurrection of the Black

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<sup>375</sup> Hutchinson, *Champions*, 40.

<sup>376</sup> According to Baumann, Miliutin and other progressive generals began debate introducing universal conscription in the wake of the Crimean War, when Russia failed to mobilize its vast resources and manpower to ward off a foreign invasion of the Crimean Peninsula. See Baumann, "The Debates," chap. 1.

Sea fleet.”<sup>377</sup> Naval matters should not concern us here, but Gangardt’s connection of universal conscription to improved care for wounded soldiers affirmed the idea that a nation’s security rested on the health of its population, an idea with which Pirogov would have agreed. “The time has come when every citizen is required to yield all of his facilities and knowledge to the state; when voluntary associations should be inundated with the goals of the army and the people, amalgamated together by conscription,” Gangardt insisted.<sup>378</sup>

He continued by stressing that Russia must emulate the United States and Prussia, developed countries in possession of large and diverse voluntary organizations, numerous collection points and mobile sanitary brigades, and who pay widespread attention to sanitation, a subject they teach with modern curricula in the barracks and schoolhouses. He believed that merely propagating the mission of the Red Cross to the masses, as earlier writers in the *Vestnik* suggested, would win little popular support. Instead, following Pirogov’s recommendation, educated society must see the Red Cross in action. They must train people to handle life threatening accidents in factories, on railroads, and in remote places where there were few doctors. Finally, he advocated that national relief societies expand the number of trained sanitary workers in peacetime and practice sanitary tasks under the guidance of professionals from the military medical corps.<sup>379</sup>

Members of the Red Cross agreed with Gangardt’s views, and the introduction of universal conscription in Russia provided a stimulus to expand the membership, endowment, and mission of this organization. Advertisements soliciting donations for and membership in

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<sup>377</sup> “Pis’mo v redaktsiiu,” *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenykh i bol’nykh voynakh* (February 1871): 12.

<sup>378</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>379</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

the Red Cross repeated these themes. An exposition in Odessa in October 1874 emphasized private aid's hope of how universal conscription would resonate with educated society:

In the past, the majority of the nobility, according to their higher calling, willingly entered the army and nearly to a man went into the home guard (*opolchenie*), when the defense of the motherland demanded it. Now the nobility meets the new law with gratitude, whereby military service has become obligatory, as it was before and during Peter I's rule. The first levy is upon us by virtue of the new law. Both fathers and sons must turn attention to the goals of the Red Cross and the limited means at its disposal. The provincial chapters of the society have demonstrated useful activities.<sup>380</sup>

The Red Cross turned to the newspapers as well to emphasize its benefit for a citizens' army. An article from *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, reprinted in the *Vestnik*, stated that mandatory service for members of the higher classes would encourage wealthy elites to participate in national relief, prompting a boon in donations and consistent support for this organization. The author of this article admitted that commitments from zemstvo and city hospitals to support the Red Cross had been disappointing: When the Main Directorate surveyed hospitals for numbers of how many wounded soldiers each facility would accept, only seventeen hospitals responded with a total capacity of 711 beds. This paltry contribution alarmed the Red Cross's planners, so they invented all sorts of methods for improving civilian care for soldiers. One example was a proposal to deduct small sums of money from each conscript's pay and give it to the Red Cross to guarantee satisfactory medical treatment for the soldier should any harm befall on him. If the soldier needed no medical treatment by the end of his period of enlistment, the contributions would be returned to him.<sup>381</sup> This project was never put into practice, but it shows one of the new ways the Red Cross envisioned expanding its mission to accommodate universal conscription.

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<sup>380</sup> "Vystavka," *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenikh i bol'nykh voynakh* (November 1874): 8.

<sup>381</sup> *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenikh i bol'nykh voynakh* (January 1875): 13-14.

For members of the Red Cross, Russia's adoption of universal conscription in 1874 provided a new rhetorical tool to try to solicit donations from an unenthusiastic population. With the empire at peace, public fervor for the Red Cross had never taken off. After 1874, Russia possessed a people's army, recruited from all social groups. Red Cross planners hoped this reform would prompt a wellspring of donations, and they reminded Russians in their publications that a people's army required greater commitment from civilian society to sustain its wellbeing.

### **Conclusion**

None of the Red Cross's activities during the early 1870s inspired educated society to respond with a sudden increase in donations or membership. Slow and steady growth in membership and endowment characterized the organization's expansion during its formative years. Famine relief to Samara Province, which totaled nearly half a million rubles in expenditures, attracted some new donors but involved few members of the Red Cross. Russia's contribution to the Franco-Prussian War was modest, and the organization's involvement in the Central Asian expeditions to Urda and Khiva drew little attention. On paper and in practice the Russia's national relief society remained underfunded and poorly staffed by mid-decade. What the Red Cross had closely guarded was its independence, the lesson advocates for private aid took away from the USSC and the Franco-Prussian War. This independence would enable Russia's national aid organization to undertake a tremendously popular project that was likely at odds with the state's and military's best interests.

The Russian Red Cross's evolution during the first eight years of its existence was relatively mundane, but this narrative changed dramatically at the end of 1875. On 30

October 1875, Metropolitan Michael of Serbia petitioned Russia to help the Christians of Bosnia and Herzegovina in revolt against the Muslim Turks. In his appeal, Metropolitan Michael noted that the International Committee of the Red Cross had already placed agents in Dalmatia, Serbia, and Montenegro to distribute aid from Austria-Hungary for the wounded, but the Europeans had thus far provided little material assistance. He implored readers that “there are few doctors, orderlies barely know their tasks, and there are very few compassionate female hands.” The Main Directorate responded by appropriating ten thousand rubles for immediate Balkan relief, but even the *Vestnik* admitted that this sum was far too little.<sup>382</sup> Soon after Russia gleefully dispatched sanitary brigades to Herzegovina and Montenegro, two corners of Europe whose low level of medical services made the tsarist empire look advanced.

The conflicts in the Balkans in the late 1870s prompted Russian Pan-Slavists to view the Red Cross as way to back their Slavic brethren in a holy war for Orthodoxy and empire. This novel enthusiasm for the Red Cross provoked new challenges as well. The more Russian subjects supported the Red Cross, the more tsarist educated society sought to direct its missions and demanded accountability for all expenditures. The military entered the picture as well. For Miliutin, soldiers’ health posed a challenge far too important to be left in the hands of enthusiastic volunteers. In the conflicts between Slavs and Turks in the Balkan during the 1870s, the Red Cross walked a tight rope between satisfying popular demands, and fulfilling its mission as Russia’s national relief organization.

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<sup>382</sup>*Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenyykh i bol’nykh voynakh* (October 1875): 2-3.



## CHAPTER 5 – THE RUSSIAN RED CROSS, MEDICAL DIPLOMACY, AND THE RUSSO-TURKISH WAR OF 1877-78

In the fall of 1875, Ottoman Christians in Bosnia and Herzegovina rose up against their Turkish overlords. Russian officialdom had little interest in Balkan insurrections, since tsarist foreign policy had preferred to work over the past two decades within the Three Emperor's League, the compact with Prussia and Austria-Hungary, to solve continental problems through general consensus. Alexander II and his governing clique, especially Minister of Foreign Affairs Aleksandr Gorchakov and Dmitrii Miliutin, sought every means to keep Russian foreign policy detached from the unpredictable national awakenings in small Europe.

What Alexander II was reluctant to acknowledge was that educated Russia, the consumers of newsprint and partakers in associational life, had come into being as a political force a decade prior, during the Great Reforms. As the Christian uprisings spread from Bosnia and Herzegovina to Montenegro, Serbia, and Bulgaria, a new group of Russian imperialists demanded tsarist armies intercede to expel the Turks from Europe. Wielding high-ranking political positions and cultural capital, the Pan-Slavists counted among their ranks N. P. Ignat'ev, the tsarist ambassador to Constantinople, M. N. Katkov, the publisher of the newspaper *Moskovskie vedomosti*, M. G. Cherniaev, an imperialist general, also known as the Lion of Tashkent, and Empress Maria Aleksandrovna. This group enjoyed unprecedented success. Within a year and a half, Pan-Slavist pressure and Ottoman

recalcitrance had drawn Russia into a crusade to give the little brother Slavs national autonomy and the fruits of European civilization, long deprived them by the Ottoman yoke.

This chapter begins with a survey of the Russian Red Cross's humanitarian relief missions to Montenegro and Serbia in 1875 and 1876. Usually portrayed as a footnote to the Pan-Slavists' campaign to drive the Turks from Europe and establish Russian hegemony over the South Slavs, these missions are crucial for the history of the Red Cross and tsarist medicine more broadly. These missions helped spread modern medicine among the South Slavs and provided an opportunity for Russian surgeons to show off their skills on the world's stage. The aid campaigns to Montenegro and Serbia proved that the Red Cross could raise private funds successfully and deliver medical professionals to play what it believed was a substantive role in wartime relief. The outcome of these missions cast doubt on how many hearts and minds the Russians actually won (or saved) in Serbia and Montenegro. But the Red Cross's success was difficult to quantify when the moment for reflection was so short. Less than a year later, a new challenge arose in the Balkans, and the Red Cross again mobilized to engage it. During Russia's war with Turkey, Red Cross planners paid more careful attention to how they coordinated with the military and whom they dispatched as volunteers.

The second half of this chapter analyzes how Russians addressed the lessons from the conflicts of 1876 in the Russo-Turkish War the following year. This conflict enabled tsarist generals to test the Great Reforms of the military, and this study focuses on one of these small innovations, Russia's use of private medical aid in war. The Red Cross's mobilizations in 1876 and 1877 exemplified a unique moment in the evolution this institution. At the outset, in 1876, this organization was still very much a private association; however,

problems that resulted from the aid missions to Serbia and the public's subsequent loss of confidence in the Red Cross led planners and tsarist statesmen to intervene more heavily in Russia's wartime national aid society. By the end of 1878, the conflicts in the Balkans had accomplished what the limited efforts at civilian relief and aid shipments to imperial campaigns in the early 1870s had failed at: All of educated Russia knew the country possessed a Red Cross, which enabled eager civilians to support tsarist armies abroad and influence tsarist foreign policy.

### **The South Slavic Wars and Russian Humanitarian Intervention**

Cultural affinity gave the Pan-Slavists the impetus to involve themselves in the Balkans, but Russia's acceptance of the Geneva Convention provided the legal opportunity to send medical aid to foreign conflicts. During the Franco-Prussian War, many European Red Cross societies dispatched funds and materials to the International Agency's Special Commission for wartime relief in Basel, Switzerland, or they mobilized doctors and medical teams to work behind the lines. Russian doctors viewed this conflict as a chance to study innovations in military medicine and learn from the Prussians how to mobilize private philanthropy for wartime use. The Prussians met these Russian volunteers with chilly embraces and rigid bureaucratic restrictions. Slighted by the Prussians, Russian humanitarians sought another chance to demonstrate their medical talents and civilized ethos.

When Christian Ottoman subjects in Herzegovina and Bosnia, frustrated by high taxes and corrupt governors, rose up against their Muslim rulers in the autumn of 1875, Russian Pan-Slavists recognized an opportunity to intervene in the Balkans. The Ottomans' clumsy response to the insurgency drove refugees across borders, challenging Montenegro and Serbia to enter the conflict. Ignat'ev, the Russian ambassador to Constantinople,

attempted to pacify the crisis by asking the Turks to enact reforms, which the sultan decreed in October and December 1875. However, a regime change in Constantinople, the ambitions of rogue tsarist officers, and rivalries between Montenegro and Serbia led both South Slavic states to war with the Ottomans in the summer of 1876. Educated Russia escalated the conflict: Donations poured into the Pan-Slavic committees; Russian officers left their posts to join the Serbian army; and the empress directed the Russian Red Cross to deliver aid to victims.<sup>383</sup>

With neither a mandate from the International Committee of the Red Cross nor precedent established by the Geneva Convention for intervention in civil wars or insurgencies, the Red Cross tiptoed carefully into the crisis in the Balkans. The Russians feared that Austro-Hungarian relief organizations, operating out of Croatia, would beat them to the needy Orthodox Slavs. Heeding calls from the press, the Main Directorate on 3 September 1875 announced ten thousand rubles would be sent to the Russian consul in Dubrovnik for refugee aid in Montenegro.<sup>384</sup> To test the Russian public's support for this campaign, the Main Directorate circulated a petition to local chapters asking for donations, and this drive netted nearly a hundred thousand rubles for Montenegro, Serbia, and Bulgaria.<sup>385</sup> The Russians wanted to deliver aid directly to the insurgents in Herzegovina and Bosnia, but the Ottoman Red Cross denied these requests on the grounds that the Geneva

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<sup>383</sup> On the origins of this conflict, see B. H. Sumner, *Russia and the Balkans 1870-1880* (London: Archon, 1962), 137-54; David MacKenzie, *The Serbs and Russian Pan-Slavism 1875-1878* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), chaps. 3-4; Matthias Schulz, "The Guarantees of Humanity: The Concert of Europe and the Origins of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877," in *Humanitarian Intervention: A History*, ed. Brendan Simms and D. J. B. Trim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 184-204.

<sup>384</sup> *Golos*, November, 21, 1875, 1-2.

<sup>385</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 45, ll. 1-25; "Otchet glavnogo upravleniia," *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenikh i bol'nykh voynakh* (January 1876): 9; "Otchet glavnogo upravleniia," *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenikh i bol'nykh voynakh* (August 1876): 1.

Convention did not cover insurgencies and that aid to Christian partisans would result in their recognition as belligerents.<sup>386</sup> By November 1875, members of the Main Directorate had consulted with the empress and decided to initiate “practical activities.” This same month, Prince Nikola of Montenegro informed the International Committee of the Red Cross that his nation had adopted the Geneva Convention, which made him legally eligible for foreign aid.<sup>387</sup> Fearing that the Austro-Hungarian Red Cross would seek to make bedfellows with the Montenegrins, the Russians dispatched a medical brigade of thirty-three people to Cetinje, where they set up a hospital with one hundred beds. The Main Directorate budgeted sixty thousand rubles from its wartime reserves to fund this outfit for six months.<sup>388</sup>

The initial brigade to Montenegro, headed by P. A. Rikhter, contained eight nurses led by E. P. Kartsova, a veteran of the Exaltation Society who had served in the Crimean War. This group was soon joined by another Russian brigade, and the two set up medical facilities in in the towns of Cetinje, Grakhov, and Danilovgrad, where they treated more than one thousand patients during the period from January to September 1876. Most doctors were volunteers from the Russian military, while the nurses came from the nursing societies in Russia’s two capitals. Since the Montenegrins had no military or civilian medical services, the Russians outfitted special mobile ambulances (*letuchie otriady*) to serve in the rear of the army and dress wounds near the front at Nikčiš. The number of patients the Russians treated in Montenegro was small because of the difficulty of transporting patients in the mountains and because Montenegrins at first feared modern medicine, especially surgeries, and sought

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<sup>386</sup> M. N. Katkov, “Ustroenie prepiatstvii k deiatel’nosti ‘Krasnogo Kresta,’” *Polnoe sobranie peredovykh statei Moskovskikh vedomostei 1876 god* (Moscow: S. P. Katkova, 1897), 358-61.

<sup>387</sup> Pierre Bossier, *From Solferino*, 300.

<sup>388</sup> GIM, f. 17, op. 1, d. 481, ll. 739-41; *Golos*, November, 21, 1875, 1-2.

treatment from village healers if they could find them. Soon, however, the locals warmed to European medicine and sought out the Russian facilities. For the foreign volunteers, this modest relief effort spread the “civilizing mission” that “would not disappear from memory in this corner of the Balkan Peninsula.” The Montenegrins impressed their guests by allegedly mastering the Geneva Convention; despite their bellicose nature, the Slavic tribesmen resisted the urge to target Turkish medical facilities and permitted the Russians to treat wounded Muslims.<sup>389</sup>

The Russian Red Cross’s plans for Serbia were initially modest, but the escalating conflict, Serbia’s military failures, and pressure from tsarist subjects for greater involvement led to a broad expansion of the mission by late summer 1876. The Main Directorate initially provided its agent in Serbia, V. N. Tokarev, with one hundred thousand rubles to open a two-hundred bed hospital outside Belgrade for six months. Tokarev’s instructions tasked the privy councilor with ensuring that the funds, supplies, and Red Cross arm bands were distributed and used properly.<sup>390</sup> By September, additional medical teams had arrived, and the Russians set up a network of medical facilities throughout the country with a capacity of around one thousand hospital beds.<sup>391</sup> The largest concentration of medical workers was in the village of Jagodina, about eighty-five miles south of Belgrade. In total, the Russians treated over five thousand wounded Serbs during this conflict.<sup>392</sup> A steady stream of

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<sup>389</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 654, ll. 8-9; Alyshevskii, “Russkii ‘Krasnyi Krest’ v Chernigorii,” *Golos*, April 1, 1876, 1; P. A. Vasil’chikov, “Svideniia o deiatel’nosti russkogo sanitarnogo otriada (Iz vlechenie iz doneseniiia upolnomochennogo P. A. Vasil’chikova),” *Vestnik obschestva popecheniia o ranenyykh i bol’nykh voynakh* (April, 1876): 4-5; Bogoiavlenskii, “Otchet iz Chernogorii,” *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenyykh i bol’nykh voynakh* (October 1876): 4; “Materialy dlia sanitarnogo ocherka Chernogorii vo vremiia chernogorsko-turetskoi voiny,” *Moskovskaia meditsinskaia gazeta*, July 15, 1878, 654-56.

<sup>390</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 35, ll. 1-2.

<sup>391</sup> “Otchet iz Serbii,” *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenyykh i bol’nykh voynakh* (November, 1876): 5-8.

dressings, bedding, and clothing traveled from warehouse in St. Petersburg to the lazarettos in Serbia.<sup>393</sup> These quantities of goods and services, however, did little to benefit the Serbs.

By many accounts, Russia's humanitarian mission in Serbia exposed serious problems within the Red Cross and with Tokarev's leadership. The Serbs, whose political leadership was divided on the war, seemingly gave the Russians *carte blanche* to provide aid without making any preparations for how the network of hospitals would be arranged. One Russian author surmised that the Serbs took the Prussian plan from 1870, translated it into Serbian, and "checked out."<sup>394</sup> Personnel, supplies, and coordination existed only on paper. Poor communication with Serbian authorities and transportation meant that Russian doctors had no idea when lazarettos would be inundated with hundreds of wounded patients.<sup>395</sup> Russians found Serbian women unfit for nursing because of their low education and unwillingness to interact with foreign professionals, and trustworthy male laborers were similarly difficult to find among the locals.<sup>396</sup> Some Russian doctors even brandished pistols to drive Serbian shirkers from the lazarettos and back to the front.<sup>397</sup> It appears as if the Montenegrins welcomed foreign aid, whereas the Serbs seemed displeased that foreigners had overrun their country and pushed it into an ill-fated war.

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<sup>392</sup> Kekher, "Zametki o deiatel'nosti Russkogo Obshchestva popecheniia o ranenykh i bol'nykh voynakh v Serbii," *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenykh i bol'nykh voynakh* (April-May 1877): 3.

<sup>393</sup> "Otchet iz Serbii," *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenykh i bol'nykh voynakh* (November 1876): 5.

<sup>394</sup> V. A. Studitskii, "Materialy dlia sanitarnogo ocherka Serbii vo vremia voiny 1876 goda," *Moskovskaia meditsinskaia gazeta*, May, 14, 1877, 579.

<sup>395</sup> V. A. Studitskii, "Materialy dlia sanitarnogo ocherka Serbii vo vremia voiny 1876 goda," *Moskovskaia meditsinskaia gazeta*, April 9, 1877, 433-34.

<sup>396</sup> S. Kolomnin, *Obshchii meditsinskii ocherk Serbo-Turetskoi voiny 1876 g. i tyla armii v Bessarabii i Rumynii vo vremia Turetskoi voiny 1877 goda*, vol. 1 (St. Petersburg: A. Suvorin, 1878), 4-5.

<sup>397</sup> V. A. Studitskii, "Materialy dlia sanitarnogo ocherka Serbii vo vremia voiny 1876 goda," *Moskovskaia meditsinskaia gazeta*, April 9, 1877, 430.

Lacking experience with this type of aid campaign, the Russians created many of their own problems. Critics noted the uneven distribution of medical resources throughout the country and shortages of surgeons. Doctors from the Russian military quarreled with brainy surgeons from university medical faculties. One witness explained how the search for scientific knowledge may have harmed patient care: “The doctors try to concentrate in their hands the most difficult and serious patients out of honest scientific interest, but it seems to me that the head doctor should spread the difficult cases among different lazarettos in order to prevent the outbreak of infectious diseases, even if this measure impairs the doctors’ quest for medical knowledge.”<sup>398</sup> Many of the hospital staff, medical students, and adventure-seeking nurses behaved poorly; some even abandoned their assigned posts to travel to the front. The Russians failed to establish a monopoly over aid workers, as tourists and amateurs purchased Red Cross armbands in shops to visit medical facilities or wander the theater of operations unmolested. At the same time, Tokarev upset workers at medical facilities run by Old Believers and Pan-Slavist organizations by forbidding them to use the Red Cross symbol, thereby denying these volunteers the securities promised by the Geneva Convention.<sup>399</sup> Suitable carts and wagons were in short supply as well, which meant that evacuation from the front was slow and uncomfortable for the wounded. Neither the Russians nor the Serbs deigned to set up a bureau to track patients or keep tabs on the number of free beds. Some hospitals became so crowded that the wounded slept in wagons, while other facilities lay empty.<sup>400</sup> Not surprisingly, the press responded by reproaching the Russian

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<sup>398</sup> R. Taurov, “Zamechaniia o sanitarnoi chaste v Serbii vo vremia Serbo-turetskoi voiny 1876 goda,” *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenyykh i bol’nykh voynakh* (January 1877): 15-16.

<sup>399</sup> M. N. Katkov, “Neudovletvoritel’naia deiatel’nosti russkogo otdela Krasnogo Kresta v Serbii,” *Polnoe Sobranie statei Moskovskikh vedomosti 1876 god* (Moscow: M. P. Katkova), 535-37.



relief organization for these shortcomings. An article in *Novoe vremia* from 17 September 1876 titled “Is Our Red Cross Society Prepared for War?” was indicative of these frustrations. Frustrated with the war, and more likely the Russian autocracy for sending nurses instead of soldiers, Katkov quoted Cherniaev for the readers of *Moskovskie vedomosti* as stating “the local Red Cross, which is occupied with formalities alone, provides nothing.”<sup>401</sup>

In the end, however, Cherniaev and the Pan-Slavs had done little to benefit the Serbs; Ottoman advances in late October routed the Serbs and opened the road to Belgrade. These setbacks compelled Russian officialdom to issue an ultimatum to the Turks, forcing an immediate truce. Russia’s bold wager, that the threat of invasion would control Ottoman behavior, almost guaranteed war would break out shortly.

The interventions in the Balkans in 1876 revealed that Russians had not yet learned how to deploy humanitarian relief in foreign conflicts. True, the Russians found 115 doctors, 118 nurses, 70 feldshers, and 41 medical students to volunteer to go to Serbia, and the Red Cross spent 526,276 rubles on the mission to Serbia and another 369,141 on the campaign in Montenegro, incredible sums for tsarist charities at the time.<sup>402</sup> But these vainglorious efforts depleted the Red Cross’s coffers while drawing Russia into a major war with the Ottoman Empire. The most important lesson from the Franco-Prussian War, that private aid worked

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<sup>400</sup> V. A. Studitskii, “Materialy dlia sanitarnogo ocherka Serbii vo vremia voiny 1876 goda,” *Moskovskaia meditsinskaia gazeta*, June, 4, 1877, 672-75; Kekher, “Zametki,” *Vestnik obshchestva popecheniia o ranenykh i bol’nykh voynakh* (April-May 1877): 2-8.

<sup>401</sup> Katkov, “Neudovletvoritel’naia deiatel’nosti,” 535-37.

<sup>402</sup> *Rossiskoe Obshchestvo Krasnogo Kresta, sostoiashchee pod Avgusteishim pokrovitel’stvom ee imperatorskago velichestva gosudaryni imperatritsy Marii Feodorovny: Ocherk vozniknoveniia i deiatel’nosti Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta* (St. Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1913), 33.

best to supplement military medical services, passed over the Russians' heads.<sup>403</sup> Rather than assisting state-sponsored medical services, the Russians attempted to deliver to Serbia and Montenegro institutions that should have existed already.

A second consequence of the interventions in Montenegro and Serbia was that Russian surgeons' unfettered access to the war wounded provided them with an opportunity to hone their medical skills and assert their expertise within the Russian and international medical communities. Pirogov called for greater cooperation between military surgeons, even proposing that doctors on opposite sides of a conflict should share information on medical innovations and statistics, and some medical men hoped the Red Cross would serve as an instrument for spreading military medical knowledge across borders.<sup>404</sup> This yearning for medical knowledge helps explain why these conflicts attracted Russia's best medical minds, famous physicians such as S. P. Botkin, N. V. Sklifosovskii, A. S. Tauber, and others. When these physicians returned to Russia, they published accounts of their activities in Russian medical journals, evidence that they regarded wartime volunteer work as means for advancing scientific knowledge and promoting the reputation of Russian medicine. And many authors' reports confirmed the conclusions of Russia's greatest surgeon, Pirogov. Both A. S. Tauber and M. N. Kolomnin argued in favor of conservative surgical practices, the use of gypsum casts, triage, and housing patients in temporary wooden facilities or tents instead of large, permanent hospitals, all innovations Pirogov had advocated for in his textbook on

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<sup>403</sup> N. V. Sklifosovskii, *Iz nabliudenii vo vremia slavianskoi voiny 1876 goda* (St. Petersburg: Iakov Trei, 1876), 25.

<sup>404</sup> Pirogov, *Nachala obshchei voennopolevoi khirurgii*, 4-6.

battlefield surgery.<sup>405</sup> Since Russia possessed the medical talent, it came as no surprise that educated Russia viewed its surgeons as a mark of a highly developed civilization.

From 1876 onward, Russia recognized the potential for medical diplomacy as a means for attracting political support in foreign countries. In Montenegro's case, a country without any professional doctors in 1876, the project, at least in Russian minds, had won over Slavic tribesmen to the benefits of modern medicine and demonstrated the Russian empire's benevolence. The Serbian case proved more problematic, since the war had failed and many of the guests had behaved poorly. Still, Russia continued to dispatch medical volunteers to foreign nations, with varying degrees of success, to the end of the tsarist period.

The campaigns in 1876 revealed that the Russian Red Cross had not figured out how to use the public sphere to its advantage. Despite institutional growth, the Russian Red Cross suffered from low levels of public support and an inadequate endowment prior to 1876, a sign that this organization's mission was far greater than its means.<sup>406</sup> The press as well proved a double-edge sword for the Red Cross. Enthusiasm for Balkan undertakings was manufactured by Pan-Slavist writers, and positive reports certainly translated into donations and support. But what public opinion giveth, the editor's reproof could just as quickly taketh away. Negative accounts from Serbia undermined the public's trust in the Red Cross as the empire itself prepared for war. The Main Directorate recognized this danger and in the future

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<sup>405</sup> Conservative surgery came into vogue in the middle of the nineteenth century as a result of innovations in anesthesia and statistics. Proponents of conservative surgery calculated the risks, pain, and likelihood of success for the patient before undergoing any procedure. For a study on attitudes toward conservative surgery in the United States, see Martin S. Pernick, "The Calculus of Suffering in Nineteenth-Century Surgery," *The Hastings Center Report* 13, no. 2 (April 1983): 26-36. See A. S. Tauber, "Ocherk moei khirurgicheskoi deiatel'nosti vo vremiia Serbsko-Turetskoi voiny 1876 g.," pts. 1-8, *Meditinskii vestnik* 11 (19 March 1877): 121-22; 12 (26 March 1877): 129-32; 13 (2 April 1877): 141-44; 14 (9 April 1877): 153-56; 15 (16 April 1877): 165-68; 16 (23 April 1877): 179-81; 17 (30 April 1877): 189-91; 18 (7 May 1877): 198-200; S. Kolomnin, *Obshchii meditsinskii ocherk*, vol. 1, chaps. 1-3.

<sup>406</sup> RGVA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 19, ll. 68-74; *Osnovanie Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, vol. 1, 179.

followed, editor of *Grazhdanin* (The Citizen), V. P. Meshcherskii's advice by countering slander in the press with published accounts of the organization's income, expenses, and results.<sup>407</sup> Thus, the foreign relief missions to the South Slavs in 1876 entangled the Red Cross in missions for which it turned out to be poorly prepared and which placed its reputation and capabilities at the whims of a fickle press. The Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 would prove a boon for the Red Cross, but the nature and scale of the war drew the private aid society away from the public and embroiled it within the machinery of the state. Henceforth, the Red Cross's endeavors in Russia's wars would never be a non-governmental affair.

### **The Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78**

The Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 surprised contemporary observers and the historians who have studied it over why tsarist Russia's military performed so poorly.<sup>408</sup> Victory was supposed to be easy, but frustrations at the front and with the postwar settlement led generals, statesmen, and the reading public to doubt whether this conflict improved Russia's foreign policy in regard to the Eastern Question. The Ottomans' violence against Orthodox Slavs ceased, but Russia gained little besides free naval passage on the Black Sea, and this concession came at tremendous cost in lives and rubles. The weight of this burden,

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<sup>407</sup> V. Meshcherskii, *Pravda o Serbii: Pis'ma Kniazia V. Meshcherskago* (St. Petersburg: V V Obolenskii, 1877), 339-40.

<sup>408</sup> Historians Petr Zaionchkovskii, Bruce Menning, John Bushnell have argued the Russo-Turkish War demonstrated that Miliutin's reforms did little to change tactical culture or improve the material base of Russia's military. Tsarist generals failed to adapt to the increased firepower of rifled weaponry and clung to Napoleonic infatuations with speed, élan, and the infantry column. Autocratic patronage remained the surest path to advancement, undermining Miliutin's attempts to make merit and education the key determinants of rank. Methods of supply, provision, and peacetime training continued to lag due to Russia's poor material base and conservative traditions. See Petr Zaionchkovskii, *Voennye reform 1860-1870 godov v Rossii* (Moscow: Moskovskii universitet, 1952), 338-58; Menning, *Bayonets before Bullets*, 85-86; John S. Bushnell, "Miliutin and the Balkan War: Military Reform vs. Military Performance," in *Russia's Great Reforms, 1855-1881*, eds. Ben Eklof, John Bushnell, and Larissa Zakharova (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 139-58.

coupled with the embarrassing retreats at the Congress of Berlin and the generous constitution tsarist diplomats bequeathed to Bulgaria, ignited the political crisis of the early 1880s in St. Petersburg.<sup>409</sup> Russia, as Miliutin and Gorchakov feared in 1876, was ill-prepared for the strategic, social, and economic consequences of a major war at the moment when the Great Reforms were beginning to take root. The historical coup may in fact have been that Russia avoided drawing Britain into the conflict, while at the same time limited the domestic upheaval to economic crisis, political discontent, and the life of a tsar. This was a storm nonetheless, but one the state weathered in the 1880s.

For the purposes of this chapter, the Russo-Turkish War revealed the transitional nature of private aid in Russia. The Red Cross and military did not yet know how to apply private aid to war, and the experiences in Montenegro and Serbia provided few lessons for what might happen when Russia mobilized its own forces. By war's end, however, Russian medical services and advocates for private aid had drawn important conclusions from this conflict that would enable the organization to grow and thrive in the decades following 1878.

A brief survey of this conflict's kinetics provides a sense of how transitional this war was for Russia's armies and military medical services. The Russo-Turkish War began as a result of Russian humanitarian motives, Ottoman obstinacy, Austro-Hungarian meddling, and mixed messages from Britain to the Porte suggesting aid might be forthcoming should tsarist armies threaten Constantinople.<sup>410</sup> In October 1876, with the Serbian war effort collapsing, Russia imposed an armistice to prevent the Turks from marching on Belgrade. At the end of

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<sup>409</sup> Peter A. Zaionchkovskii, *The Russian Autocracy in Crisis, 1878-1882*, trans. Gary M. Hamburg (Gulf Breeze: Academic International Press, 1979), 4-6.

<sup>410</sup> Schulz argues that Russian memories of Greece and Syria in a large way inspired Russians to see it as their duty to end suffering in the Balkans. Schulz, "The Guarantees of Humanity," 202. See also Gary Bass, *Freedom's Battle: The Origins of Humanitarian Intervention* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), chaps. 18-23.

the year, delegates from the European powers convened in Constantinople in hopes of convincing the Porte to establish autonomous Christian provinces in Ottomans' European holdings. The Turks rejected a pair of heavy-handed peace settlements, and the Sick Man's defiance prompted Russian mobilization.<sup>411</sup>

Ottoman strategic confidence rested on several advantages: The sultan's armies possessed superior Peabody-Martini rifles, the Black Sea was closed to the Russian fleet, and Turkish generals had several months to prepare for war. Russia needed to transport its armies through Romania, cross the Danube, and push through the Balkan passes to threaten Constantinople, an enormous logistical assignment. Tsarist generals bested their Ottoman rivals by a long shot, but talents such as M. I. Dragomirov, I. V. Gurko, M. T. Loris-Melikov, and E. I. Totleben had to respect the autocratic imperative that insisted Grand Dukes Nicholas and Michael Romanov lead the armies. Confusion and error at the main headquarters often compromised Russian commanders' ingenuity.<sup>412</sup>

Permission from Romania for military transit came on 4 April, and eight days later Russia declared war. War plans called for a speedy two-pronged campaign on either side of the Black Sea. In the western theater, Russian troops would cross the Danube, force the Balkan passes, and reach Constantinople before the British could intervene. In the Caucasus, Russian forces would make less ambitious advances along a broader front, seizing principle towns and fortresses and tying up Turkish forces. The first and third phases of the war turned out to be highly successful, as Russian commanders demonstrated careful planning and adroit maneuvers. The second phase, a protracted and costly campaign for the town of Plevna,

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<sup>411</sup> Sumner, *Russia and the Balkans*, 302-3.

<sup>412</sup> *Ibid.*, 304-5.

which lasted from July to December 1877, nearly led to a Russian failure on par with Sevastopol.

In the first phase of the war, the Russians brilliantly executed M. I. Dragomirov's risky plan for crossing the Danube at Zimnicea and pressed on to the village of Svistov and nearby high grounds. Once reinforcements arrived on the south shore of the river, the Russians split into three echelons and fanned out in Bulgaria, and the popular General I. V. Gurko pressed forward in the center and took the town of Turnovo and later the crucial Shipka Pass by 5 July. This daring push into the mountains incited panic in Constantinople, but Gurko lacked the manpower and supply network to exploit the initiative. The Turks recalled Mehmet Ali Pasha from Montenegro and rushed in reinforcements to drive the Russians from Shipka. Miliutin, fearing that Gurko might be cut off by Turkish garrisons along the north side of the Balkans, convinced the tsar to slow down the offensive to defend the Shipka Pass. Meanwhile, the Russians' emphasis shifted to reducing Turkish strongholds at Rushchuk and Nikopol to the east of Sistovo and amassing troops in the west for an assault on Plevna.<sup>413</sup>

Early on, speed had carried the day for the Russians, but this situation changed at Plevna, where infantry columns' inability to best entrenched defenders armed with modern rifles became apparent. As the famous surgeon S. P. Botkin put it, "First Plevna was careless, Second Plevna a mistake, and Third Plevna a crime."<sup>414</sup> In the initial engagement on 8 July, the Russians broke through Ottoman trenches and briefly fought along the streets of Plevna before frightening losses and a lack of reinforcements forced them to retreat. Ten days later,

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<sup>413</sup>Menning, *Bayonets before Bullets*, 55-60.

<sup>414</sup>S. P. Botkin, *Pis'ma S. P. Botkina iz Bolgarii* (St. Petersburg: M. M. Stasiulevich, 1893), 213.

tsarist forces repeated their mistakes in an engagement known as Second Plevna. All of the sudden, a hasty strategic victory in the war was thrown into question. Russian commanders altered their war plans by shifting to the strategic defensive as the tsar called for a new mobilization of 110,000 men and initiated discussions aiming to bring Romania into the war. To the south, the Russians dug in along the Shipka Pass and resisted an intense Turkish effort to drive them from the mountains in mid-August.<sup>415</sup> With Shipka successfully held and Russian and Romanian reinforcements arriving around Plevna, Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaevich and Prince Karol of Romania believed they had the necessary forces to oust Osman Pasha at month's end. Even though the Christian allies enjoyed superiority in manpower and artillery, the third assault on Plevna on 30 August produced no charm. Turkish rifles again massacred Russian frontal assaults. Despaired of these bloodlettings, the Russians shifted tactics and recalled Gurko and Totleben to surround and besiege Plevna. Another costly victory at Gorni Dubnik completed the Russian encirclement in October, and the Turks, weakened by illness and starvation, capitulated in early December.<sup>416</sup>

The frustrations at Plevna exposed the cracks in Russia's military capabilities following the Great Reforms. A loss of confidence in the generals undermined support for the tsar at home. The autumn of 1877 renewed fears of unrest in Russia, as the ruble collapsed, peasants grew restless, and the Senate conducted a show trial of 193 populists (*narodniki*).<sup>417</sup> While Russian resolve for the war weakened at home, the military situation at the front suddenly appeared more sanguine. Miliutin recognized that Plevna's capitulation

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<sup>415</sup> Menning, *Bayonets before Bullets*, 61-65.

<sup>416</sup> *Ibid.*, 70-74.

<sup>417</sup> Sumner, *Russia and the Balkans*, 336.



afforded Russia the strategic offensive, and he urged Grand Duke Nicholas to force the mountain passes in the winter and threaten Constantinople before the British could intervene. The Russians completed an advance across the mountains by the turn of the new year at the cost of many fingers and toes to frostbite. The city of Philippopolis (Plovdiv) fell after a three-day battle in early January, and the Russians reached San Stefano, a village seven miles from Constantinople, where they began negotiations for an armistice on 7 January.

Russia's second front in the Caucasus lacked a strategic objective other than stymying Turkish forces and preventing the Ottomans from deploying reinforcements to the Balkans. In this theater, the Grand Duke Michael Nikolaevich enjoyed moderate success due to the skills of his subordinate generals. Similar to the western theater, the Russians advanced quickly in four columns across the Ottoman border and enjoyed initial successes in capturing several Turkish forts, but shortages of troops and problems with supply forced the grand duke to switch to defensive operations by midsummer. In the autumn, General N. N. Obruchev led reinforcements against the Turkish citadel of Kars, which the Russians took in an impressive victory. The Russians then besieged the town of Erzerum, which the Turks surrendered once the war in the west had ended.<sup>418</sup> The Caucasian campaigns were truly a sideshow in this conflict; Russia's strategic interests and popular enthusiasm directed all eyes south of the Danube.

### **Medical Services in the Russo-Turkish War**

In many ways, the same leadership failures that escalated the conflict and cost tens of thousands of lives undermined the Russian military medical service's performance during the Russo-Turkish War. Miliutin had made reforming the medical services a component of his

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<sup>418</sup> Menning, *Bayonets before Bullets*, 78-80.

transformation of the army, but if military sanitation in 1877-78 is used as a litmus test, then the results of these efforts were decidedly ambiguous. The Russians, eager to repeat the Germans' medical performance in 1870, failed to overcome the scourge of epidemic diseases, the single biggest killer in war prior to the Prussians' remarkable feat.<sup>419</sup> Tsarist observers identified many causes for this outrage: Russians' poor practice of military sanitation; shortages of supplies and ambulances; misplacement of personnel and hospitals; the climate and environment; and contact with Turkish prisoners.<sup>420</sup> In sum, a storm of unforeseen problems and human errors threatened Russia's military medical services, but the real culprit appears to have been a failure to communicate: Russian military operations did not correspond with medical services.<sup>421</sup> Ambulances, hospitals, evacuation trains, dressings, food, and doctors never appeared where they needed to be. And despite Botkin's doubt that any improvements had been made, some scholars have argued the Russian military performed much better than in the Crimean War.<sup>422</sup> Therefore, a short survey of Russia's medical effort in 1877-78 will identify where the problems lay.

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<sup>419</sup> The Russian experience in the Russo-Turkish War contrasted starkly with the German state's ability to control infectious disease in the Franco-Prussian War. In 1870-71, Prussia mobilized more soldiers than the Russians and lost only 1.5 percent of the men mobilized to illnesses. Russia lost 11 percent of the total men it mobilized for the Russo-Turkish War to contagions, which represents an improvement from the Crimean experience, in which roughly 27 percent of Russia's mobilized soldiers perished from disease. For comparative statistics, see B. Ts. Uralnis, *Istoriia voennykh poter'* (St. Petersburg: Poligon, 1994), 291. Also, for statistics on illnesses in the Russian ranks see Gladkikh and Kriuchkov, *Ocherk istorii*, vol. 2, 104, table 4.

<sup>420</sup> Gladkikh and Kriuchkov, *Ocherk istorii*, vol. 2, 91-2; 103-7, 111-112.

<sup>421</sup> A. S. Georgievskii and Z. V. Mitsov, *Meditsinskaia obshchestvennost' i voennaia meditsina v Osvoboditel'noi voine na Balkanakh v 1877-1878 gg.* (Moscow: Meditsina, 1978), 129.

<sup>422</sup> By September the medical situation around Plevna had upset S. P. Botkin so much that he believed, despite the talented people working on the problem, no progress had been achieved in military medicine since the Crimean War. See Botkin, 252, 256-57. For positive appraisals, See N. I. Beliaev, *Rusko-turetskaia voina 1877-1878 gg.* (Moscow: Ministerstvo oborony soiuzna SSR, 1956), 412; Menning, *Bayonets before Bullets*, 82.

As war became likely in the fall of 1876, the Russian general staff worked out a plan for medical services in the Balkans and Caucasus. Envisioning a short war, the army concentrated medical facilities along the southwestern border of the empire and the Caucasus. By December 1876, plans called for sixty-four wartime hospitals in the Danubian theater of war with over forty thousand beds and another seventy-eight smaller hospitals in the Caucasus with a capacity of sixteen thousand patients. By war's end, major engagements such as Plevna and the deteriorating sanitary situation on the south side of the Balkans forced the Danubian army to increase its capacity to 130,000 beds and mobilize the Red Cross to set up facilities in the rear for at least 12,000 beds. Also, prior to the war, the Russian army had hired civilian doctors, recalled reservist physicians, and mobilized medical students to serve as physicians, decisions that had increased the complement of medical professionals at the army's disposal.<sup>423</sup>

But capacity was not the issue; location, timing, and behavior were far more crucial for success. Losses in all three Plevnas were far worse than anyone expected, and the Russians never managed to arrange the military medical services to handle a casualty load that reached five thousand wounded in a single day.<sup>424</sup> Shortages of ambulances and the difficulty of evacuating soldiers by railroad caused unforeseen crowding and delays. In order to free doctors from administrative tasks, regulations stipulated that staff officers without any specialized training govern medical facilities. The result was a dual-power structure (*dvoevlastie*) between doctors and staff officers in which quality of care was often given

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<sup>423</sup> A. P., "Sanitarnye meri, priniaty v nashei armii v posledniuiu voinu s Turtsiei, 1877-1878 gg.," *Russkaia starina* 55 (July 1887): 78.

<sup>424</sup> Botkin, *Pis'ma*, 199; Gladkikh and Kriuchkov, *Ocherk istorii*, vol. 2, 78-80, 89, 95.

short shrift.<sup>425</sup> In the Balkans, this structural problem was clear from the differences between V. I. Priselkov, the Field Military Medical Inspector, an experienced surgeon who had toured lazarettos in the Franco-Prussian War, and the Field Inspector of Hospitals, V. D. Kossinskii, a line officer turned administrator.<sup>426</sup> Lastly, the Russians forced the Balkan passes in the winter, leaving the rear medical services in their wake. While the armies shivered outside Constantinople waiting for a peace settlement, epidemics decimated the ranks. Official statistics held that Russian soldiers in Balkans suffered 875,542 cases of illnesses, or 1.5 cases per soldier, and soldiers in the Caucasus a terrifying 1,198,023 cases of illnesses, or 4.7 cases per soldier. In all, disease killed a recorded 81,847 soldiers during the campaign. In comparison, 6,542 Russians perished from wounds between the two theaters combined.<sup>427</sup>

Contemporaries viewed the typhus and dysentery epidemics that plagued Russia's armies as products of nature and negligence. Nicholas I's armies had suffered tremendously from typhus during the campaign of 1829 in the same region, but the mobilization in autumn 1876 occurred with almost no cases of illness, an unexpected surprise that may have lulled Russian commanders into a false sense of security.<sup>428</sup> The Main Military Medical Department recognized this danger and produced two directives titled the "Instructions for Protection of Troops' Health in the Mobilized Army" and "Instructions for Measures to Protect Against the Spread of Infectious Diseases," but field commanders simply ignored

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<sup>425</sup> D. N. Amenitskii, "Zametki o deiatel'nosti 63-go voenno-vremennago gosspitalia vo vremia turetskoi voiny 1877 i 1878 godov," *Voенno-meditsinskii zhurnal* 137 (March 1880): 243-44.

<sup>426</sup> Georgievskii and Mitsov, *Meditsinskaia obshchestvennost'*, 68-69.

<sup>427</sup> Beliaev, *Russko-turetskaia voina*, 411; Gladkikh and Kriuchkov, *Ocherk istorii*, vol. 2, 78.

<sup>428</sup> On the Russo-Turkish War of 1828-39, see Georgievskii and Mitsov, *Meditsinskaia obshchestvennost'*, 60. Prior to the outbreak of hostilities, Russian doctors were delighted by the "splendid (*blistatel'nyi*)" sanitary state of their army. See for example, S. Popel' optimistic reports from the winter of 1876-1877. S. Popel', "Iz Kishineva," pts. 1-6, *Moskovskaia meditsinskaia gazeta*, January 15, 1877, 46-48; February, 12, 1877, 185-190; February, 26, 1877, 251-54; March, 19, 1877, 348-56; April, 16, 1877, 456-459; May 14, 1877, 573-576.

these orders.<sup>429</sup> Botkin reproached medical staff for neglecting to boil water, complained that commanders refused the advice of medics, and commented, “our soldiers are infected by their own waste.”<sup>430</sup> Lieutenant Greene, the American military attaché to the tsarist army, provided the most colorful diagnosis:

Six or seven officers of the Emperor’s suite. . . are seriously ill with the fever. . . I suppose it is considered almost an epidemic there. I cannot but think that it is due. . . to the defective—or rather the total lack of—sanitary precautions about the camp. . . *There are no sinks or latrines whatever* for the officers or men. . . [and] the streets and lanes of the village are filled with human excrement, which is never covered and which gives forth at night a stench of the most unhealthy nature. I have also been informed by correspondents who have been with other parts of the Army that it is the same thing about their camps and even about their field hospitals.<sup>431</sup>

If the tsar was up to his ankles in shit, the rank-and-file’s hygiene must have been deplorable.

A later study by Dr. K. K. Iskerskii placed responsibility solely on human errors.

Overcrowded, poorly-heated hospitals, abominable latrines, inattention to sanitation, and the mixing of sick and wounded soldiers in the wards produced the epidemic. Iskerskii repeated the complaint heard often from medical professionals all over tsarist Russia: The solution lay in freeing military physicians from the arbitrary tyranny (*proizvol*) of field commanders and empowering the doctors to use their own talents to police the health of the army.<sup>432</sup>

Nevertheless, the concern here should not be the causes of these medical shortcomings or the establishment of the guilty parties. Instead, as the next section will argue, pressing medical

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<sup>429</sup> Gladkikh and Kriuchkov, *Ocherk istorii*, vol. 2, 103-4.

<sup>430</sup> Botkin, *Pis'ma*, 45, 139.

<sup>431</sup> “Greene’s Report from August 2/14, 1877,” Dispatches of US Ministers to Russia, 1808-1906, Department of State, National Archives of the United States, Washington, DC, Reference Group 65, Reel 32, document 212.

<sup>432</sup> N. I. Pirogov, *Voenno-vrachebnoe delo i chastnaia pomoshch' na teatre voiny v Bolgarii i v tylu deistvuiushchei armii v 1877-1878 gg.*, vol. 2 (St. Petersburg: Glavnoe upravlenie Obschestva popecheniia o ranenyykh i bol'nykh voynakh, 1879), 50-51; K. K. Iskerskii, *Voyna 1877-78 gg: Prichiny razvitiia tifozykh epidemii, ot kotorykh taiali nashi voiska vo vremiia voiny 1877-78g.g. Mery portiv etogo zla v budushchem* (St. Petersburg: N. V. Vasil'ev, 1897), 14-18.

necessity expanded the scale and scope of activities the Red Cross conducted in the Russo-Turkish War, especially in the Danubian theater. However, as we shall see, expansion of mission did not translate into freedom of action.

### **The Russian Red Cross in the Russo-Turkish War**

Prior to the outbreak of hostilities, military planners at the Main Headquarters (*Glavnaia kvartira*) largely ignored the Red Cross in the plans for war. Believing that the war would be short and swift, the generals permitted private aid a restricted, supportive role in Romania and the border provinces inside the Russian empire. These were not outlandish plans, considering the Red Cross suffered from limited resources and a weakened reputation after its campaign in Serbia. A 6 March letter from the Main Headquarters to Prince V. I. Cherkasskii, the Red Cross's Main Plenipotentiary in the Danubian theater, instructed the organization to set up a series of etappe points along railroad lines in Romania.<sup>433</sup> The army intended for these private facilities to feed evacuated soldiers and provide small lazarettos where the most critical patients could convalesce.<sup>434</sup> This role for the Red Cross made sense to Russian generals, who envisioned thousands of casualties during the initial operation to cross the Danube and feared that the limited number of sanitary trains in Romania would make it difficult to evacuate all patients to Iași, the border town with Russia.<sup>435</sup> But tsarist

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<sup>433</sup> Prior to the outbreak of hostilities, the empress named Prince V. A. Cherkasskii to be the head of the Red Cross in the Danubian theater of war. A member of Elena Pavlovna's clique, Cherkasskii worked on the emancipation problem in the 1850s, helped N. A. Miliutin subdue Poland after 1863, and served as the mayor of Moscow for several years in the 1870s. A sound track record in the imperial bureaucracy and close connections to the court made Cherkasskii a logical choice to head operations in the theater of war. But, as Cherkasskii's biographer later admitted, this bureaucrat was not the best candidate to head the Russian Red Cross's wartime operations. The prince was overburdened with the task of managing the nascent state in occupied Bulgaria and possessed scant knowledge of the Red Cross's mission, structure, or procedures. See: D. Anuchin, "Kniaz' V. A. Cherkasskii i grazhdanskoe upravlenie v Bolgarii. 1877-1878 gg.," *Russkaia starina* 83 (March 1895): 13-19; Ovsianyi, *Russkoe upravlenie v Bolgarii*, vol. 1, 88.

<sup>434</sup> *Meditsinskii vestnik*, May 7, 1877, 207.

<sup>435</sup> GARF, f. 642, op. 1, d. 346, ll. 139-40.

troops executed the river crossing excellently and suffered few cases of disease during the war's first act, so the few Romanian sanitary trains proved adequate at first, and these etappe stations seemed unnecessary.<sup>436</sup>

The Russians' crossing of the Danube caught the Red Cross by surprise, since General Dragomirov had kept the time and location of the assault secret. Once the Russians secured the southern shore of the river, Cherkasskii sent volunteer parties to search for wounded soldiers concealed in the reeds along the Danube, and these parties found a few casualties as late as six days after the crossing.<sup>437</sup> Still, the Red Cross lacked plans for how to help beyond the Danube, which led organizers such as Cherkasskii and N. S. Abaza, the Main Plenipotentiary in the Iași-Kishinev region, to expend too many resources improving their facilities in the rear in Romania and within the Russian empire.

By August, after the first two battles of Plevna had made it apparent the Russians were in for a slog and needed medical facilities closer to the front, Cherkasskii met with the army's chief medical officers to discuss how to involve the Red Cross in Bulgaria. A report on this meeting delivered to the Main Directorate indicated that the military wanted outside help, but generals remained hesitant to give private aid too much leeway in the theater of war. This meeting concluded that it was unwise to increase the number of independent, nonmilitary medical facilities south of the Danube, but the Red Cross should provide complements of doctors and nurses to the overtaxed military hospitals in Bulgaria and deliver

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<sup>436</sup> Botkin, *Pis'ma*, 13, 35.

<sup>437</sup> N. R. Ovsianyi, *Russkoe upravlenie v Bolgarii v 1877-78-79 gg.*, vol. 1 (St Petersburg: Voennno-istoricheskaia komissiia Glavnogo Shtaba, 1906), 48-49.

dressings and medicines to these facilities. Additionally, the military requested they extend the network of etappe points along the evacuation lines in Bulgaria.<sup>438</sup>

Russia's system for evacuating the wounded was inadequate for handling the numbers of casualties produced at Plevna. Fallen soldiers received first aid at the dressing station, were examined next at the division lazarettos, and then were evacuated to Zimnicea if their wounds were serious. From Zimnicea, they crossed the Danube over a pontoon bridge and boarded trains bound for the Russian border at the Romanian town of Frățești. Prior to August, this system was slow and inefficient, but the bottlenecks in Romania did not too grave a threat there were very few evacuees. After the outrages at Plevna and as the summer weather turned cold and rainy, the military medical authorities requested that the Red Cross become more involved with evacuation by building winterized barracks in Zimnicea.<sup>439</sup>

Under P. A. Rikhter's oversight and with additional funds from several banks in St. Petersburg, the Red Cross set up barracks for three hundred patients and managed the transfer of evacuees, who arrived by cart from Bulgaria and left Frățești by train. At this facility, Red Cross workers sorted, fed, cleaned, and tended patients as they awaited the sanitary trains. Patients too seriously wounded or sick for travel were removed from the main body of evacuees and housed in nearby military hospitals or private lazarettos. In an odd reversal of roles, the military put rank-and-file troops at the disposal of the civilian volunteers to help with orderly duties and sanitation. The Red Cross's Zimnicea facility served as the major evacuation point for soldiers from Plevna until April 1878, when the spring thaw and end of hostilities enabled the Russians to evacuate patients by boat along the

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<sup>438</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 38, ll. 255-56.

<sup>439</sup> P. A. Rikhter, *Krasnyi Krest v Rumynii i Severnoi Bolgarii 1877-1878. Otchet glavnoupolnomochennogo obshchestva popecheniia o ranenykh i bol'nykh voynakh* (St. Petersburg: Rossiiskiy Krasnyi Krest, 1879), 60.



Danube. In total, no fewer than eighty-five thousand Russian patients as well as forty thousand Turkish prisoners from Plevna passed through the Zimnicea evacuation point.<sup>440</sup> The logistical burden of sorting and transporting this mass of people proved a tremendous task for the Red Cross.

The Balkans posed an unusual challenge for railroads, because all transports had to be unloaded and reloaded at the hubs in Iași or Bender, where the narrower European tracks met the Russian ones. Despite advice from the Germans on railroad evacuation and two borrowed trains from Dresden and Berlin, it took the Russians months to begin rail evacuations. Success in this endeavor was due in part due to the efforts of M. S. Sabinina, Maria Aleksandrovna's agent, tasked with overseeing evacuation in Kishinev.<sup>441</sup>

Inside Romania, the Red Cross at first established four evacuation commissions, but the profusion of administrative bodies proved so burdensome that they centralized all operations in Bucharest. With ten sanitary trains at its disposal, the evacuation commission moved evacuees across Romania to Iași, where they boarded Russian trains or placed the most serious patients in nearby lazarettos. The Iași commission initially sought to distribute all of its patients to temporary medical facilities along rail lines in the Kiev, Odessa, and Kharkov military districts. To prevent epidemics from spreading to civilian population centers, the military ordered that patients with the most serious diseases remain close to the Romanian border. Patients with less serious illnesses were sent deeper into Russia. Wounded soldiers were often dispatched to their home provinces to convalesce.<sup>442</sup>

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<sup>440</sup> Rikhter, *Krasnyi krest*, 48.

<sup>441</sup> RGVIA, fond 12651, op. 1, d. 38, ll. 11-12, 30.

<sup>442</sup> Gladkikh and Kriuchkov, *Ocherk istorii*, vol. 2, 100.

Civilian doctors worked out a system of identifying evacuees by colored cards. The most serious cases were assigned red cards and required to stay in Frățești, green cards went to the second category who were admitted to lazarettos along the railroad lines in Romania, and yellow cards went to soldiers healthy enough to make it to Iași and beyond. This system presented problems after the battles of Plevna, when the number of evacuees arriving in Frățești reached three thousand per day; patients lost their cards and exchanged tickets with one another; or the staff ran out of cards all together. Frățești became another bottleneck in the evacuation network. Here, agents outfitted several barracks and warehouses near the railroad station to house over two thousand patients. The volunteer medical team numbered only a few dozen and could process no more than several hundred patients per day, but the number of arrivals kept growing during the siege of Plevna. In total, the facility in Frățești processed over eighty thousand patients during and after the war.<sup>443</sup>

Russian forces in Bulgaria began to suffer from the typhus epidemic well before hostilities commenced in January 1878, and Red Cross agents feared the slow speed of railroad evacuation posed a threat to the army's health. Again Sabinina sped off, this time to Vienna, to rent and outfit barges for water evacuation along the Danube when the ice broke in the spring. Even though water evacuation demanded a costly investment up front, the system worked well, and at no point in Reni or elsewhere did patients suffer the bustle or overcrowding that occurred at railheads in Zimnicea, Frățești, or Iași.<sup>444</sup> In the autumn of 1878, with the Black Sea reopened to Russian navigation, the Red Cross began transporting

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<sup>443</sup> Rikhter, *Krasnyi krest*, 69-71, 81.

<sup>444</sup> *Ibid.*, 157-59.

men from wharfs along the Danube to the port cities of Nikolaev, Odessa, Sevastopol', and Feodosia.

From June 1877 to March 1879, the Russians evacuated over 200,800 patients and Turkish prisoners; of these, roughly 126,000 traveled by train, and the other 82,000 went by sea. One Red Cross agent noted that only ninety of these evacuees died on the crossing to Odessa, a low number he found fantastic.<sup>445</sup> Over half of all evacuees received shelter and treatment in Red Cross facilities in Russia.<sup>446</sup> Despite delays, miscommunication, and discomfort, evacuation was one area in which the Russians enjoyed success in the Russo-Turkish War. The army and Red Cross worked together, not without occasional friction, to move tens of thousands of soldiers from remote war zones to medical facilities within the empire in spite of logistical challenges involving poor roads, different types of railroad, and no access to the sea for the first half of the project.

The Red Cross significantly reduced its activities in Bulgaria and Romania in July 1878 as troops returned home. Only two sanitary trains operated in Romania by midsummer, and the evacuation barges made their final trips at the beginning of October. In the autumn, the Red Cross kept five small hospitals in Northern Bulgaria, and most staff returned to Russia. Henceforth, the army intended to provide all medical care for soldiers. What the army did not foresee was that the sanitary situation would worsen as epidemics struck in the winter of 1878.<sup>447</sup>

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<sup>445</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 49, ll. 138-40; RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d.1311, ll. 33-35; RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1311, l. 38.

<sup>446</sup> Gladkikh and Kriuchkov, *Ocherk istorii*, vol. 2, 101-2.

<sup>447</sup> S. V. Shakhovskii, *Deiatel'nosti Krasnogo Kresta pri okkupatsionnykh russkikh voiskakh v kniazhestve bolgarskom i vostochnoi rumelii 1878-1879 god* (St. Petersburg: Glavnoe Upravlenie ROKK, 1880), 6-10.

In September, E. K. Veis became the new director of Red Cross operations in Bulgaria. His tours of military hospitals in the autumn revealed startling shortages of supplies and poor care. It seems that, as the Red Cross withdrew, the military did nothing to expand its medical capacities in Bulgaria. Veis redirected supplies destined for Bucharest, but he soon realized that the sanitary problems were more serious than the Red Cross or army could handle. As the need grew, the Red Cross again expanded operations in Bulgaria. In mid-October, the Red Cross renewed evacuations by water and train. A dispute with Romania soon shut down Russian access to rail lines across the country, so Dr. A. N. Veis, the new Red Cross agent in Bulgaria, had to rent and outfit additional barges to conduct evacuation by water. In July 1879, Russian forces began to leave the Balkans en masse. As the troops left, the Red Cross halted operations. Once the military hospitals closed, the Red Cross distributed back-pay to its remaining employees and purchased nurses second-class rail tickets home. A post-occupation report claimed the Red Cross spent 158,518 francs on operations south of the Danube from September 1878 to August 1879.<sup>448</sup> This sum was considerably smaller than expenditures during the war, but so was the mission.

With fewer soldiers located in the theater of war and the duress of battle not weighing on army medical services, generals should have ended the Red Cross's mission. Still, even in peacetime, the Red Cross found duties the military was ill-prepared to handle, such as providing the troops warm clothing and helping with evacuation. One author complained that the quality of the medical care fell substantially in military hospitals once the Red Cross was shut out.<sup>449</sup>

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<sup>448</sup> Ibid., 16-17, 25-32, 41-51, 69, 76.

<sup>449</sup> Ibid., 11-13.

## Mobile Ambulances

Dreamed up by Henri Dunant as an alternative to military first responders who were apt to abandon the wounded in retreats, this type of sanitary unit won little love from military commanders, who demanded civilians stay away from the front. To the Russian Red Cross, these types of units provided volunteers with the romantic opportunity to serve at the front as Pirogov had fifty years prior. Highly-mobile, adaptable units also seemed to complement Russian military tactics and needs in war. Mobile ambulances could follow cavalry units on raids deep within enemy territory and set up isolated medical stations in the Balkan and Caucasus mountains. Russia experimented with these types of ambulances during the interventions in Serbia and Montenegro, and they appeared to be a useful way of delivering civilian medical aid to a shifting battlefield. The Russian military also desperately needed all types of help after major engagements produced unforeseen numbers of casualties. Even though the army wanted to keep civilians away from the front, commanders reluctantly admitted mobile ambulances when they needed them.<sup>450</sup>

In the Russo-Turkish War, Romanov princesses and court favorites sponsored at least five of these brigades, which were often attached to privileged Guards units. Reportedly, in August 1877, after the Turks repulsed the initial Russian advance at Plevna, Empress Maria Aleksandrovna personally interdicted to support the Guards at the front. The empress first solicited approval from Count I. I. Vorontsov-Dashkov, the Chief of the Staff of the Guards Corps and an early Red Cross advocate, to sponsor several mobile ambulances to dispatch

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<sup>450</sup> Dr. N. V. Sklifosovskii, a civilian volunteer present at Plevna, estimated that 9,500 wounded soldiers passed through one military hospital during the four days after the second assault in August 1877. Sklifosovskii liked the idea of mobile ambulances, but he conceded that they should probably be staffed by members of the military sanitary services. See N. V. Sklifosovskii, "V gospitaliakh i na perevizochnykh punktakh vo vremia turetskoi voiny," *Voенno-meditinskii zhurnal* 132 (July 1878): 164.

with this corps in August 1877 for the penultimate assault on Plevna. Arriving in Bulgaria at the end of the month, Rikhter initially directed the brigades to work in military hospitals in Zimnicea and Sistovo; these facilities suffered staff shortages because all of the doctors had left to man the dressing stations around Plevna. As the main medical station between the multiple fronts in Bulgaria and the evacuation route through Romania, Sistovo's Wartime Hospital Number Fifty saw over ten thousand patients during these period.<sup>451</sup> Coordinating directly with General Gurko, these brigades provided relief at the Battles of Gornyi Duniak and Third Plevna. Even though these units were mobile and independent, they seem to have offered assistance to divisional lazarettos inundated with tremendous numbers of wounded, as they did at Plevna, or followed orders from military doctors to set up dressing stations and collect the wounded at the front, tasks they performed at Gornyi Duniak.<sup>452</sup>

In the rear of the army, the mobile ambulances set up etappe stations to feed wounded soldiers during the evacuation by cart, a journey that might take several days from the front to Sistovo depending on traffic and weather. When needed, these etappes could set up lazarettos in tents or houses to treat ambulatory patients or provide spaces for evacuees to convalesce. Once the cold weather set in, the mobile ambulances distributed blankets, boots, hats, and other winter clothing to the poorly supplied troops. When the mobile ambulances crossed the Balkans with Russian forces in December, the agents who led them ran out of funds and found themselves unable to wire Cherkasskii for help. Military authorities intervened by providing loans to Red Cross agents to continue relief activities. The mobile ambulances' journey ended when Russian forces occupied the Bulgarian city of Plovdiv in

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<sup>451</sup> GARF, f. 642, op. 1, d. 350, ll. 1-2.

<sup>452</sup> GARF, f. 642, op. 1, d. 350, ll. 9-10; Rikhter, *Krasnyi krest*, 24-29.

January. At the time, typhus wracked the remaining population, so the civilian aid workers quarantined and treated sick civilians and disposed of corpses and dead animals. The epidemic took its toll on the occupiers, and several of the Red Cross workers perished from disease during this campaign.<sup>453</sup>

Despite the setback in Plovdiv, the Red Cross upheld the mobile ambulances as ideal for deploying private aid to the theater of war.<sup>454</sup> Commanders such as Gurko appreciated the hasty and diverse types of aid the mobile ambulance could deliver. The Red Cross believed it had provided invaluable help to armies on the move by listening to the generals' needs and adroitly adapting to meet a diverse range of challenges.<sup>455</sup> Mobile ambulances seemed an attractive and cheap option for the Red Cross, but Russia's unfamiliarity with controlling independent sanitary units in a war zone posed new problems for coordinating between the military and private aid. For example, Sklifosovskii tore out of Zimnicea with a mobile ambulance destined for Plevna with sixteen Red Cross nurses, all of whom were supposed to work at an army hospital that was already over-capacity. One witness lamented that dressings went unchanged for days and rank-and-file soldiers failed to receive provisions in a timely manner at this facility.<sup>456</sup> Still, additional care at critical junctures prompted the Red Cross to embrace the mobile ambulance as the primary method for delivering aid to the battlefield. As a result of the experiences from the Russo-Turkish War, these small, independent units became central to the Russian Red Cross's understanding of its wartime mission.

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<sup>453</sup> GARF, f. 642, op. 1, d. 350, ll. 7-8, 13, 16-17, 24, 29-33, 34-35, 37.

<sup>454</sup> GARF, f. 642, op. 1, d. 350, ll. 42-43.

<sup>455</sup> GARF, f. 642, op. 1, d. 350, ll. 44-45.

<sup>456</sup> Rikhter, *Krasnyi krest*, 29.

To facilitate the disbursement of supplies to military and private aid facilities near the front, the Red Cross established a warehouse in Bucharest. From Bucharest, supplies were disseminated to the smaller Red Cross depots located near all of the major hospitals. Despite the delays, Rikhter was pleased with the Red Cross's ability to deliver materials to medical facilities in Romania and northern Bulgaria, but military doctors complained that supplies too often arrived unevenly and in poor condition.<sup>457</sup> Other large orders of supplies were purchased in Vienna or Berlin by agents abroad.<sup>458</sup> Most of the supplies seem to have been bedding, clothing, underwear, shoes, and other items to keep wounded soldiers warm and comfortable. The newspaper *Golos* listed donations of 130,000 shirts, 80,000 pairs of long johns, 50,000 sheets, 27,000 sweaters, and nearly 1,000,000 bandages by November 1877, much of which was sewn by the ladies of St. Petersburg and Moscow. The Russian wounded may not have been eager to put their noses in the thirty-five thousand books donated for their enjoyment, but the Romanovs and other elites showed they had the troops' best interests in mind when they donated thousands of cases of wine and liquor for convalescents.<sup>459</sup>

One frustration for the Red Cross was the many formalities burdening the delivery of luxury materials, such as certain foods, tobacco, or alcohol, and the fact that military facilities had to request these items before agents could make such deliveries. Red Cross volunteers at times felt the wounded deserved greater food and comforts during hospital stays than the military allowed, but the decision to permit these luxury items lay solely with the military medical authorities. Worried that this opulence undermined discipline, one military

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<sup>457</sup> Ibid., 230-32; Amenitskii, "Zametki," *Voенно-медицинский журнал* 138 (June 1880): 113-14, 117-18.

<sup>458</sup> GARF, f. 642, op. 1, d. 346, l. 141.

<sup>459</sup> *Golos*, December 17, 1877, 1-2.



doctor remarked that the food in the Red Cross hospitals was on par with the best restaurants in St. Petersburg and “this luxury was not useful and even in few cases downright harmful.”<sup>460</sup> Some military hospitals rebuked the Red Cross’s offers of help, which led to shortages of bedding and clothing.<sup>461</sup> In total, the storehouse in Bucharest cost the Red Cross more than 270,000 rubles, an expense that indicates the amount of material this organization distributed in Romania.<sup>462</sup>

The Ministry of War relied on the Red Cross to provide carts and ambulances to transport wounded soldiers to evacuation stations, a task some officials regarded as a burden well suited for private aid in war. Agents outfitted around one thousand horse-drawn wagons and ambulances in both the theater of war and within the borders of the empire during this conflict.<sup>463</sup> The most popular type of vehicle was the Zavadovskii-type ambulance, a two-wheeled, sprung cart that could fit two supine patients or four sitting soldiers. The Main Directorate held a campaign to raise funds to purchase these vehicles, which netted seventy thousand rubles in the autumn of 1877 as well as donations of individual ambulances and wagons.<sup>464</sup> Red Cross officials hoped to organize these carts into independent convoys, but the military had designs of its own for these carts. Tsar Alexander II interceded on behalf of

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<sup>460</sup> V. I. Priselkov, *Vasilii Ivanovich Priselkov, 1829-1894 (Iz vospominaniia sosluzhivtsa)* (Odessa: Novorossiiskii telegraf, 1895), 271.

<sup>461</sup> Rikhter, *Krasnyi krest*, 247.

<sup>462</sup> Rikhter, listed this number at seventy thousand francs which equals around twenty-seven thousand rubles. Both Rikhter and his contemporary N. S. Abaza denominated some incomes and expenditures in francs. Abaza cited “1 ruble=2.558 francs” as the average conversion between these two currencies during the Russo-Turkish War. I denote all sums in rubles using this conversion rate. See Abaza, vol. 2, 399 and Rikhter, *Krasnyi Krest*, 251.

<sup>463</sup> Rikhter, *Krasnyi Krest*, 92-93.

<sup>464</sup> Again he listed 174,000 francs in the original source. Rikhter, *Krasnyi Krest*, 95.

the army and insisted Cherkasskii surrender the vehicles, a move that upset members of the Main Directorate, who felt the Red Cross's resources were not for the army to commandeer arbitrarily.<sup>465</sup>

In the theater of war, a medical student or feldsher usually headed Red Cross convoys, with local peasants hired as drivers. In total, from October 1877 to early March 1878, the Red Cross transported roughly 4,700 patients by road from Zimnicea to Frățești, and delivered cargo, sanitary personnel, and even healthy soldiers to the front, a violation of the Geneva Convention. Citing confusion and cost, the army took control of all road transportation on 1 March 1878, after the war had ended. For the Red Cross, road transportation turned out to be very costly: It spent nearly eight hundred thousand francs on vehicles, drivers, horses, and fodder during this war.<sup>466</sup>

### **Red Cross Personnel**

During the Russo-Turkish War, an unprecedented number of Russians subjects volunteered for the Red Cross for altruistic and patriotic motives. This group ranged from talented bureaucrats and medical professionals to amateurs and opportunists. In St. Petersburg, the chairman of the Red Cross, A. K. Baumgarten, oversaw the Main Directorate and reported directly to Empress Maria Aleksandrovna. Baumgarten seemed a logical candidate for this post because he had led troops during the Hungarian campaign of 1848, seen a great deal of the Crimean War, participated in the Great Reforms as a member of the Military Council—the state body that oversaw changes to the army—and later headed the

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<sup>465</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 11., 282-84.

<sup>466</sup> Rikhter, *Krasnyi Krest*, 110.

Main Military Hospital Committee.<sup>467</sup> During the Russo-Turkish War, Baumgarten oversaw the day-to-day activities of two special commissions, the Executive and Revision committees, to manage the Red Cross's operations in the theater of war and finances.<sup>468</sup> Maria Fedorovna, the wife of Tsarevich Alexander, appeared more frequently at Red Cross meetings during the war as well. The written records are silent on what she did at these gatherings, but this campaign must have served as a training opportunity for her to learn the ropes of the national aid society that she would soon head.

In the theater of war, the Red Cross deployed a network of agents to run individual facilities. Prior to the outbreak of hostilities, the empress named Prince V. A. Cherkasskii to be the head of the Red Cross in the Danubian theater. Cherkasskii's role as the chief Red Cross administrator was problematic because Alexander II also tasked him with being the head civil administrator in occupied Bulgaria. The responsibility of managing a nascent state in Bulgaria, a duty complicated by local Slavs' violent retributions against their Muslim neighbors, overburdened this aged prince. He further gaffed by trying to circumvent the Main Directorate with indirect appeals to the empress and direct appeals in the press, moves that won him no love from Red Cross advocates.<sup>469</sup> Overwork took its toll on Cherkasskii, who died suddenly on 19 February 1878. His successor, S. F. Paniutin, was a former officer and civil servant in Poland who had participated in Red Cross work in Serbia the year before.<sup>470</sup>

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<sup>467</sup> See "A. K. Baumgarten," *Russkii biographicheskii slovar'*, vol. 2, ed. A. A. Polovtsov (St Petersburg: Glavnoe Upravlenie Udelov, 1900), 596.

<sup>468</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 38, ll. 85-86.

<sup>469</sup> S. P. Botkin, *Pis'ma*, 30, 63, 273-74, 318; D. Anuchin, "Kniaz' V. A. Cherkasskii i grazhdanskoe upravlenie v Bolgarii. 1877-11878 gg.," *Ruskaia starina* (March 1895): 13-19; Ovsianyi, *Russkoe upravlenie*, 88.

<sup>470</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1311, l. 1.

Besides Cherkasskii, the most important Red Cross agent was the military physician and governor of Riazan, N. S. Abaza, who was headquartered in Kishinev and managed Red Cross services throughout southern Ukraine (*Novorossia*). Once Cherkasskii passed into Bulgaria in the summer of 1877, the Main Directorate recalled P. A. Rikhter, the former Red Cross agent to Montenegro, and sent him to manage operations in Romania. General M. N. Tolstoi acted as the agent in the Caucasian theater of war. These men often fought with the Main Directorate and one another over funding allowances. Conversely, the Main Directorate regularly questioned whether all the requests for additional funding were warranted.<sup>471</sup> The responsibility for relief operations in the theaters of war made the agents easy scapegoats for bureaucrats in St. Petersburg, generals, and journalists.

The most crucial personnel in the field were doctors, and patriotic sympathies attracted some of Russia's best medical minds to Red Cross service in the Balkans and Caucasus. Abaza at first entrusted his subordinate S. P. Kolomnin to gathering a brigade of doctors with experience in the Serbian-Turkish War to serve in the rear lazarettos in southern Russia. Later, S. P. Botkin, the second most famous doctor in tsarist Russia behind Pirogov, selected many of the Red Cross doctors for the Danubian theater. Pay for doctors was fixed at two hundred rubles per month, a salary lower than many would have enjoyed at home, but pay was surely not the motivating factor that caused these men to volunteer. The Red Cross had no trouble recruiting famous physicians such as K. K. Reier, E. V. Pavlov, S. P.

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<sup>471</sup> One example is the fight over monthly allowances between Cherkasskii, Rikhter, and the Main Directorate. See, for example, RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 38, l. 183. Another is Cherkasskii's complaint that the Main Directorate withheld funds from him or paid him late. See RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 49, ll. 104-7. Abaza got into trouble for overspending his budget, and the Main Directorate tried to exercise greater control over him by demanding he file monthly reports on the number of patients treated in the medical facilities in his region. See RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 38, ll. 292-94; RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 49, l. 68.

Kolomnin, and N. V. Sklifosovskii. Even Pirogov, at age sixty-seven, offered his services as a consultant and inspector.

Most of these volunteers had graduated from the Medical-Surgical Academy and knew the demands of battlefield surgery. To supplement the professionals, the Red Cross welcomed fifth-year medical students from the universities and a few women who had completed the medical course in St. Petersburg.<sup>472</sup> In total, Abaza's region had 126 doctors and 8 female physicians serve during the war.<sup>473</sup> Rikhter employed forty-six doctors and pharmacists in the evacuation points and lazarettos in Romania and Bulgaria.<sup>474</sup> In temporary hospitals within Russia, zemstvo doctors and private practitioners donated their skills or received payments from local Red Cross committees.

Women doctors made up a small group of medical volunteers in the Russo-Turkish War. Miliutin had created this cohort at the Medical-Surgical Academy as an experiment in the 1870s, but Russian law limited opportunities for these women to practice medicine independently or even call themselves "doctors." P. A. Ilinskii, the chief physician for the military secondary schools in St. Petersburg and a well-known medical publicist, listed forty female doctors who distinguished themselves during the Russo-Turkish War. Their success, Ilinskii argued, demonstrated women's professional talents and proved that Russia must expand medical opportunities for women.<sup>475</sup>

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<sup>472</sup> Rikhter, *Krasnyi Krest*, 259-61.

<sup>473</sup> Abaza, *Krasnyi Krest*, vol. 2, 25, 29.

<sup>474</sup> Rikhter, *Krasnyi Krest*, 281.

<sup>475</sup> P. A. Ilinskii, *Golos*, December 4, 1877, 2; idem, *Russkaia Zhenshchina v voinu 1877-1878 g.* (St. Petersburg: P. I. Schmidt, 1879), 141-142; 185. The critic of the Red Cross, military surgeon N. A. Amenitskii admitted that these women served well as physicians during the Russo-Turkish War. They may not have had surgical experience before they arrived, but they quickly learned the art of amputation on the job. Even though these doctors's talents equaled their male peers, Amenitskii still concluded that women's lack of strength and the possibility for scandals in field hospitals should confine women physicians to civilian medicine only. See N.

The popular discourse on medicine in the Russo-Turkish War upheld female nurses' accomplishments as the brightest spot on the Red Cross's record. The Crimean War showed that this project was possible, and the experience in the Balkans again convinced observers that nurses provided a necessary component to wartime medicine. At first, the Red Cross called on Sisters of Mercy from the nursing societies, and up to three hundred of these women answered, but these numbers were far too few to meet the army's or private aid's needs. Russia's largest nursing society, Assuage My Tears in Moscow, provided only about 150 nurses throughout the conflict, and some of these women joined the order during the war.<sup>476</sup> To avoid the problems encountered in the Serbo-Turkish War, when Russian women of questionable skill and character presented themselves at lazarettos as nurses, the Main Directorate organized accelerated nursing courses at major hospitals. These courses trained as many as 3,000 nurses during the war, and P. A. Ilinskii estimated that up to 1,300 nurses served in the theaters of war, with 270 in the Caucasus, and perhaps an additional 1,000 on the home front.<sup>477</sup> Many of these women worked as Red Cross liaisons to the largest military hospitals, where women received salaries of thirty rubles per month.<sup>478</sup> Even if nurses were in short supply, these women's commitment to their work, one proponent stressed,

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A. Amenitskii, "Zametki o deiatel'nosti 63-go voenno-vremennago gosspitalia vo vremia turetskoi voiny 1877 i 1878 godov," *Voенno-meditsinskii zhurnal* 137 (January 1880): 59-60.

<sup>476</sup> Ilinskii, *Ruskaia zhenshchina*, 159; *Zametki po voprosam otnosiashchimsia k deiatel'nosti Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta v minuvshuiu voinu 1877-1878gg.* (St. Petersburg: A. Transhel, 1879), 53.

<sup>477</sup> P. A. Ilinskii, *Ruskaia zhenshchina*, 25, 33, 36; A. A. Shibnov, "Vozniknovenie i osnovnye napravleniia razvitiia Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta (1867-1917)," in *Materialy nauchnoi konferentsii, posviashchennoi 100-letiiu Krasnogo Kresta v SSSR (sostoivsheisia 8 iunია 1967 g.)*, eds A. P. Minishakin, E. F. Selivanov A. A. Shibkov (Moscow: Meditsina, 1968), 15.

<sup>478</sup> GARF f. 642, op. 1, d. 346, l. 21.

demonstrated that Russian women had become conscious of their “obligations as citizens (*grazhdanskie obiazannosti*).”<sup>479</sup>

Russian nurses came from diverse backgrounds and careers, and observers tended to conflate social class with medical talent and trustworthiness. Pirogov, who supported nursing societies as a means for training a professional cadre, chastised the accelerated nursing courses for failing to impart appropriate medical knowledge to the graduates and for admitting women with questionable moral characters.<sup>480</sup> Rikhter would have liked to have received more women such as Sabinina, Bakunina, or Kartseva, highly educated nobles and veterans from the Crimean War, but they were few and older. When noblewomen were employed, they often served as head nurses, managing groups of underlings in a single hospital.<sup>481</sup>

Most nurses entered service during the war through the accelerated nursing courses. Lasting eight weeks, these programs provided rudimentary training in anatomy, applying dressings, doling out medicines and food, and assisting the doctors. The courses were popular, and often more women tried to enter than spots permitted, but the academic demands weeded out amateurs. In one case, of the 250 candidates who took the final exam, only 171 women passed.<sup>482</sup> One memoirist believed, “the real trial was to pass the training course in the hospital; those who survived it could be certain of their strengths and cross the Danube without fear.”<sup>483</sup> The nurses’ salary of thirty rubles per month, a low wage in tsarist

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<sup>479</sup> P. A. Ilinskii, *Golos*, December 4, 1877, 2.

<sup>480</sup> Pirogov, *Voenno-vrachebnoe delo*, vol. 1, 335.

<sup>481</sup> Rikhter, *Krasnyi Krest*, 268-69.

<sup>482</sup> Ilinskii, *Ruskaia zhenshchina v voinu*, 11.

<sup>483</sup> Petrochenko, “*Zapiski sestry ‘Krasnogo kresta*,”” *Kolos’ia* (July-August, 1884): 323.

Russia, was a level of compensation that still encouraged women at the bottom of the educated classes to volunteer.<sup>484</sup> Literate and possessing some secondary education, these women gave military nursing the legitimacy it needed to survive in tsarist Russia. At least half of the nurses came from the lowest social classes, and their capabilities and discipline were suspect.<sup>485</sup> The Red Cross, it appears, wanted nurses who served out of selfless devotion to Russia and its soldiers, not women of questionable background or repute seeking payment or adventure.

Although advocates for private aid such as Pirogov and Ilinskii stressed that these women's self-sacrifice and commitment to duty won them places in military medicine, the commanders of military hospitals often displayed cool attitudes toward the nurses, a new group of intruders whom they not know how to employ or control.<sup>486</sup> Some medical officers found it irritating that civilian nurses drew salaries from the state but were formally subordinate to the head nurse and Red Cross agents, members of a voluntary association.<sup>487</sup> When medical officers treated nurses as employees of the army (*voennye sestry miloserdiia*) subjected to military discipline, they drew obloquy from Red Cross advocates who wanted to keep private aid independent.<sup>488</sup>

Several accounts suggested that the nurses worked better during the war and evacuation because burdensome work schedules provided little opportunity to misbehave.

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<sup>484</sup> RG VIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 49, ll. 134-35.

<sup>485</sup> Rikhter, *Krasnyi Krest*, 274-76.

<sup>486</sup> Amenitskii, "Zametki," *Voенно-медицинский журнал* 138 (June 1880): 111-12.

<sup>487</sup> Shakhovskii, *Deiatel'nosti Krasnogo Kresta*, 18.

<sup>488</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-21.



After the peace and epidemic, when the glut of wounded and sick decreased, discipline among the nurses grew lax. Some women stopped changing dressings, visiting tents, or distributing food, and quarrels between nurses and non-nurses broke out more frequently.<sup>489</sup> Shakhovskii believed that the small number of Red Cross agents overseeing relief work in northern Bulgaria encouraged nurses to neglect their duties in hospitals to pursue amusements. Nurses socialized and cooked for officers or doctors, rented rooms in private homes away from the hospitals, traveled the countryside, or slipped into civilian clothes to frequent cafes and theaters.<sup>490</sup> As violations grew more visible, Red Cross agents, head nurses, and hospital commanders identified the bad apples and sent them home. For Rikhter, the remedy was to exclude poorly educated or lowly bred women from nursing work and keep the pace of duties strenuous so that quiet periods did not lead to boredom.<sup>491</sup> Pirogov believed that the Red Cross must keep “soldiers’ views of women” in mind when they selected nurses, a prescription intended to bar coquettes from military hospitals.<sup>492</sup>

Red Cross nurses were always in short supply and overworked for much of the war. Prewar plans sought to outfit sixteen nurses per wartime hospital, which would have created a nurse-to-patient ration of 1:40, hardly a guarantee of attentive care. However, shortages of nurses and overcrowding in hospitals made the ratio often exceed one hundred patients per nurse.<sup>493</sup> Nurses also served in the evacuation stations, rear hospitals, and on sanitary trains and barges. The stresses of war took their tolls on these women. Crowded, disease-infested

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<sup>489</sup> Rikhter, *Krasnyi Krest*, 269-71.

<sup>490</sup> Shakhovskii, *Deiatel'nosti Krasnogo Kresta*, 21-22.

<sup>491</sup> Rikhter, *Krasnyi Krest*, 270-71.

<sup>492</sup> Pirogov, *Voenno-vrachebnoe delo*, vol. 1, 335.

<sup>493</sup> *Zametki po voprosam otnosiashchimsia k deiatel'nosti Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, 55.

hospitals caused many to take ill. Of the 131 nurses from the Crimean Blagoveshensk Society who served in the war, 124 came down with typhus or dysentery, and two died. Ilinskii estimated that more than forty Red Cross nurses perished during the war.<sup>494</sup> *Golos* reported that wartime traumas led one female volunteer to commit suicide.<sup>495</sup> And the postwar reception many of these women received gave little respite from their hardships. Unlike soldiers, nurses won no pensions, housing, or easy access to medical care from the state. Health and mental problems as well as poverty plagued many of these women for years after they returned home.<sup>496</sup> Ivan Turgenev captured this indifference in his poem “To the Memory of U. P. Vrevsky,” an ode to a Red Cross nurse dying of typhus in Bulgaria: “But grievous it is to think that no one said thanks even to her dead body, though she was shy and shrank from all thanks.”<sup>497</sup> The Crimean War made Bakunina and Kartsova heroines, but these were women of means, and they remained heroines after the Russo-Turkish War. Repeated calls in the 1880s and 1890s to establish pensions for Red Cross nurses reveal the true state of affairs for many of these women.

### **Private Aid in the Caucasian Theater**

The Red Cross’s activities in the Caucasian theater of war were far more limited than in Europe, and the geography and war in the east posed different challenges than in the Balkans. It seems as if the Ministry of War had fewer ambitions to incorporate private aid into its war planning in the Caucasus, and the Main Directorate devoted fewer resources to

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<sup>494</sup> Ilinskii, *Ruskaia zhenshchina v voinu*, 163, 202.

<sup>495</sup> *Golos*, October 7, 1877, 2.

<sup>496</sup> Ilinskii, *Ruskaia zhenshchina v voinu*, 211.

<sup>497</sup> Ivan Turgenev, “To the Memory of U. P. Vrevsky,” *Dream Tales and Prose Poems*, Constance Garnett, trans. (London: William Heinemann, 1879), 275-77.

this theater. Inclement terrain and weather coupled with the Russians' inadequate clothing weakened the soldiers' capacity to ward off diseases. Firewood grew in short supply in many places, so the men had to burn dung for fuel, which one report argued spread typhus and dysentery.<sup>498</sup> Soldiers in the Caucasus were over three times more likely to come down with typhus than soldiers in the Danubian theater of war even though mortality rates among infected soldiers in the Balkans were slightly higher.<sup>499</sup> Much of the Red Cross's activities involved evacuating sick and wounded soldiers and dispatching nurses and supplies to army hospitals.<sup>500</sup> The army informed the Red Cross that it possessed fifty-six military hospitals in the Caucasus, over half of which were functioning by 1 July 1877, so private aid need not concern itself with setting up etappe points along lines of march and evacuation routes.<sup>501</sup>

The Main Directorate only budgeted sixty thousand rubles per month for these activities and planned to send medical facilities for up to one thousand patients to the theater of war.<sup>502</sup> The Caucasus Regional Committee outfitted a hospital, which spent most of the war in Gyumri, in present-day Armenia, and later moved to Tiflis. The other four voluntary hospitals in the region came from private initiatives by Grand Duchess Ol'ga Fedorovna, the Moscow nobility, the Finish Red Cross, and the Dutch Church in St. Petersburg. These lazarettos operated in several different places during the campaign, but all moved to Tiflis around 1 January 1878 as hostilities died down.<sup>503</sup> Prince V. A. Sheremet'ev acted as the

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<sup>498</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 58, ll. 2-3.

<sup>499</sup> Beliaev, *Russko-turetskaia voina*, 411.

<sup>500</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 58, ll. 2-2a.

<sup>501</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 38, ll. 175-76.

<sup>502</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 38, ll. 169-70.

<sup>503</sup> N. Kozlov, *Voенно-медицинский отчет за войну с Турцией 1877-78 гг.* vol. 2 (St. Petersburg: A. E. Landau, 1884), 283-4.

chief agent of the Moscow nobility's lazaretto. He seems to have directed much Red Cross work in this region and even dispatched a mobile ambulance that traveled with forces all the way to Erzerum in Asiatic Turkey. Sheremet'ev's wife, Natal'ia Afanas'evna, the Duchess Ol'ga Fedorovna, and even the sixty-five-year-old E. M. Bakunina all managed lazarettos and oversaw nurses in this region.<sup>504</sup>

Since this region contained no railroads, all evacuation had to be conducted by horse-drawn cart. The Moscow nobles sent Sheremet'ev forty ambulances, which he used to evacuate the wounded. A second innovation the Red Cross experimented with was the horse-drawn stretcher, a canvas stretcher affixed to two mules instead of carried by soldiers.<sup>505</sup> The advantages of this type of arrangement were that each stretcher could carry three patients, two lightly-wounded soldiers riding the animals and one supine, and it moved more easily along rough mountain paths. Unlike in Europe, in the Caucasus, long distances and the threat of ambushes made road evacuation a much more sporadic affair. The Red Cross set up rest areas along the major roads where evacuees could receive food and medical care. In some places, they even rented houses where the evacuees could sleep. The numbers demonstrate an impressive effort to evacuate sick and wounded soldiers; for example, in January and February 1878, 5,700 patients traveled from the captured fortress of Hassan-Kala to Kars, a distance of nearly two hundred kilometers, and another 8,500 evacuees made the trek from Kars to Gyumri, a shorter and easier haul.<sup>506</sup> In April 1878, the army asked the Red Cross to expand its help with evacuation, which led to more rest stations and more frequent convoys.

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<sup>504</sup> RGVIA, fond 12651, op. 1, d. 58, l. 50.

<sup>505</sup> RGVIA, fond 12651, op. 1, d. 58, ll. 37-38.

<sup>506</sup> RGVIA, fond 12651, op. 1, d. 58, ll. 4-7.

Still, a postwar evaluation lamented that the Red Cross had devoted too few supplies to the Caucasus and hoped for greater participation in the future.<sup>507</sup> The Red Cross's contribution to the Caucasian front was relatively small, which contrasts sharply with private aid's commitment within the borders of the Russian Empire.

### **Red Cross Activities within the Russian Empire**

After war was declared on April 12, provincial committees of the Russian Red Cross with the assistance of city dumas, zemstvos, and wealthy individuals prepared hospitals and lazarettos throughout the empire. The Red Cross promised the army sixteen thousand hospital beds inside Russia, which were housed in facilities that ranged from expensive lazarettos to private homes to barns.<sup>508</sup> In total, the Red Cross set up at least 238 hospitals with as many as 25,000 beds during the Russo-Turkish War. These facilities treated 116,296 persons for a total of 2,696,998 sick days.<sup>509</sup>

A published report on the Lefortovo City Hospital demonstrates the efforts civilian authorities directed toward treating evacuees in the rear. Following the declaration of war, the Moscow City Duma appropriated one million rubles to the Red Cross. Some of these monies were set aside to outfit one thousand beds for convalescents, spread among seven of Moscow's hospitals. Administration of these temporary wards was to be shared by the duma, the provincial committee of the Red Cross, and by agents such as Prince V. M. Golitsyn, the manager of the facility at the Lefortovo City Hospital. The first wards opened in June, and by

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<sup>507</sup> RGVIA, fond 12651, op. 1, d. 58, l. 51.

<sup>508</sup> Kolomnin, *Obshchii meditsinskii ocherk*, 162.

<sup>509</sup> *Rossiiskoe Obshchestvo Krasnogo Kresta, sostoiashchee pod Avgusteishim pokrovitel'stvom ee imperatorskogo velichestva gosudaryni imperatritsy Marii Feodorovny. Ocherk vozniknovaniia i deiatel'nosti Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta* (St. Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1913), 25; *Zametki po voprosam, otnosiashchimsia k deiatel'nosti Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, 31-33.

August all were in operation.<sup>510</sup> In total, Moscow constructed eight large wards for one thousand soldiers and furnished an additional twenty-one small lazarettos with another five hundred beds, some of which were even founded by groups of workers or artisans.<sup>511</sup> The number of evacuees arriving in Moscow waned in May 1878, so the *duma* began to close smaller facilities the following month. By 1 October, all temporary wards for wounded soldiers had been shut down.<sup>512</sup>

The hospital complex at Lefortovo was perhaps the best temporary ward because it contained the Assuage My Tears nursing society. Within the nursing society's main building, workers constructed a lazaretto divided by tents into six-patient rooms. This facility prided itself on its advanced ventilation system and indoor plumbing. Also, in the summer months, workers at Lefortovo pitched large tents in the society's garden. Most of these patients came from the Balkan theater of war and arrived by railroad to the Kursk Railway Station, where they met ambulances arranged by the organization Christian Aid (*Khristianskaia pomoshch* '). Founded by Colonel A. N. Vishevskii as a way to support the troops, Christian Aid acquired thirty-five new ambulances and transported and fed over three thousand evacuees in Moscow during the course of the war. This organization won royal patronage, which helped fund its endeavors, two of which included outfitting a sanitary train and

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<sup>510</sup> Gr. Uranossov, *Lefortovskii gorodskoi hospital' dlia ranenykh i bol'nykh voinov v Moskve vo vremia voiny 1877-1878g.g.* (Moscow: S. V. Gur'lnov, 1879), 12-13, 18-19.

<sup>511</sup> For example, the Handicraft Workers Society (*Remeslennoe Obshchestvo*) outfitted its own lazaretto. See, "Gospitali Krasnogo Kresta v Moskve," *Moskovskaia meditsinskaia gazeta*, May 6, 1878, 430.

<sup>512</sup> Uranossov, *Lefortovskii gorodskoi hospital'*, 33-34.

funding an ambulatory clinic for veterans.<sup>513</sup> In total, the Lefortovo facility saw 1,321 patients over the span of fourteen months.<sup>514</sup>

The Ministry of War intervened in Moscow's efforts to support the troops in two ways. Military doctors toured the wards to determine which patients should be released: Of the 807 patients examined by a commission of doctors from the Moscow Military Hospital, 422 returned to the army. The remaining soldiers entered invalid brigades or were discharged from service. The Ministry of War also paid the society fifty kopecks per day to feed each patient, but this payment was not enough, and the *duma* subsidized additional costs for sustenance. In total, the Lefortovo facility spent only 49,347.80 rubles to support 1,321 patients for 57,605 days in the hospital.<sup>515</sup> This facility saw a significant number of the total evacuees to Moscow, since *Moskovskaia meditsinskaia gazeta* reported that, during the ten-month period from June 1877 to March 1878, only 3,985 evacuees arrived in the city.<sup>516</sup>

Private aid in war opened new opportunities for self-initiative, and the Red Cross's mission drew support from a broad swath of patriotic civilians. Crowds impatiently greeted the first train full of Russia's heroes to arrive at the Kursk Railway Station on 6 July 1877. One poor Turkish prisoner, the twenty-four-year-old Omer Suleiman, burned all over and feverish with typhus when he arrived, became a trophy of Russian humanism when he recovered at Lefortovo.<sup>517</sup> For a task as mundane as outfitting ambulances, Christian Aid

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<sup>513</sup> N. Soedov, *Istoricheskii ocherk osnovaniia deiatel'nost uchrezhdenii sostoiashego pod osobym avgusteishim pokrovotel'stvom Gosudaryni Imperatritsy komiteta "Khristsianskaia pomoshch'" Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta* (Moscow: M. G. Volchaninov, 1890), 7-8, 14-16, 28-29.

<sup>514</sup> Uranossov, *Lefortovskii gorodskoi gospital'*, 32, 43.

<sup>515</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-21, 27-28, 35, 43, 139.

<sup>516</sup> "Gospitali Krasnogo Kresta v Moskve," *Moskovskaia meditsinskaia gazeta*, May 6, 1878, 431.

<sup>517</sup> Uranossov, *Lefortovskii gorodskoi gospital'*, 22-23.

raised at least twenty thousand rubles in donations.<sup>518</sup> Clearly the call to participate in the war effort resonated with Muscovites, who viewed Red Cross work as evidence of Russia's proud humanitarian tradition and highly developed culture. But it was easy for Moscow to obtain evacuated soldiers since the city sat on a juncture of multiple railways, possessed fine hospitals, and donated huge sums to the Red Cross. This experience was not shared by Red Cross organizers in all corners of the empire.

The provincial Red Cross representative K. O. Glavaty in Orel complained to the Main Directorate that his chapter had devoted significant time and effort to constructing lazarettos that went unused. During the 1870s, Orel featured a very involved chapter of the Red Cross for the city's small size. Glavaty wrote the Main Directorate to inform them that his volunteers had set up facilities for 940 beds in their province, but they received only half that number of patients. He added that the hospitals were beautifully constructed and possessed full complements of doctors, nurses, and supplies. To add further insult, the Ministry of War had recently opened a temporary hospital in Orel with two hundred beds, which was full. This move prompted Red Cross donors to berate Glavaty, who prodded the Main Directorate, "Naturally our wish is to be given sick and wounded . . . so that our hospitals do not walk off (*chtoby nashi gospitali ne guliali*)."<sup>519</sup> Public enthusiasm for the Red Cross's mission waxed and waned with personal connection to the war effort. The residents of Orel wanted to honor these heroes by spoiling them during periods of

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<sup>518</sup> Soedov, *Istoricheskii ocherk*, 8.

<sup>519</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 38, ll. 363-64.



convalescence, but the military, which likely thought too much private aid would undermine discipline, stymied the Orel Red Cross's contribution.

### **The Red Cross in the Russian Press**

The tsarist press's portrayal of the Red Cross reflected the empire's hopes and frustrations beyond the Danube. Newspapers such as *Golos* lent support for the efforts to relieve the wounded, even if editors differed on their attitudes toward the war. For many readers drunk on Pan-Slavic jingoism, Russia's declaration of war could not come soon enough. Finally, the tsarist empire had pledged itself to ending Turkish atrocities in the Balkans and reversing the embarrassment of the Crimean War.<sup>520</sup> But as the sober realization that war was not an easy affair donned on Russian generals and newspapermen, the press did not shy away from scandalous exposés on the state of medical affairs in the south. The press proved to be a double-edged sword for the Red Cross throughout the history of tsarist Russia, especially when readers realized that an underfunded private aid organization could not relieve all of the empire's suffering. Readers provided much of the donations needed to keep this organization in operation, but accusations of amateurism, inattention to duty, and misuse of funds often caused educated society's support for the Red Cross to wane at the most critical junctures.

Tsarist censorship forbade direct assaults on the autocracy, but the Red Cross was fair game in the press. Closely aligned with the empresses, this organization took flak for not doing enough and interfering too much with the war effort. Rumors of corruption, amateurism, and bureaucratic inflexibility always appeared when campaigns turned sour. At the same time, lavish facilities and maternal care undermined military discipline among the

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<sup>520</sup> Dietrich Geyer, *Russian Imperialism: The Interaction of Domestic and Foreign Policy, 1860-1914*, trans. Bruce Little (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 72-80.

sick and wounded. This vitriol served to denigrate the autocracy as well as the Red Cross; after all, did not the Romanov women oversee the Main Directorate? And these criticisms worked well for the radical intelligentsia's opinion of the regime as a whole. Was not the bureaucracy stifling yet indifferent, and the empire over-governed and under-governed at the same time? These critiques constantly irritated the Red Cross in tsarist Russia, but the organization's members did not sit by idly. At times they fought back in the press and their own newsletter, especially when individuals' reputations were at stake.

At war's outbreak, newspapers such as *Golos* beseeched the public, and especially women, to provide for the wounded by bombarding the reader with daily reports on the Red Cross's activities. On the first day of hostilities in April 1877, one writer acknowledged that the Crimean War showed that "care for soldiers suffering for the motherland had become an all-encompassing affair (*obshchenarodnoe delo*)."<sup>521</sup> And newspapers reminded that aid was easy to deliver. Bulletins directed readers to Red Cross collection points for cash or material donations and printed lists of donors to let the public know who the most patriotic subjects were. Writers often played on gendered notions of men as warriors and women as caregivers to appeal to the home front for support. For those readers who wanted to add a personal touch, *Golos* reported on sewing circles, such as the one set up by the Romanov women in the Nicholas Palace, which, a notice tactfully remarked, anyone "from princesses to dressmakers' daughters" may attend.<sup>521</sup> A description of the graduation ceremony at one nurses' course quoted Princess Evgeniia Maksimilianova, who extolled the sisters that "all of Europe would come to realize what the Russian woman is capable of."<sup>522</sup> A feuilleton

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<sup>521</sup> *Golos*, May 28, 1877, 4.

<sup>522</sup> *Golos*, June 7, 1877, 3.

upholding women's achievements in Russian suggested that female achievements, such as Ekaterina Goncharova's recent completion of the medical course at the Sorbonne, showed that "it is evident that our fatherland is resolved to decide the 'woman's question' exactly as it has come to determine the Eastern [Question]."<sup>523</sup> But none of this was really new. Women in 1812, without the benefit of an official charity, "carried the burden of war, not only with material donations but with active participation in it – they bore [this burden] not for pay, but voluntarily, prompted by the highest patriotic sentiments."<sup>524</sup> Whether in the fetid lazarettos outside Plevna or the best salons of the capital, newspapers such as *Golos* encouraged women to use opportunities provided by war as a means to fulfill their "duties as citizens."<sup>525</sup>

But similar to the Serbo-Turkish War, once Russia's fortunes on the battlefield fell, the press set its sights on the Red Cross as a culprit. In *Golos's* melodrama, Cherkasskii played the role of the villain. Cherkasskii committed a grave error when he broke unspoken protocol by admonishing the readers of *Golos* to provide warm clothing to the troops after the Main Directorate denied one of his requests. This move caused a minor scandal in the press and offended the Main Directorate, because it suggested to the public that the Red Cross was hiding the true state of affairs in Bulgaria. In response to the rumors, P. A. Ilinskii, a Red Cross supporter, took his revenge.<sup>526</sup> Ilinskii investigated medical activities in northern Bulgaria and found that, unlike in Romania and Moldavia, the Red Cross had virtually no

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<sup>523</sup> *Golos*, July 10, 1877, 1-2.

<sup>524</sup> *Golos*, July 26, 1877, 1.

<sup>525</sup> P. A. Ilinskii, *Golos*, December 4, 1877, 2.

<sup>526</sup> P. A. Ilinskii, the head doctor for the military secondary schools in St. Petersburg and a well-known medical publicist, wrote several pieces advocated on behalf of women's access to the medical profession. For example, see: P. A. Ilinskii, *Golos*, December 4, 1877, 2.

presence in Cherkasskii's zone of responsibility.<sup>527</sup> This bickering went back and forth on the pages of *Golos* throughout the war. Abaza had to pen a long account addressing rumors he misappropriated funds, overpaid workers, held lazarettos in his region in inactivity, and committed many other abuses.<sup>528</sup> But the Red Cross had recognized the challenge of dealing with newspapers the year prior, and the Main Directorate undertook countermeasures to ward off this type of harassment.

The man who would become Russia's greatest defender of autocracy since Nicholas I, K. P. Pobedonostsev, at this point tutor to Tsarevich Alexander and a member of the Red Cross's Main Directorate, led the charge aimed at encouraging mass participation and winning educated society's trust. The Red Cross's own newsletter, *Vestnik Rossiiskogo obshchestva popecheniia o ranenykh i bol'nykh voinakh*, altered its format to provide more timely information to a broader audience as the military activities in the Balkans intensified in spring 1877. From 5 June 1877, this periodical appeared weekly and changed its name to *Vestnik narodnoi pomoshchi*. A change in format and content accompanied the revision to the title, and this move may have been designed to make Russia's aid society more open. Gone were the pedantic debates on the relationship between private aid and international law or military practice. Instead, the newsletter focused on reproducing news from the front, inspection reports, and statistical records without touching on political topics. This type of material may not have competed with *Golos* for entertainment, but meticulous records of expenses and patients treated might be seen as Pobedonostsev's means for responding to the

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<sup>527</sup> P. A. Ilinskii, *Golos*, November 6, 1877, 2-3.

<sup>528</sup> For the charges against Abaza, see A. B. V. "Krasnyi Krest v tylu armii," *Golos*, October 14, 1877, 1-2. For Abaza's rebuttal, see: N. S. Abaza, "Ob'iasnenie glavnoupolnomochennogo N. S. Abazy," *Golos*, November 22, 1877, 1-2.

sensational stories appearing in the press. Pobedonostsev gave himself oversight of the journal and named L. A. Spichakov the new editor tasked with governing the content.<sup>529</sup>

But Pobedonostsev could not resist for a second the allure of addressing his critics directly. Russians had to learn the true nature of their Red Cross, lest they lend their ears to a bunch of nonmilitary poltroons in Geneva or pacifist socialists from the worst coterie of the intelligentsia. The first issue in the new format featured an article titled “What the Red Cross Stands For,” which summarized the *Russian* interpretation of the Red Cross movement. Humanitarianism for the Russian combined the Christian imperative to help others, state-sponsored welfare, and nationalism. Pobedonostsev insisted readers know that Russia waged a “people’s war” against the Ottomans and this journal “connects the activities of the troops with the public” by informing readers how the Red Cross spent its donations to support the troops.<sup>530</sup> Rhetorically, instead of promoting the abstract and universal ideals found in the Geneva Convention, the editors of this journal sought to translate “Christian citizenship (*khristianskaia grazhdanstvennost’*)” into public and material support for the Red Cross.<sup>531</sup> And even though the readership of this journal must have been low, the propagandistic rhetoric seemed to work, at least in the short term. An empire with tremendously underfunded philanthropic institutions still raised a significant amount of monies for relief during the Russo-Turkish War.

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<sup>529</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 38, ll. 94-95; 119-20.

<sup>530</sup> “Chto oznachaet Krasnyi Krest,” *Vestnik narodnoi pomoshchi*, June, 5 1877, 1-4; *Vestnik narodnoi pomoshchi*, June 12, 1877, 8.

<sup>531</sup> “Chto oznachaet Krasnyi Krest,” *Vestnik narodnoi pomoshchi*, June, 5, 1877, 2; “Voina za russkoe sviatoe prizvanie,” *Vestnik narodnoi pomoshchi*, June 19, 1877, 15-16.

## **Red Cross Finances during the Russo-Turkish War**

As a private organization the Russian Red Cross was supposed draw its funds solely from outside donations. During the first decade of its existence the endowment grew slowly, which disappointed many members, but the conflicts in the Balkans produced a windfall in donations that enabled this organization to undertake large-scale operations in 1877. At the same time, the army had greater needs than the Red Cross could satisfy. The imbalance between private aid's capacity and the military's needs caused the Ministry of War to draw the Red Cross closer to the state by providing it with large subsidies to continue wartime operations during the Russo-Turkish War. This convergence demonstrates that the Russian military, which mistrusted aid organizations, had come to depend on the Red Cross for modern war making. This drift toward the state ensured the Red Cross's longevity in tsarist Russia but also deprived the voluntary association of some of the independence for which Pirogov clamored and opened it to new criticisms.

The Russian aid society's financial resources at the beginning of this conflict are difficult to trace because funds were divided between the Main Directorate and the provincial committees. At war's outbreak, neither of these two institutions probably possessed significant financial reserves since missions to Serbia and Montenegro had depleted accounts. One source listed the Main Directorate's available cash on hand in April 1877 as a mere 100,000 rubles, while the provincial committees held 550,000 rubles. By 29 November 1877, these accounts had grown to over five million rubles for the Main Directorate and four million for the provincial committees. And the expenses in 1877 were immense: The Main Directorate by November had spent over 4.5 million rubles and the provincial committees

nearly 2.3 million rubles.<sup>532</sup> The majority of resources went to the Danubian theater of war and rear services in southern Russia. Expenses for the Caucasian theater were considerably lower. The Main Directorate began spending fifty thousand rubles per month on the Caucasus and slowly increased this sum to one hundred thousand rubles per month over the course of 1877.<sup>533</sup> According to one estimate, the Russian Red Cross spent 16,788,142 rubles during the Russo-Turkish War.<sup>534</sup> This sum paled in comparison to the amounts spent by the United States Sanitary Commission during the American Civil War or the German Red Cross societies in the Franco-Prussian War, but no contemporary expected underdeveloped Russia to surpass the West in private initiative.<sup>535</sup>

The Red Cross drew funds from private and public sources during the Russo-Turkish War. The largest donations came from the St. Petersburg and Moscow city dumas, which each pledged a million rubles. The St. Petersburg Merchants Society provided 500,000 rubles, and the Finns added another 374,000, a large amount for an ethnic group exempt from military conscription. Donations of one hundred thousand rubles each came from the Holy

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<sup>532</sup> *Golos*, December 17, 1877, 1.

<sup>533</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 40, l. 24.

<sup>534</sup> *Rossiskoe Obshchestvo Krasnogo Kresta, sostoiashchee pod Avgusteishim pokrovitel'stvom ee imperatorskago velichestva gosudaryni imperatritsy Marii Feodorovny: Ocherk vozniknoveniia i deiatel'nosti Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, 26.

<sup>535</sup> It is important to note that the Russian Red Cross did equal (or maybe even surpassed) the United States Sanitary Commission in one crucial statistic – administrative costs. The USSC allegedly spent no more than 4 percent of all expenditures during the Civil War on administration, and Red Cross advocates in Russia upheld this percentage as an ideal target for maintaining public support for private aid. Rikhter and Abaza both produced financial reports for their regions in the Danubian theater, and neither of these plenipotentiaries claimed to spend more than 4 percent on administrative costs. Accounts can easily be faked, but neither report drew attention to the low percentages spent on administration. Rikhter claimed to have spent 176,977 francs on administration and travel out of a total budget of 5,092,960 francs. As a percentage, these numbers suggest Rikhter spent no more than 3.5 percent of his budget on administration. Abaza listed his administrative costs under two separate categories, which totaled 50,172 rubles, and his total expenses came to 1,377,750 rubles. For Abaza, administrative costs were slightly over 3.6 percent of his total budget. See Abaza, *Krasnyi Krest*, vol. 2, 399-403; Rikhter, *Krasnyi Krest*, 296-97. For Russian references to the USSC's 4 percent target, see TsIAM, f. 16, op. 57, d. 199, l. 76; *Golos*, September 18, 1877, 2.

Synod, city dumas in Kiev, Kazan, Saratov, Orel, and Tula, the nobility of Nizhnyi Novgorod, and the Moscow Credit Society. Significant personal donations came from the Romanovs and other elite landowning and merchant families.<sup>536</sup> Even though many Red Cross supporters voiced Pan-Slavist or nationalist sentiments, non-Slavic groups such as the Kirgiz of Semipalatinsk and the Jews from Berdichev still donated several thousand rubles to support the wounded.<sup>537</sup> Enthusiasm for the Red Cross grew from many strata of the population. Red Cross membership tripled during the war from 9,877 members in 1876 to 33,102 the following year.<sup>538</sup> The Holy Synod permitted the Red Cross to place coin boxes in churches, and charity concerts and balls raised in the larger towns and cities.<sup>539</sup> Newspapers helped by advertising for donations and publishing the lists of donors. Private donations brought the Main Directorate around 150,000 rubles per month by the fall of 1877, a number far below the Red Cross's monthly expenditures, which at this time averaged about 673,000.<sup>540</sup> But the outpouring of public support encouraged Red Cross advocates to believe that the public would cough up the cash for relief work in future conflicts.

The Red Cross's second source of funds came from the Ministry of War, and these funds kept essential medical facilities in the rear operating during the final stages of the war and after the armistice. Russian generals did not anticipate a prolonged and costly conflict, so they neglected to establish an adequate medical support network in the rear until mounting casualties compelled the army to expand institutions to house the wounded in summer 1877.

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<sup>536</sup> *Golos*, December 17, 1877, 1.

<sup>537</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 57, ll. 1, 8.

<sup>538</sup> P. Bogaevskii, *Krasnyi Krest v razvitiu mezhdunarodnogo prava*, vol. 1, 161.

<sup>539</sup> RGVIA, f., 12651, op. 1, d. 57, l. 10.

<sup>540</sup> RGVIA, f., 12651, op. 1, d. 40, l. 9.



The Red Cross exceeded its initial obligations by supplying lazarettos in the rear with as many as twenty-five thousand beds instead of the initial sixteen thousand beds, and sixteen sanitary trains instead of ten.<sup>541</sup> Initially, the Ministry of War paid the Red Cross forty kopecks per soldier per day, which was intended to provide the soldier's food and might help with the heating and lighting costs of the ward, but this sum left most of the burden to private aid. In Romania, for example, payments for soldiers' sustenance only amounted to 200,660 rubles, but the Red Cross as a whole spent well over 2,000,000 rubles in this region during the war.<sup>542</sup> Contributions declined as Russia's successes beyond the Danube turned to frustrations and scandalous articles in newspapers undermined the public's trust. Meanwhile, growing numbers of casualties required the army to depend on the Red Cross more than ever, and cold weather added new expenses for clothing and winterizing hospitals.<sup>543</sup>

The challenge of keeping medical services running on diminished budgets forced Chairman A. K. Baumgarten to ask for subsidies from the Ministry of War in the summer of 1877. Promising to reduce costs, Baumgarten devised plans to cut expenses on Red Cross services from over 700,000 rubles per month to 430,000 per month over the first several months of 1878, if only the Ministry of War would provide a subsidy of 330,000 per month to overcome the shortfall.<sup>544</sup> Miliutin endorsed this project, and, in exchange for the subsidy, the Ministry of Finance demanded that the Red Cross provide careful records for all

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<sup>541</sup> RGVIA, f., 12651, op. 1, d. 40, ll. 51-52.

<sup>542</sup> Both Abaza and Rikhter denominated their incomes and expenditures in francs. Abaza cited "1 ruble=2.558 francs" as the average conversion between these two currencies during the Russo-Turkish War. I denote all sums in rubles using this conversion rate. See Abaza, *Krasnyi Krest*, vol. 2, 399 and Rikhter, *Krasnyi Krest*, 295.

<sup>543</sup> *Zametki po voprosam, otnosiashchimsia k deiatel'nosti Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, 14.

<sup>544</sup> The Main Directorate spent 716,000 rubles in August 1877, 727,000 rubles in September, 708,000 rubles in October, and 763,000 rubles in November. See RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 40, ll. 48-49.

expenditures. Still, the state refused to take over direct administration of the Red Cross. Baumgarten, the Main Directorate, and agents in the field continued to decide how the money was spent. These subsidies diminished in size as the Russian army returned home, but payments from the state for Red Cross sanitary services in occupied Bulgaria continued into the autumn of 1878.<sup>545</sup>

State subsidies ensured the Red Cross's capacity to deliver aid to the army in times of war, but they also undermined one of the Geneva Convention's tenets of private aid, namely that national aid societies be independent from governments. The Russian Red Cross did not protest help from state; instead, Baumgarten begged for it, and advocates who wanted to keep this agency firmly rooted in associational life (*obshchestvennost'*), such as Pirogov, voiced no objections to this decision. The consequences of this shift in many ways shaped the later institutional development of the Red Cross in Russia. Future campaigns to relieve famine-stricken provinces in 1891 and conduct wartime operations in 1904 were planned and managed through close coordination with state ministries and funded by large donations from the Romanovs. This support from the state and autocracy enabled the Red Cross to deliver unprecedented volumes of assistance in both crises. However, alliances with the bureaucracy and autocracy opened the Red Cross to new criticisms from those who wanted greater public accountability in tsarist Russia. In Russia's next major war, members of the zemstvo would come to view the Red Cross's alliance with the state as liability. For these men, disappointments in the Far East exposed the Red Cross as nothing more than a corrupt and arbitrary appendage of the state.

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<sup>545</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 40, ll. 9-10, 30, 66.

## Conclusion

Every serious commentator on private aid in the Russo-Turkish War believed it had proved itself a necessary component of modern war making. Universal conscription, nationalism, and the press had escalated the passions behind warfare, mobilizing more troops and wider strata of civilian populations for war. The physician N. V. Sklifosovskii, shortly after the Russo-Turkish War, summed up this development: “The sphere of [private aid’s] activity should widen more and more; this flows from the natural way of war of our time—it is a war of entire governments, entire peoples, because the army of the present is the people (*narod*).”<sup>546</sup> Russian society had responded to this call in 1877 by donating millions of rubles, volunteering to work in sanitary brigades, and setting up temporary hospitals across the European and Caucasian parts of the empire. The public had embraced the autocracy’s imperative of working with the state to improve Russia, and this is why stalwarts of the autocracy like Pobedonostsev defended the Red Cross so vociferously in the press. But everyone also knew that hundreds of thousand casualties in the theaters of operations meant Russia had failed the medical test of modern war and changes were needed to make its private aid organization operate better. These debates centered on the question of how independent a national aid society should be from the military and whether allowing civilian organizations to intervene in war undermined military discipline and effectiveness.

The Red Cross’s charter established it as an organization independent from the tsarist state’s control, but by 1878 the military’s struggles with disease in the theaters of war had caused the government to subsidize this organization, patronage many activists for private aid welcomed. Only the elderly Pirogov took the radical stance that private aid must be

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<sup>546</sup> N. V. Sklifosovskii, “Chasnaia pomoshch’ na voine,” *Izbrannye trudy*, ed. V. V. Kovanov (Moscow: Medgiz, 1953), 334.

totally independent from the state in all circumstances. The Ministry of War should not be able to hinder or obligate a private society for goods or services, and private aid societies should have the freedom to undertake any endeavor they wished, he surmised.<sup>547</sup> S. P. Botkin, who spoke little on the issue, thought the venerable surgeon was losing his mind in 1877.<sup>548</sup> Other physicians voiced the militarist sentiments of the era. Sklifosovskii believed that private aid societies must be subject to state control and be restricted to wartime activities alone, but, as a doctor in tsarist Russia, an autocratic state that deprived professionals of corporate autonomy, he demanded that physicians head the Red Cross.<sup>549</sup> Doctors Kolomnin and Iskerskii went further, arguing that the Red Cross must be integrated as a supply and training organ within the military.<sup>550</sup> As the Red Cross's finances demonstrated, the drift toward the state was already underway during the Russo-Turkish War, but this trajectory did not mean integration into the army. Opportunities during the next two decades of peace kept Russia's aid society in a confused, liminal position between preparing for war and managing civilian disaster relief. When natural disaster and military conflict struck again during the next three decades, the Red Cross frustrated tsarist critics who wanted an aid organization that would be able to overcome all of the empire's unexpected ills.

The second major concern for most observers involved the inequality between the army sanitary services and Red Cross hospitals. Private aid societies provided better food,

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<sup>547</sup> Pirogov, *Voenno-vrachebnoe delo*, vol. 2, 395.

<sup>548</sup> Botkin, *Pi'sma*, 306-7, 337.

<sup>549</sup> Sklifosovskii, *Izbrannye trudy*, 338-40.

<sup>550</sup> Kolomnin, *Obshchii meditsinskii ocherk*, vol. 2, 167; Iskerskii, *Voina 1877-78 gg*, 66.

more comfortable beds, and more attentive care to patients, and commentators worried this inequality would discredit the military and adversely affect discipline.<sup>551</sup> Peasant conscripts, Sklifosovskii suspected, were unable to differentiate between shortages caused by wartime difficulties and problems that resulted from inept officers.<sup>552</sup> But the disorders these doctors feared never broke out in the rear hospitals in the Russo-Turkish War, even though conscripts had more than a few reasons to revolt. Protests are difficult to pull off when the outraged are dying of typhus. Doctors, too, objected to unequal privileges. Military physicians disliked how professors of medicine used these wartime opportunities to conduct research on sick and wounded conscripts to advance their own scientific authority. Displeased by the inequalities in comforts and medical accoutrements, V. I. Pirselkov, an army surgeon, complained that Red Cross doctors worked under no duress and therefore “could keep this or that patient for as long their scholarly interests demanded.”<sup>553</sup> In the postwar decade, Russian enthusiasm for its military waned; meanwhile, the army retreated into its own affairs and ignored the Red Cross. When war broke out again a quarter of a century later, the Russians had to revisit the same lessons of how to apply private aid in war.

Mission creep from the humanitarian missions to the Balkan Slavs helped produce the Russo-Turkish War. Believing that Russia was unready and the risks of escalation too great, Miliutin and Minister of Foreign Affairs Gorchakov did not want war in 1877. In the future, despite the public’s fervor for medical interventions in Africa and the Balkans, the Russian Red Cross carefully tailored its international aid missions to support the empire’s foreign

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<sup>551</sup> Kolomnin, *Obshchii meditsinskii ocherk*, vol. 2, 188; Pirogov, *Voenno-vrachebnoe delo*, vol. 1, 320, 323, 395, 397.

<sup>552</sup> Sklifosovskii, *Izbrannye trudy*, 354-55.

<sup>553</sup> Pirselkov, *V. I. Pirselkov*, 124-25.

policy goals at minimal cost and risk. But the decision to bring the Red Cross more closely under the state's purview came at a cost as well. During the following decades, educated society in Russia remained largely indifferent to its Red Cross during periods of peace and often became frustrated with this organization during wars and natural disasters. During the famines of the 1890s and the Russo-Japanese War, the state and autocracy needed to subsidize the Red Cross to overcome the Russian public's unwillingness to cover the costs of this organization's activities.

## CHAPTER 6 – THE INTERWAR DECADES, 1880-1909

The Russian Red Cross struggled to reinvent itself in the period following the Turkish War, as the experience in the Balkans demonstrated the potential and limitations for deploying private aid in military conflict. In 1877, the Red Cross had mobilized unprecedented resources, and Russian educated society had responded to the call with donations and willing volunteers, but popular support did not make the Russo-Turkish War quick or easy. Disappointments on the battlefield and medical front and disillusionment with the Treaty of Berlin, at which the Great Powers snatched an enlarged Bulgaria, newly created and friendly to Russia, from Alexander II's fingers, caused many tsarist subjects to lose interest in their national aid society. One existential problem for an organization of this type persisted: With no wars to fight and a public losing interest in military prowess, how might the Red Cross retain the attention and support?

Arkadii Iakobii, a Red Cross advocate, found the solution to this problem lay in having private aid delve into as many peacetime campaigns as possible. In early 1880, Iakobii gave a speech, "The Tasks of the Russian Red Cross," at Kharkov University, in which he argued that "Inactive societies gradually cease to attract donations and little by little fade from people's imaginations." The public must read about the Red Cross's peacetime campaigns in the press and see these activities with their own eyes. Iakobii concluded his address by calling attention to the diphtheria epidemic currently affecting fifteen provinces in southern Russia, to which "our zemstvo and city institutions pay scant attention, so let's

solve this problem.”<sup>554</sup> Over the next two decades, the Red Cross expanded its operations in the fields of public health and epidemic and famine relief.

Although the autocracy harbored suspicions that private charities might serve as fronts for revolutionary agitation, a fear that briefly cramped associational life in the decade that followed Alexander II’s assassination, the period from the Russo-Turkish War to the Russo-Japanese War in 1904 saw a tremendous growth in philanthropic activities across the Russian empire, and the Red Cross shared in this expansion.<sup>555</sup> On paper, the Red Cross grew in size, endowment, and mission. By the Russo-Japanese War, nearly every city and town in the empire had a chapter, and the organization had become an important partner to the state and zemstvos during the major famine-relief campaigns of the 1890s. The Red Cross’s routine had evolved and ranged from treating everyday ailments afflicting workers in St. Petersburg to providing first aid to fishermen in the Arctic.

These missions came at a price, however, since Russian subjects’ support for this organization was never adequate. With civilian or private resources lacking, the autocracy stepped in to ensure Red Cross services were forthcoming, decisions in line with the Russian monarchy’s moral imperative to protect the welfare of the empire’s subjects. But these moves also opened Russia’s national aid to society to frequent criticisms that the Red Cross was nothing more than a cumbersome appendage of the bureaucracy. And the delivery of nonmilitary aid in wartime was problematic as well. When Russia intervened in China in 1900 to keep the window for imperial expansion wedged open, Red Cross aid for tsarist

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<sup>554</sup> Arkadii Iakobii, *Zadachi Russkago Krasnogo Kresta. Rech’*, proiznesennaia na tozhestvennom akte Imperatorskago Khar’kovskago Universiteta, 17 ianvaria 1880 goda (Khar’kov: Khar’kovskii universitet, 1880), 24-26.

<sup>555</sup> Lindenmeyr, *Poverty is Not a Vice*, 198.



armies was tardy, haphazard, and erratic.<sup>556</sup> These problems mirrored the poor planning of the Balkan campaigns and foreshadowed the problems to come. Consequently, when the tsarist empire faced a more formidable threat in westernized, industrialized Japan, the Russian Red Cross careened into the war without adequate cadres of medical professionals, significant popular backing, or even instructions from the military on how to coordinate with the army. Scandals and rumors in the press during this conflict provoked a new challenge to the Red Cross, this time from the zemstvos, over who should organize national aid, but this challenge is the subject of the next chapter.

### **Institutional Development**

Under the stewardship of Maria Fedorovna, the wife of Emperor Alexander III, and M. P. von Kaufman, the son of the famous governor of Turkestan during the reign of Alexander II, the Red Cross grew substantially in membership and reserves during the quarter-century before the Japanese attack on Port Arthur in 1904. Over these three decades, the endowment more than doubled, and the number of trained nurses increased more than six-fold. Royal patronage and state support surely saved this organization during the 1880s, when the autocracy briefly discouraged private initiatives and the educated Russia's disregard for military adventurism caused membership and the number of Red Cross chapters to briefly dip. Despite this hiccup, the Red Cross as a whole entered the twentieth century as Russia's most well-endowed private charity.

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<sup>556</sup> GARF, f. 642, op. 1, d. 366, ll. 1-5; *Otchet upolnomochennogo otriada Iverskoi obshchiny Krasnogo Kresta emeni ee Imperatorskago Vysochestva velikoi kniagini Elisavety Feodorovny, V. I. Barmankovskago, po komandirovke v 1900-1901 gg. na Dal'nem Vostoke* (Moscow: A. A. Levenson, 1901).

**Table 3. Red Cross Institutions and Chapters, 1880-1896**

Year	Number
1880	402
1882	415
1884	374
1886	356
1888	350
1890	339
1892	335
1894	390
1896	457

Source: Federov and Botsianovskii, *Istoricheskii Ocherk*, 136.

**Table 4. Red Cross Funds (in rubles), 1880-1904**

Year	Wartime Reserve Fund <sup>557</sup>	Total Endowment
1880	1,943,004	4,018,372
1882	2,695,614	4,676,654
1884	2,939,256	5,186,541
1886	3,206,491	5,609,844
1888	3,552,830	6,063,560
1890	3,941,816	6,836,572
1892	3,951,961	7,727,325
1894	4,758,030	9,571,016
1904	5,527,183	-----

Source: Fedorov and Botsianovskii, *Istoricheskii ocherk*, 137-38; *Doklad Ispol'nitel'noi Kommissii Glavnago Upravleniia Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta Obshchemu Sobraniuu chlenov Obshchestva 28 Maia 1906 goda* (St. Petersburg: V. Kirshbaum, 1906), 3.

Even if the enthusiasm of some members waned in the 1880s, the numbers of individuals, and particularly women, who sought medical education in Red Cross institutions increased throughout this period. Peacetime public health initiatives and famine-relief campaigns also helped swell the number of women who chose to be Red Cross nurses in the 1890s, as the following chart reveals.

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<sup>557</sup> The Red Cross charter prevented the society from investing its wartime endowment in government bonds or touching the endowment during peacetime without special permission from the Main Directorate. Fedorov and Botsianovskii, *Istoricheskii ocherk*, 136-38.

**Table 5. Number of Red Cross Nurses, 1888-1896**

Year	Total Number of Nurses
1888	593
1889	1309
1890	1782
1891	1890
1892	2047
1893	2207
1894	2468
1895	2628
1896	2812

Source: Fedorov and Botsianovskii, *Istoricheskii ocherk*, 121.

And women participated disproportionately in Red Cross first aid classes, created by the military surgeon K. K. Reier in 1881. These courses, which consisted of five ninety-minute lectures on anatomy, wound treatment, and sanitation, entitled auditors to a certificate if they passed a written examination upon completion of the course. Over the next year, the Red Cross held twenty-seven courses, which educated a total of 938 St. Petersburg residents in first aid. Of the attendees, 555 were women and 382 men, but nearly equal numbers from both sexes made up the 658 persons who passed the final exam. The overwhelming majority of the participants in these classes were students, with 205 of them female university students, 172 students at the midwives' institutes, and 119 male students from the seminaries or commercial schools.<sup>558</sup> Although the empire enjoyed two decades of peace, tsarist subjects in urban areas continued to believe in the functions performed by Red Cross during this period.

The St. George Society (*Obshchina Sviatogo Georgiia*) operated as one of St. Petersburg's premier nursing orders during the late imperial period, and this institution's history shows how the Red Cross altered its mission to provide health services to the urban

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<sup>558</sup> Fedorov and Botsianovskii, *Istoricheskii ocherk*, 125-26.

masses. Founded in 1870 by Countess E. N. Geiden to prepare women for war work, this order was first housed in the private home of Dr. P. A. Naranovich. In 1879, the Ministry of War donated a property located at 9 Vyborg Embankment to the St. George's Society, which then purchased the neighboring buildings and transformed them into hospital wards, a church, and dormitories. By the end of the decade, this nursing society operated a surgical ward, a free ambulatory clinic, and an experimental institute for physical therapy, which included hydrotherapy, electrotherapy, massage, and other types of physical rehabilitation. Sponsored by private donations and a yearly subsidy from the St. Petersburg city duma, this hospital provided healthcare to tens of thousands of patients each year. A rotating staff of doctors, many of whom were professors at the Medical-Surgical Academy, performed general and surgical care, ambulatory services, and, on specific days, specialized pediatric, gynecological, ophthalmic, dermatological, and neurological treatments. Nurses from this society managed the wards and also moonlighted in many of the capital's military and civilian hospitals. Some women even went on sanitary expeditions within Russia or abroad to study medical treatments or unusual diseases.<sup>559</sup>

Records for this medical facility, printed in the Russian Red Cross's newsletter, show that, on average, this St. George's Society treated over 500 patients per day, most of whom came from the lower classes of the population. The vast majority of the visitors needed ambulatory care, but patients with serious illnesses or requiring surgery were admitted to the stationary wards to convalesce. Red Cross advocates believed that this facility helped attune the urban masses to the benefits of modern medicine and taught them to trust medical doctors.

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<sup>559</sup> T. I. Grekova and Iu. P. Golikov, *Meditinskii Peterburg* (St. Petersburg: Folio-Press, 2001), 331-33.

**Table 6. Number of Patients to the St. George's Society Hospital and Clinic, 1884-1889**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Patients Requiring Hospital Stays</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Visits to the Ambulatory Clinic</b>
1884	312	1885	107,464
1885	980	1886	158,798
1886	881	1887	155,575
1887	848	1888	153,647
		1889	167,138

*Source:* “Deiatel’nost’ obshchiny sv. Georgiia v 1885,” *Vestnik Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, September, 28, 1886, 306; October 5, 1886, 314; “Deiatel’nost’ obshchiny sv. Georgiia v 1886,” *Vestnik Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, August, 9, 1887, 238-39; October 18, 1887, 333-34; “Deiatel’nost’ obshchiny sv. Georgiia v. 1887,” *Vestnik Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, October 2, 1888, 313-15; October 9, 1888, 321-22; October 16, 1888, 329-30; “Deiatel’nost’ obshchiny sv. Georgiia v. 1890,” *Vestnik Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, April 21, 1891, 122-23.

For the medical staff, however, the high volume of patients proved taxing. One doctor confided in his memoir that he saw as many as one hundred patients per shift in the ambulatory clinic, and the diverse ailments that afflicted these people kept him on his toes. This number of patients was, for this memoirist, “a profanity against science and art,” but the stipend of seventy-five rubles per month for part-time work and access to professors and the head nurse, V. E. Vrangel, with her state and high society connections, made the time spent in the diagnostic room worth this doctor’s effort.<sup>560</sup> Red Cross hospitals such as the St. George’s Society existed not only in principal cities such as St. Petersburg, Moscow, and Warsaw, but also in larger provincial towns such as Yaroslavl, Vladimir, and Viatka. The public benefit of operating free hospitals attracted support from society ladies, medical professionals, and city and zemstvo governing bodies. Red Cross also activists looked

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<sup>560</sup> D. Sokolov, *25 let bor’by: vospominaniia vracha 1885-1910 g.* (St. Petersburg: A. V. Orlov, 1910), 41.

outside the walls of their institutions for exciting ways to hone their skills for war by conducting first aid for victims of workplace and transportation accidents.

### **Urban First Aid**

The Red Cross recognized early on that disaster relief helped to prepare members for war work and encouraged individuals to donate to its coffers. When disasters struck, the Main Directorate usually voted whether or not to direct resources toward providing relief. All disaster relief was conducted on an ad hoc basis, with little premeditated planning or post-disaster reflection. For example, in 1887, when an earthquake struck the city of Vernii (present-day Almaty, Kazakhstan) and left twenty-five thousand people homeless, the Main Directorate dispatched a medical team to run a clinic and help feed the local population. In total, the Red Cross spent 121,577 rubles on this campaign, an expensive endeavor, but it made no serious effort to study this campaign to prepare for future disasters.<sup>561</sup> In another example, the Red Cross's dispatch of medical workers to Poltava province in 1880 to help with diphtheria relief came at the request of the local zemstvo, which donated one hundred thousand rubles to initiate this campaign. Outside donations plus the addition of its own funds enabled the Main Directorate to hire thirty doctors and send three hundred nurses to Poltava to supplement the overburdened provincial zemstvo.<sup>562</sup> Published accounts on these activities made no recommendations for mitigating the effects of or preventing similar disasters in the future, but Red Cross workers knew that more could be done to refashion this charity into a professional aid organization.

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<sup>561</sup> Fedorov and Botsianovskii, *Istoricheskii ocherk*, 121.

<sup>562</sup> *Ibid.*, 85-87.

One opportunity for this type of change came to the Red Cross's doorstep in St. Petersburg. On 4 November 1897, the Neva breached its banks and flooded several working-class districts of the capital. Three days later, the Main Directorate of the Red Cross apportioned ten thousand rubles for flood relief and appointed N. K. Shvedov as the head of a temporary relief committee. Tasked with providing aid through existing medical institutions, organizing ambulatory medical points, and distributing warm clothing and food to the victims, Shvedov included representatives from the police, private charities, and medical associations serve on the committee. On the evening of 7 November, Shvedov petitioned the Chief Military-Medical Inspector with a request to transfer army doctors to Red Cross service. Three days later, the Red Cross set up a clinic in the Suvorov District of Petrogradskii Island. Three military doctors and three nurses staffed this facility. From its opening in November to late December 1897, the Red Cross facility saw almost four thousand ambulatory patients and dispatched doctors and nurses on at least one thousand house calls. Soon after, the Red Cross set up an another clinic with a children's ward in a poor neighborhood near Galern Harbor, an area on the edge of Vasilievskii Island close to the shipyards. From these points, Red Cross workers distributed nearly ten thousand bottles of pasteurized milk to mothers and gave clothing or shoes to another nine hundred recipients by the time the campaign ended around the New Year's holiday. Shvedov's experiences with urban disaster relief inspired the Red Cross to attempt to form a permanent team of stretcher bearers and paramedics to act as first responders for emergencies in the capital.<sup>563</sup>

In 1897, the Red Cross began to coordinate with St. Petersburg's city authorities to establish the first ambulance service for the capital, the Society to Provide First Aid in

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<sup>563</sup> N. K. Shvedov, *Pomoshch' Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta postradavshim ot navodneniia v S.-Peterburge, 4 noiabria 1897 goda* (St. Petersburg, 1898), 3-35.

Disasters. This project demonstrates how the Red Cross collaborated with local governing bodies to promote sanitary services in peacetime Russia, which, coincidentally, served as training programs for wartime triage. The Red Cross and state shared the costs for this project, and the organization's foundational charter stipulated that the yearly financial reports would be forwarded to the Main Directorate and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. This society's headquarters and chancellery were located at the Maximilian Clinic, a free hospital managed by the Red Cross. Initial plans called for the establishment of a dozen sanitary brigades at each of St. Petersburg's twelve fire stations. These brigades were led by Red Cross-employed doctors, preferably surgeons, with access to telephones to be ready at a minute's notice. The initial budget figures estimated start-up costs for the ambulances and sanitary equipment at thirty-five thousand rubles, while yearly expenditures for the physicians' salaries were not to exceed six thousand rubles, all of which the Red Cross promised to cover. The city vowed to pay for the ambulances' horses and hire the thirty-six medics by increasing the funds for the fire brigades. Derived from western precedents for specialized ambulance services that rushed through the urban morass, Red Cross planners envisioned that this project would help train physicians and medics for wartime triage and enabled them to innovate with ambulance designs. And since St. Petersburg lacked modern ambulances, a shortcoming that sometimes led to ill or wounded patients being ferried around town in taxis in search of an unoccupied hospital bed, this project, the planners hoped, would improve health care in the capital and win support for the Red Cross from members of the urban elite.<sup>564</sup>

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<sup>564</sup> GARF, f. 642, op. 1, d. 362, ll. 1-9.



This proposal must have enjoyed a degree of success because a second petition to the city duma, dated two years later, indicated that the Red Cross had set up ambulances at five of the capital's fire and police stations. This petition, authored by N. A. Vel'iaminov and N. K. Shvedov, two Red Cross agents, again argued that the project needed to be expanded to all twelve fire districts in the city for humanitarian and economic reasons. Citing statistics from Berlin, which possessed a more developed ambulance network, these agents argued that calls for emergency aid had increased substantially, while insurance payments for workers crippled on the job had decreased sharply during the 1890s. At present, large precincts such as Vasili and Petersburg Islands and the Vyborg District were not serviced by ambulances.<sup>565</sup> The archives cannot confirm whether Red Cross agents' requests for additional funding fell on willing ears after 1899, but this project reveals that the Russian Red Cross, like national aid societies elsewhere, sought to institutionalize relief work through the creation of an ambulance service, the very same type of activity these societies prepared to conduct in the immediate rear of the army at war. But Red Cross work did not always have to be related to wartime preparation; other initiatives directed specialized aid to small, high-risk groups on the margins of the empire.

### **Activities in the Arctic**

In response to popular cries for intervention in Slavic uprisings in the Balkans, a group of notables in Archangelsk founded a provincial committee of the Red Cross in 1876. Since the town in the far north of Russia lacked surplus medical personnel to dispatch anywhere, the committee decided to send 720 rubles in donations to the Main Directorate for aid to the Serbs. The Russo-Turkish War inspired a boom in membership, and the

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<sup>565</sup> GARF, f. 642, op. 1, d. 362, ll. 10-13.

Archangelsk committee grew to 1,893 members, a group that raised nearly 24,000 rubles for the war effort. Peace led to a decline in membership, and this provincial committee could only muster a little over eight hundred rubles for famine relief in 1891 and three hundred rubles to purchase grain in 1902, when crop failure struck one district in Archangelsk province. In 1891, with help from the governor, Prince N. D. Golitsyn, the chairman of the Red Cross, P. M. von Kaufman, and even a small donation from Father John of Kronstadt, the most famous religious and social activist in tsarist Russia at the time, the committee built its first hospital to house a small nursing society. To fund peacetime operations, the society received about a thousand rubles per year from the Main Directorate, a subsidy of two thousand rubles from the provincial zemstvo, and another five hundred rubles annually from the State Treasury. The Russo-Japanese War again prompted the committee to action, and it raised over fifty thousand rubles and dispatched a medical team with a fifty-bed hospital to Harbin.<sup>566</sup> Although modest in size, these initiatives show that Archangelsk Red Cross activists sought to participate outside their home province in the Red Cross movement. Locally, this provincial committee took the initiative to conduct specialized relief activities for fishermen along the Arctic and White Sea coasts.

Beginning in 1881, the Archangelsk Provincial Committee paid for several nurses and a doctor to shelter on the Arctic coast and treat fishermen. The Ministry of Internal Affairs sent a doctor, who traveled with a mobile medical station and a staff of one feldsher and five nurses, all veterans of the recent Russo-Turkish War. Once they overcame the fishermen's initial reservations—it seems the seafarers feared the Red Cross would insist on teaching moral instructions and sanitary guidelines—these facilities became widely used. The

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<sup>566</sup> *Istoricheskii obzor deiatel'nosti mestnykh uchrezhdenii Krasnogo Kresta, so vremeni ikh osnovaniia po 1908 god* (St. Petersburg: V. F. Kirshbaum, 1911), 1-10; 16-20.

following year, the Red Cross dispatched two medical brigades to the Arctic coast and, with the help of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, set up a tiny clinic in the Norwegian town of Kiberg. This project seems to have been fruitful, since the State Treasury in 1885 began to provide the Archangelsk Provincial Committee with a yearly subsidy of two thousand rubles to outfit sanitary brigades for fishermen. A group of seasonal Red Cross colonies sprung up in the villages of Teriberka, near present-day Murmansk, which drew approval from the minister of finance, Sergei Witte, who toured the facilities in 1896. By the turn of the century, the Red Cross's Arctic colony treated as many as six thousand ambulatory patients per year and as many one hundred patients needing serious hospital care.<sup>567</sup> This vignette demonstrates how a provincial Red Cross society, on the northern border of the empire, won support from state bureaucracies to help Russia exploit its economic resources along its imperial periphery. Here the state viewed local associations as a means to spread the imperial project by protecting tsarist subjects' welfare in new areas where the government had little presence.

### **Red Cross Nurses, an Unprofessional Caste**

The Red Cross's endowment, membership, and mission expanded in the period after the Russo-Turkish War, but nurses, the key group within the Red Cross, failed to win concessions that might have enabled their trade to develop as an autonomous profession. All professional groups in tsarist Russia fought for autonomy from the state and a degree of latitude to self-govern through professional societies, but Red Cross nurses found themselves restricted from two different angles: the state and the zemstvo. Russia's situation, similar to that of Germany, contrasts most starkly with Britain and the United States, where militarism

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<sup>567</sup> Ibid., 21-41.

helped advance the nursing profession.<sup>568</sup> Unlike in the West, where the free professions developed outside the purview of the state, tsarist Russia created the medical caste as an estate, with duties and obligations to the bureaucracy. In Britain, Florence Nightingale fought for and gradually won professional recognition and autonomy for nurses in the decades following the Crimean War. Despite Pirogov's recommendations that Sisters of Mercy be given salaries and standardized education, Russian nurses earned no similar exemptions to their western counterparts.<sup>569</sup>

The autocracy refused all professional groups autonomy up to its collapse in 1917, a practice that chagrined doctors especially. If western standards for professionalization are considered the norm, then Russian doctors enjoyed professional status in the most limited sense of the word.<sup>570</sup> Most Russian physicians suffered from material destitution and persistent bureaucratic impediments prior to World War I; they found few opportunities to promote public welfare through zemstvo service and advance their corporate and scientific interests in medical associations such as the Society of Russian Physicians in Memory of N. I. Pirogov (hereafter Pirogov Society). When cholera struck in 1892, national disaster compelled the bureaucracy to loosen the reigns on physicians to treat the sick and impose sanitary reforms in the towns and countryside. Russian doctors, it seemed, had finally won the authority to enact measures as they saw fit, and success in containing cholera earned

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<sup>568</sup> See Summers, *Angels and Citizens*, 226-31; Moser Jones, *The American Red Cross*, chap. 9.

<sup>569</sup> Elizabeth Murray addresses the question of professionalization in her short article. See Elizabeth Murray, "Russian Nurses: From the Tsarist Sister of Mercy to the Soviet Comrade Nurse: A Case Study of Absence of Migration of Nursing Knowledge and Skills," *Nursing Inquiry* 11, no. 3 (2004), 130-37.

<sup>570</sup> Robert Bierstedt argued that medical professionals are unique among all the professions because of their "legitimate, organized autonomy," a condition he defined as "the right to control its own work." See Robert Bierstedt, *Profession of Medicine: A Study of the Sociology of Applied Knowledge* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1971), 71.

many zemstvo doctors greater recognition and trust from the masses. But this newly found autonomy proved ephemeral; in 1900 Minister of Interior Plehve began to restrict zemstvo physicians' freedoms out of fear that many rural professionals harbored radical political views. Russian physicians struck back at the Ninth Congress of the Pirogov Society in 1904, when they demanded a comprehensive list of political and social reforms from the autocracy. However, the violence that followed in the Revolution of 1905 demoralized many of these same activist-physicians who hoped they had finally won the respect of the masses. Peasant Russia deemed professional authority as foreign and arbitrary as bureaucratic power, and this frightening realization drove many Pirogov Society members to reconnect with the state. Those physicians who persisted with their political demands on the state were silenced by Stolypin's Ministry of Interior.<sup>571</sup> The Russian physicians' example helps set the context for why nurses had little chance of obtaining a degree of professional autonomy from the autocracy.

The Russian state denied Red Cross nurses professional recognition in the form of salaries and autonomy to govern their trade out of a gendered view of nursing that degraded it to motherly or Christian duties. This attitude sought to keep nurses closer to the quasi-religious standards of the pre-reform Russian nursing communities, the Sisters of Mercy. In peacetime, nurses received no pay from their communities for their services. The nurses who worked in military hospitals received stipends, and many Red Cross nurses found side jobs tending to the sick in private homes, but this work was little better than domestic service. Not until the 1880s did the Red Cross begin to establish pension programs for nurses who had served twenty-five years and made yearly contributions to the fund. While these payments

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<sup>571</sup> Nancy M. Frieden, "The Russian Cholera Epidemic, 1892-93, and Medical Professionalization," *Journal of Social History* 10, no. 4 (Summer, 1977): 538-59; idem, *Russian Physicians*, chaps. 10, 12.

might be as high as two hundred rubles per year for the most senior nurses, one study of retired nurses in Perm revealed that pension payments averaged a miserable twelve rubles per year, which probably indicates the impoverished state of provincial Red Cross chapters.<sup>572</sup>

There was surely an abundance of needy women who sought shelter in the widows' home for elderly nurses set up by Praskov'ia Uvarova, a key figure in the Moscow Women's Committee of the Red Cross, in 1911; the greater surprise was that it took planners so long to set up such a shelter.<sup>573</sup>

Russian nurses also had to live under strict, quasimonastic rule in their communities, which forbade them from marrying, limited their mobility and free time, and compelled them to tend to the sick selflessly. Compassion for suffering may have drawn some women to this trade, but it seems that many nursing societies struggled to retain nurses. A study of the Viatka Nursing Society, which was attached to one of the more active provincial chapters of the Red Cross, revealed that the average age of all of the nurses was twenty. Idealistic or opportunistic youth probably joined these societies, passed through the training regiment, and then used their newly acquired skills to secure employment or marriage outside the Red Cross. Nurses who left the communities were supposed to have their names listed as "reservist" nurses until age fifty. These women were to promise to reenter Red Cross service in case of war or disaster, but the fact that the Main Directorate had to permit accelerated nursing courses during both the Russo-Turkish and Russo-Japanese Wars to overcome shortages of nurses suggests that many "reservists" never looked back.

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<sup>572</sup> Oleshkova, "Evoliutsiia organizatsii," 110.

<sup>573</sup> GIM, f. 17, op. 1, d. 482, ll. 21, 41.

A third problem with professionalizing the Russian nursing corps lay with training, which varied greatly from society and overseer. Famous medical men trained some of the nurses, who later earned high praise from wartime observers. Pirogov trained the Exaltation nurses prior to his departure for the Crimea, and S. P. Botkin trained the women of the St. George's Society in St. Petersburg prior to the Russo-Turkish War, but the need to rely on accelerated courses in wartime and the complaints from military doctors of inconsistent quality among Russian nurses suggest considerable variations in the quality of the teaching between the societies. In 1896, the Main Directorate attempted to standardize training by issuing a "Program for the Preparatory Course for Red Cross Sisters of Mercy," which demanded a two-year program in general and specialized medicine. During the first year, nurse-trainees studied anatomy, physiology, pathology, epidemiology, and pharmacology, while the second year added optional specialized courses in gynecology, pediatrics, psychiatry, or skin, nerve, or eye disorders. Pupils also received practical training in the infirmaries located in most nursing societies. All aspirants had to pass a final exam devised by doctors in St. Petersburg to attain the title of Sister of Mercy.<sup>574</sup> The intention of these courses, one can infer, was to prepare nurses primarily for civilian medical service in peacetime. Left off the list were any special instructions in wounds or military sanitation. This diverse curriculum also suggests that the Red Cross intended for nurses to be able to perform a large number of medical tasks independently, an aim that may have put nurses into direct competition with another quickly growing medical contender in tsarist Russia, the zemstvo-employed feldsher.

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<sup>574</sup> L. E. Gorelov and D. P. Kudr', "Rol' Krasnogo Kresta v podgotovke sester miloserdiia," *Meditsinskaia sestra* (December, 1987), 52-56.

Originally trained as army medics, Russian feldshers became a necessary evil for peasants to turn to when the doctor was on the other side of the province or the zemstvo too poor to hire physicians. After the 1874 Universal Conscription Law reduced the terms of service, the army released many “line” feldshers who found employment in zemstvos, hospitals, and factories. These veterans carried a well-deserved reputation for drunkenness, coarseness, and medical malpractice. Since the little training “line” feldshers received came from on-the-job lessons in bloodletting and bandaging, the state established a few civilian feldsher schools, which greatly improved the medical preparation for these “schooled” feldshers. The result, historian Samuel Ramer calculated, was that, by 1900, twenty thousand feldshers worked in civilian medicine, most employed by zemstvos.<sup>575</sup>

Even though Russian doctors mistrusted feldshers’ medical skills, and no sober feldsher prior to 1917 believed their training put them on par with a physician, this group showed tremors of professionalization in the 1890s. Articles in the journal *Feldsher* expressed concerns with poor standards of living and insecure relations with doctors, and authors stressed that community solidarity between all feldshers might end the worst of these abuses. Still, feldshers never won the degree of professional autonomy that they hoped to earn. They remained a group deeply divided between the “schooled” and “line” feldshers. Additionally, Russian physicians refused to take up the feldsher cause because they viewed the path to achieving their own professional ambitions lay in replacing all feldshers with more physicians.<sup>576</sup> But Russian medical schools never succeeded in producing a sufficient number of physicians to meet the empire’s needs. Thus, Russia’s zemstvos, army, hospitals,

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<sup>575</sup> Samuel Ramer, “Who was the Russian Feldsher?,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 50, no. 2 (Summer, 1976): 216-17.

<sup>576</sup> *Ibid.*, 218-19.



factories, prisons, and even Red Cross had to rely on inferior medical specialists, who might fill in when the situation demanded first aid treatment, but who should not have been relied on for serious procedures. Russia's greater numbers of feldshers and the feldshers' push for professional recognition probably diminished opportunities for nurses to achieve similar status.

The feldsher challenge to nurses became more formidable as the feldsher trade increasingly became a feminine occupation around the turn of the century. By 1910, 70 percent of the students in feldsher courses were women, many of them training to be feldsher-midwives. These students often had more education than their male counterparts, with 80 percent of the female students having studied for at least four years at a gymnasium.<sup>577</sup> Several causes explain the preponderance of women in this occupation. Stringent admission policies to medical courses and the lengthy course of study limited careers as doctors to the wealthiest or ablest women. For most women, feldsher classes presented the best (or only) opportunity to further their education. Fearing higher education might have a greater likelihood to infect the subordinate half of the population with radical sentiments, the Ministry of Interior often looked upon female physicians with a degree of suspicion, but feldsher-midwives posed no such threat. And, since the overwhelming majority of feldshers worked in rural areas, those subjects who wanted to serve the masses found an easy avenue to do so in this line of work.<sup>578</sup> In many ways, as humble as the feldshers were, they enjoyed stable, albeit low, pay and freedom from the rule of the

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<sup>577</sup> Samuel Ramer, "The Transformation of the Russian Feldsher, 1864-1917," in *Imperial Russia, 1700-1917: State, Society, Opposition*, Ezra Mendelsohn and Marshall S. Shatz, eds. (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1988), 147-48.

<sup>578</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

quasireligious nursing order, privileges antithetical to the communal, self-sacrificial nature of Russian nursing.

Women's medical courses provided the second opportunity for scientific and professional advancement in tsarist Russia for an even smaller number of women. Initially set up by Minister of War Miliutin in 1872 at the Medical-Surgical Academy, this experiment trained seven hundred women to serve as advanced midwives or physicians during the 1870s and early 1880s. For the intelligentsia, these courses proved that the Great Reforms had launched a new era of progress and opportunity in Russia. Some of graduates from these courses served in the Russo-Turkish War, but most, it seems, struggled to survive as physicians in the face of legal restrictions on where and how women could practice medicine and the same series of problems that frustrated the Russian medical profession as a whole. The women's courses at the Medical-Surgical Academy closed as part of the reaction led by D. A. Tolstoi and K. P. Pobedonostsev following Alexander II's assassination in 1882, but Nicholas II revived these courses in 1897 when he founded the Women's Medical Institute in St. Petersburg. This institution admitted well over one hundred students per year. By 1913, Russia possessed additional Women's Medical Institutes in Moscow, Kiev, Odessa, Kharkov, Kazan, Dorpat, and Ekaterinoslav; hence, the feminization of Soviet medicine began before the Bolsheviks seized power.<sup>579</sup> The diverse opportunities for women in medicine help explain why nurses made so little gains at establishing nursing as a profession in Russia during the years prior to 1914. With so many opportunities available, and the intelligentsia and press giving the most weight to calls for women's advancement in the

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<sup>579</sup> See Christine Johanson, *Women's Struggle for Higher Education in Russia, 1855-1900* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), 77-94; Michelle D. DeBeste-Barnett, "Earnestly Working to Improve Russia's Future: Russian Women Physicians, 1867-1905," (Ph.D. diss., Southern Illinois University, 1997), 52-58.

doctor's trade, it comes as little surprise that Russian nurses made little headway toward establishing their own craft as an independent profession.

Still, the argument for the professionalization of nurses had become an issue by the turn of the century, and this movement in many ways resembled the feldshers' collective calls for professional recognition. Russian Sisters of Mercy lived lives of destitution and obedience. Confined to a near monastic lifestyle and receiving no payments for their services until they earned a pension in old age, these women were hardly the talented, independent group that Pirogov hoped would transform Russia. One nurse, Mirkovich, writing after the Russo-Japanese War, complained that quasireligious aspect of Russian nursing communities was worthless, especially because the charters for these institutions made it clear that they were not under the auspices of the Orthodox Church, nor must the members live as nuns. Those nurses who had seen war gained a taste of freedom and came back empowered, so they had no reason to remain in the nursing communities, while those who stayed were often too old and frail to conduct epidemic relief in the provinces. And material destitution and a lack of independence caused too many of these aging nurses to develop a malevolence to the Red Cross and nursing societies, the institutions that exploited these women's labors. The activist Mirkovich argued in favor of a new set of laws that standardized and professionalized nurses. She called for a common, more practical curriculum to be taught in all of the nursing societies and asked for the Red Cross to work with city and zemstvo hospitals to ensure that they only hire women who completed the nursing courses, a policy similar to German law.<sup>580</sup> This critique, unfortunately, won no ardent supporters. Even though many women entered

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<sup>580</sup> T. Mirkovich, *Rossiiskoe Obshchestvo Krasnogo Kresta i Obshchiny Sester miloserdiiia. Zametka zapasnoi Sestry miloserdiiia Krasnogo Kresta ob odnoi iz naibolee vazhnykh prichin, vredno vliiaushchikh na postanovku voprosa ob ukhode za bol'nymi i ranenymi v Rossii* (St. Petersburg, 1910), 17-41.

the communities, Russian nursing remained a quasi profession until the collapse of the Old Regime.<sup>581</sup> The leaders of the Red Cross, which had the influence at court to at least voice these concerns, were either ignorant of the problem or viewed professionalization as a path that would make nursing unattractive to noblewomen, the ideal nurses Pirogov took to Sevastopol.

### **The Famine of 1891-1892**

In summer of 1891, tsarist Russia suffered its worst crop failure in recent memory, as drought affected the Volga and the Black Earth regions, an area twice the size of France and inhabited by thirty-five million people. Dry soil caused the crops to fail, and cereal harvests in certain places fell to half the levels seen during the good years of the mid-1880s. By autumn, famine and epidemic engulfed central Russia. Contrary to arguments by contemporary critics—a group that ranged from Grigorii Plekhanov, the “Father of Russian Marxism,” on the left to Count Sergei Witte, the soon-to-be minister of finance, on the right—peasant backwardness and the lack of state intervention in the agrarian economy probably did not cause the weather to turn dry or the crops to fail. This massive disruption to rural Russia prompted the autocracy to undertake an unprecedented relief campaign to save the peasantry from starvation. Russia halted all grain exports in 1891, a measure that risked unhinging an economy geared toward supplying industrial Europe with cheap foodstuffs, and the state severely restricted vodka sales, a decision intended to halt distillation but which also undermined the state’s tax base. Coupled with these macroeconomic measures, the autocratic

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<sup>581</sup> Laurie S. Stoff, *Russia’s Sisters of Mercy and the Great War: More than Binding Men’s Wounds* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2015), 303-4.

state and Russian society collaborated on an unprecedented scale to provide relief to the afflicted provinces.

Historian Richard Robbins has viewed the famine of 1891-92 as a test the Old Regime confronted and weathered in the short term, especially in comparison to British attempts to alleviate famine in India in the 1890s or the Soviet attempts to do so in 1921 or 1932-33. In 1891, the autocracy was neither nonchalant nor unresponsive when natural disaster threatened society and state. Confronting a humanitarian crisis, the autocracy hardly skimped on the largess; one estimate puts the state's expenditures on rural welfare at 196 million rubles over two years, an amount that made up 10 percent of the state budget in 1891. At its peak, the Russian state gave loans of grain to nearly twelve million peasants. The zemstvos, which distributed much of this grain to the peasants, cooperated with the bureaucracy, and the provincial governors permitted the zemstvos to perform their duties without interference. Private aid from the Red Cross, Orthodox Church, and other religious and philanthropic organizations coordinated with the bureaucracy under the oversight of the Special Committee, led by Tsarevich Nicholas, the future tsar. And despite the economy's agrarian base, this calamity did not produce long-term damage to Russian agriculture. Bountiful harvests enabled a quick economic recovery in 1893.<sup>582</sup>

Notwithstanding these successes, the famine of 1891-92 undercut public trust in the autocracy and became one of the many causes of the Revolution of 1905 in Russia. The government did little to publicize its successes because Russia was a world power, and

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<sup>582</sup> Richard Robbins, *Famine in Russia, 1891-1892: The Imperial Government Responds to a Crisis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), 171-76, 186-87; James Y. Simms, "The Economic Impact of the Russian Famine of 1891-92," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 60, no. 1 (January 1982): 63-74; idem., "The Crop Failure of 1891: Soil Exhaustion, Technological Backwardness, and Russia's 'Agrarian Crisis,'" *Slavic Review* 42, no. 2 (Summer 1982): 236-50.

developed nations were not supposed to suffer famines. Russia's hindrances toward greater success in famine-relief efforts were largely structural: An inadequate rail network could not deliver grain quickly where it was needed; communication delays caused vertical delays in conveying policy decisions from St. Petersburg to the countryside; and the under-government of rural Russia meant there were too few land captains and no zemstvos in the villages.<sup>583</sup> Thus the state had almost no presence in the *mir*, the peasant commune. For future opponents of the regime, such as the Kadet V. A. Maklakov, the mismanagement of the famine marked the first irreparable break between state and society in the post-Reform era.<sup>584</sup> Some private associations, such as the endowment started by the renowned author Lev Tolstoy, refused to participate in the tsarevich's Special Committee, which fanned the public's mistrust of charitable directives that partnered with the regime. Disgust and indignation incited a resurgence in the revolutionary movement, largely dormant or in exile during the decade of reactionary counter-reforms designed to protect the state after the assassination of Alexander II, and another generation of youth became seduced by the long-departed populists' "to the people" campaign, a romantic effort by educated young people to inspire the peasantry to rise up in revolution.<sup>585</sup>

The autocracy's retort to society's discontent merely exacerbated the tensions between the two. Economic concerns over the famine prompted Alexander III to replace conservative Minister of Finance I. V. Vyshnegradskii with the pro-industry Sergei Witte, a

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<sup>583</sup> Robbins, *Famine in Russia*, 174-76. The land captains (*zemskie nachal'niki*) were agents of the Ministry of Interior dispatched to work in rural Russia. Created in 1889 as a means to widen state surveillance to the village, land captains served as police constables and helped direct state-sponsored economic development and relief projects at the local level. See Thomas S. Pearson, "The Origins of Alexander III's Land Captains: A Reinterpretation," *Slavic Review* 40, no. 3 (Autumn 1981): 384-403.

<sup>584</sup> V. A. Maklakov, *Vlast' i obshchestvennost' na zakate Staroi Rossii (Vospominaniia)* (Paris, 1936), 128.

<sup>585</sup> Robbins, *Famine in Russia*, 180.

change that promised to overcome the burden of rural backwardness but, in reality, only added another group of troublemakers to Russian society: the rebellious proletariat. Then, in 1894, Alexander III died suddenly, and his son, Nicholas II, ascended to the throne. Early in his reign, Nicholas fell under the influence of V. K. Plehve, the deputy minister of internal affairs, who encouraged the young tsar to turn on the zemstvos. Citing problems with coordinating aid on the Special Committee, Nicholas II consolidated all famine relief in the hands of the bureaucracy after 1895, denying the zemstvos a role in the relief campaigns during crop failures in 1898 and 1900.<sup>586</sup> Zemstvo advocates read this move as a betrayal by the young tsar of his former rural allies, a group that had worked with him on the Special Committee and hoped to expand the zemstvos to the county (*volost'*) level and into additional provinces outside Central Russia.<sup>587</sup> The assassination of Minister of Internal Affairs D. S. Sipiagin, Plehve's accession to the vacant post, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs' reports on revolutionary activities within the Samara zemstvo, incited the new minister to conduct a witch hunt amid the zemstvo ranks for the "third element," a group of suspected provocateurs and revolutionaries working as doctors, teachers, and agronomists in the provinces. This campaign to purge rural Russia of its most progressive elements incensed many zemstvo activists against the state.<sup>588</sup> The divergence between the bureaucracy and its sober and

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<sup>586</sup> Ibid., 180-82.

<sup>587</sup> In 1890 the zemstvos existed only in thirty-four provinces of Central Russia. Zemstvos had not been set up in Siberia or the Far East because these provinces had few Russian peasants to administer, and the autocracy had most certainly not permitted local autonomy in contentious regions such as the western borderlands, Caucasus, or Central Asia.

<sup>588</sup> According to Thomas Fallows, the bureaucracy viewed the zemstvo as its provincial agent in the decades prior to the Russo-Japanese War, a role that most zemstvo activists fulfilled happily. See Thomas Fallows, "The Zemstvo and the Bureaucracy, 1890-1904," in *The Zemstvo in Russia: An Experiment in Local Self-Government*, Terence Emmons and Wayne S. Vucinich, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 177-242.

talented rural partners set the stage for zemstvo opposition in 1904-05, a subject of the next chapter.

The Red Cross participation in the famine-relief efforts of 1891-92, 1898, and 1900. In the first of these campaigns, the Red Cross worked alongside the state and the zemstvos. In the second two campaigns, Nicholas II began to limit the zemstvos from widespread participation. With the Red Cross unable to raise sufficient funds to satisfy rural hunger during these latter campaigns, Nicholas II diverted monies from the Ministry of Finance and his own fortune to sponsor relief operations, a decision that drew Russia's national relief organization closer to the autocracy.

The Russian Red Cross participated in relief efforts during the famine of 1891-92 on a large, but not unprecedented, scale. In 1873, the Red Cross had raised about half a million rubles for the peasants of Samara Province, a campaign that some recognized as evidence that the Red Cross was ready for a major wartime mobilization. Twenty years later, when a series of crop failures affected a much larger region, the Red Cross responded by working beside the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the zemstvos to provide nearly two million rubles of aid in 1891-92. For Red Cross activists, these campaigns proved that Russia's aid society needed to undertake greater planning for large-scale peacetime activities, the very types of campaigns that mirrored wartime deployments. This type of exercise, they argued, enabled the Red Cross to practice mobilizing independent medical brigades to serve in faraway locations. Visibility to the public during these campaigns won greater support and donations from Russian subjects, whose enthusiasm for the Red Cross had dwindled in the years following the Congress of Berlin.



The Red Cross's involvement in the famine relief campaigns of 1891 began as a series of provincial initiatives. The Saratov Provincial Committee, for example, began to spend monies from its disaster relief fund in July, and other provincial committees arranged networks of volunteers during the summer. In late August, however, after hearing disturbing reports from the provinces, the Red Cross initiated Russia's first empire-wide disaster relief campaign. At a meeting on 22 August, the Main Directorate elected to begin collecting donations for crop relief at all of the organization's chapters. Reports from local agencies indicated that seventeen provinces were in need of immediate relief, so planners in St. Petersburg selected provincial committees in nearby regions of Russia not affected by crop failure to serve as designated "sponsors" on 31 August. Hence, the provincial committees in Moscow and Vladimir sent grain to Nizhgorod Province along the rail line that linked Moscow to Nizhnyi Novgorod. Fertile areas in the Caucasus sent aid to Saratov. Each provincial committee, St. Petersburg instructed, would compose a bimonthly report on the monies they raised and the grain or funds they sent or received in recently printed account books. To review these reports and direct surpluses to the neediest provinces, the Main Directorate established an Oversight Committee. Throughout the "sponsoring provinces," the areas free from crop failure, the provincial committees set up charitable boards staffed by individuals who enjoyed the "public's trust," such as clergymen, state administrators, and prominent merchants and townspeople. Governors or the heads of the provincial Red Cross committees usually chaired these boards, but zemstvo delegates sometimes also served as chairmen.<sup>589</sup> These groups' tasks were to solicit charitable contributions, send these funds to

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<sup>589</sup> Francis Reeves visited Tula Province in 1892 and met with Vladimir Bobrinskii, the head of the Bogoroditskii Uezd zemstvo and local Red Cross. See Francis B. Reeves, *Russia, Then and Now, 1892-1917: My Mission to Russia during the Famine of 1891-1892, with Data Bearing upon Russia of To-Day* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1917), 57-58.

neighboring provinces, and deliver reports to the Oversight Committee in St. Petersburg. Within the provinces suffering from crop failure, the Red Cross bureaucratic network stretched down to the county (*uezd*), district (*uchastok*), and sometimes even village level in a series of wards (*popечitel'stva*). By 1892, this network numbered 22 provincial, 145 district, 1279 county, and 352 village wards. At the village-level, the Red Cross had to entrust the distribution of aid to the few literates available, which often meant relying on landowners, priests, teachers, or land captains, all non-peasants. To ensure this structure came into being quickly, the Main Directorate sent preliminary funds totaling 170,000 rubles from its wartime endowment to the twenty-two provinces then suffering from crop failure.<sup>590</sup>

Collections for the hungry came from multiple sources. In 1891 alone, the Red Cross gathered 1.8 million rubles for famine relief, a sum far larger than any amount directed toward peacetime activities prior to this point. The Romanovs, several prominent landowners, and merchants' groups made public donations. Maria Fedorovna contributed twenty thousand of her own rubles, while Count A. V. Orlov-Davydov gave one hundred thousand rubles, and the Petersburg bankers added another fifty thousand. These donations were advertised in the press. Led by St. Petersburg province (which included the Main Directorate), the Caucuses, and, the Congress of Poland, the provinces free from crop failure raised well over one million rubles for the Red Cross during the campaign of 1891. At the local level, the Orthodox Church allied with the Red Cross, and priests encouraged parishioners to part with a few kopecks in coin-boxes located in every parish. Over the fourteen months from August 1891 to October 1892, the Red Cross collected 2,762,054

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<sup>590</sup> "Otchet o deiatel'nosti Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta v 1891 i 1892 godakh po okazaniiu pomoshchi naseleniiu, postradavshemu ot neurozhaia 1891 goda," *Vestnik Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, February 28, 1893, 66-68; April 11, 1893, 115.

rubles in cash and 508,256 poods of donated grain, which was worth another 600,000 rubles. When contributions from the state were added to these sums, the Red Cross oversaw nearly five million rubles in cash or kind during this welfare campaign.<sup>591</sup>

Of these funds, the sponsoring provinces sent 531,732 rubles directly to their designated target provinces, but, beginning with the establishment of Tsarevich Nicholas's Special Committee in November 1891, the Red Cross routed another 448,959 rubles, or 45 percent of the total, through this body. The Special Committee, designed to coordinate aid work between multiple charities and ensure philanthropic work did not overlap with state or zemstvo aid, was not a bureaucratic attempt to undermine private initiative, as some contemporaries suspected. Instead, the idea for the Special Committee came from Count I. I. Vorontsov-Dashkov, a longtime Red Cross supporter. The Red Cross's chairman, P. M. von Kaufman, as well as K. P. Pobedonostsev, at the time a high-ranking Red Cross official, were members of this committee.<sup>592</sup> In only six provinces did the Red Cross committees remain independent of the Special Committee after 1 January 1892; the rest became partially managed by the provincial organs of the Special Committee. This committee transferred 468,163 rubles and over 600,000 rubles-worth of grain to provincial Red Cross agencies over the next year. In total, the Special Committee gathered about thirteen million rubles and spent nearly twelve during the campaign, many of which went to charities sponsored by the Orthodox Church. Only two million rubles came from donations to the Special Committee,

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<sup>591</sup> "Otchet o deiatel'nosti Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta v 1891 i 1892 godakh po okazaniiu pomoshchi naseleniiu, postradavshemu ot neurozhaia 1891 goda," *Vestnik Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, March 7, 1893, 74-75; 14 March 14, 1893, 89-90; April 4, 1893, 100; "Pomoshch' Krasnogo Kresta postradavshim ot neurozhaia s 1874-1905 g.," *Vestnik Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, September 30, 1906, 531.

<sup>592</sup> Robbins, *Famine in Russia*, 95-100.

while eight million came from charitable lotteries sanctioned by the state, and 2.5 million were transfers from independent institutions such as the Red Cross.<sup>593</sup>

**Table 7: Red Cross Funding for the 1891-92 Relief Campaign (in rubles)**

	Funds Raised from Reserve Accounts	Funds Donated by Various Individuals and Corporations	Funds From the Special Committee	Funds from Local Church Committees	Funds from Temporary Charitable Committees	Funds from the Sales of Donated Items	Total
The Main Agency	170,000	362,105.66	0	0	0	1,252.30	533,357.06
Provincial and Local Red Cross Committees in Areas with Successful Harvests	208,408.48	863,454.85	0	0	29,803.22	1,545.57	1,103,202.12
Provincial and Local Red Cross Committees in Areas Suffering from Crop Failures	175,910.68	720,935.01	468,163.66	25,348.12	98,907.74	258,441.61	1,747,706.82
<b>Total</b>	<b>554,319.16</b>	<b>1,946,495.52</b>	<b>468,163.66</b>	<b>25,348.12</b>	<b>128,710.98</b>	<b>261,239.48</b>	<b>3,384,276.90</b>

Source: “Obzor deiatel’nosti Rossiiskogo Obshestva Krasnogo Kresta v 1891 i 1892 godakh po okazaniiu pomoshchi naseleniiu, postradavshemu ot neurozhaia 1891 goda,” *Vestnik Rossiiskogo Obshestva Krasnogo Kresta*, March 7, 1893, 84.

On the ground, Red Cross agents preferred to distribute food to peasants at cafeterias (*stolovaias*), even though they were more expensive, than by handing out bread from bakeries or packets of flour. This policy ensured that food reached those ineligible for zemstvo relief, such as the elderly, unmarried women, children, and landless peasants.<sup>594</sup> By following the delivery of food into the mouths of the recipients, Red Cross agents could know that grain was not distilled into vodka or sold to purchase spirits. If nurses ran the cafeterias, they could look out for typhus and other diseases that afflicted the

<sup>593</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>594</sup> The state preferred to distribute aid as seed loans or grants to zemstvos, which would then distribute the grain to male members of the peasant commune (*obshchina*) according to a series of regulations determined by the Ministry of Interior. This strategy was designed to support village patriarchy by connecting the zemstvo with the heads of households, the traditional bastion of authority in the village. The problem with this method for doling out aid was that many village inhabitants did not have a direct connection to a male member of the commune. For example, widows, the elderly, children, landless peasants or artisans all lacked formal membership in the commune. Robbins, *Famine in Russia*, 50.

malnourished.<sup>595</sup> In total, the Red Cross opened 2,703 cafeterias, 60 cafeterias for children, 40 shelters for migrant workers, 357 bakeries, and 231 grain storehouses. By one estimate, this network of facilities fed nearly 1.7 million people in provinces affected by crop failure and gave hot food for another 3.5 million subjects in cafeterias. The Red Cross spent only about seventy thousand rubles on medical aid, a comparatively small amount, and most of this sum went to dispatching medical brigades to areas with scurvy or infectious epidemics. Incomplete reports from the medical brigades indicate that as many as eight formed, which were staffed by 9 doctors and 104 nurses, and these brigades may have treated as many as 35,000 patients.<sup>596</sup> Only a small portion of the Red Cross's funds, 39,414 rubles, was distributed as cash payments, and officials insisted that this type of aid only be used in cases where the affected peasants lived so far from rail lines that delivery of grain to them was too costly.<sup>597</sup> Grain deliveries continued in 1893, but this time the Red Cross ceased its activities distributing food and let state and zemstvo institutions take the lead in Russia's agricultural recovery.<sup>598</sup>

Despite the Red Cross's considerable contribution to this campaign, liberal elements from Russian society criticized the organization for indifference, inflexibility, and corruption. The Russian novelist and playwright Anton Chekhov wrote a letter to a friend in December 1891, in which he referred to rumors of graft in the Moscow Provincial Committee of the

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<sup>595</sup> RGIA, f. 954, op. 1, d. 233, l. 1.

<sup>596</sup> "Obzor deiatel'nosti Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta v 1891 i 1892 godakh po okazaniiu pomoshchi naseleniiu, postradavshemu ot neurozhaia 1891 goda," *Vestnik Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, April 4, 1893, 115.

<sup>597</sup> "Otchet o deiatel'nosti Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta v 1891 i 1892 godakh po okazaniiu pomoshchi naseleniiu, postradavshemu ot neurozhaia 1891 goda," *Vestnik Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, April 4, 1893, 101-2.

<sup>598</sup> "Prodoval'stvennaia pomoshch' v 1893 godu," *Vestnik Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, April 15, 1893, 116.

Red Cross. When a group of intellectuals and businessmen from Moscow reached out to Minister of Interior I. V. Durnovo for permission to mobilize their own relief efforts, the state ruled that all aid had to go through the Red Cross or Orthodox Church, a decision that dispirited these activists. Chekhov refused to follow the state's prerogatives and helped to organize his own subscription for famine relief.<sup>599</sup> The American Red Cross also yearned to help, but journalists and diplomats slowed international aid efforts by accusing the Russian Red Cross of graft. Ultimately, American public initiative overcame suspicions, and the Russian Famine Relief Committee, made up of prominent politicians and barons of industry, as well as the representatives from the Millers' Fund and the Iowa Famine Relief Fund, sent four shiploads of grain to Russia.<sup>600</sup> With public obloquy directed toward the autocracy forbidden by Russian censorship laws, the Red Cross again became the target of allegations of callousness and ineptitude from a diverse group of voices in liberal society. This slander, however, did not cause the Red Cross to change its activities or undertake measures to improve its image. Instead, tireless action followed by the publication of dry reports, the Red Cross hoped, would silence critics.

As the Old Regime came to grips with the food supply problems, cholera reared its ugly head along the empire's southern border in 1892. By June, the disease had spread from Persia to Baku, the capital of modern day Azerbaijan, where General A. N. Kuropatkin, the head of military forces in the Caspian region, turned to the Main Directorate and Caucasus Regional Red Cross Committee for aid. Initially, the Red Cross hired military doctors to man

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<sup>599</sup> Anton Chekhov, *Letters of Anton Chekhov*, Avrahm Yarmolinsky, ed. (New York: The Viking Press, 1973), 194-98.

<sup>600</sup> One historian estimated that the value of American aid was as high as 800,000 dollars or 1.6 million rubles. See James Young Simms, "The Impact of the Russian Famine of 1891-92: A New Perspective" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1976), 63-74.

two sanitary brigades that monitored civilians for the disease around Ashkhabad, present-day Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. Later, the Ministries of Internal Affairs and Railroads, and various private and city institutions issued requests to the Main Directorate for nurses to staff temporary medical facilities throughout the empire. Lacking willing volunteers, nursing societies in St. Petersburg and Moscow established shortened courses to train women for the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of cholera. In total, the Red Cross mobilized 710 nurses to work on the cholera epidemic in 1892 and 1893. The largest group of these women, 169 in total, stayed in St. Petersburg to deal with the epidemic in a network of temporary hospitals. Another 321 nurses left Russia's capitals to work in hospitals and in sanitary brigades in the Caucasus and Volga provinces, a campaign Red Cross agents believed won public supporters to its cause. Medical brigades often set up small clinics to isolate those suffering from epidemics or enable patients with scurvy due to malnutrition a chance at recovery. With doctors in short supply, a village's clinic and the cafeteria attached to it might be managed by a nurse or medical student. These brigades also monitored sanitary conditions in the villages, inspecting wells, latrines, and cemeteries.<sup>601</sup> Despite these efforts, this cholera epidemic quickly spread across Russia, claiming as many as three hundred thousand lives and prompting widespread violence against the police and medical workers tasked with stopping it. Red Cross documents are suspiciously silent about the popular response to the cholera epidemic, but these workers certainly faced the same backlash that drove many doctors to

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<sup>601</sup> "Otchet o deiatel'nosti Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta v bor'be s kholernoiiu epidemieiu 1892 goda," *Vestnik Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, April 22, 1893, 123); April 29, 1893, 130-31; "Pomoshch' Krasnogo Kresta postradavshim ot neurozhaia s 1874-1905 g.," *Vestnik Rossiiskogo Krasnogo Kresta*, November 4, 1906, 582-84; November 17, 1906, 600-601.

become disillusioned with the state's heavy-handed policies to excise and quarantine the infected.<sup>602</sup>

### **Famine Relief from 1897 to 1901**

Crop failure returned to the Russia in 1897, and with it the Red Cross began yearly mobilizations to feed starving peasants that continued until the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War. The autocracy, fearing that members of the Third Element might incite suffering peasants to revolt, denied the zemstvos widespread freedoms to innovate during these relief campaigns, a policy that would lead progressive zemstvo activists to form their own rival Red Cross during the Russo-Japanese War. With the zemstvos' role circumscribed to the province-level, the Red Cross, an organization that many already equated with the autocracy, appeared more than ever to be a state agency, impinging on provincials' rights to govern themselves.<sup>603</sup>

In 1897, Red Cross Agent S. V. Aleksandrovskii directed relief work in Voronezh, Tambov, and Riazan, three of the worst hit provinces. During this campaign, the Main Directorate raised about a million rubles, half of which came from a large donation from Nicholas II. The Main Directorate selected to keep nearly half of these funds in its permanent disaster relief fund, and only 550,000 rubles went to providing food, fodder, or outfitting sanitary brigades in 1897-98.

The following year, in 1898, the harvest failed again in six provinces of Central Russia, and Aleksandrovskii returned to the provinces to conduct relief work, but this time he

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<sup>602</sup> For more on these policies and the responses from peasants and medical workers, see Nancy M. Frieden, "The Russian Cholera Epidemic, 1892-93, and Medical Professionalization," *Journal of Social History* 10, no. 4 (Summer, 1977), 542-47.

<sup>603</sup> In the 1890s, the Ministry of Finance sought to limit and reduce spending on rural projects. See Thomas Fallows, "The Zemstvo and the Bureaucracy," 217.



was joined by N. K. Shvedov. In the seven provinces affected, the Red Cross opened 7,518 cafeterias, which fed more than 1.5 million people. If bread and flour distribution programs are included, Red Cross aid reached nearly 3.7 million people. Also, about 1,200 medical professionals, including medical students, conducted relief work in the affected provinces. To combat illness, the Red Cross set up nearly 450 clinics for patients suffering from scurvy, which treated around 15,000 patients, and they gave ambulatory care to another 125,000 patients. By June 1899, visible cases of scurvy had disappeared, so the makeshift Red Cross medical facilities were shuttered and their responsibilities transferred to zemstvo facilities. The Red Cross also set up shelters for migrant workers and established a workers' bureau to hire the unemployed. Help with famine relief came from the Ministries of Railroads and Finance; the former paid many of the workers' salaries, and the latter provided reduced-priced tickets for laborers to travel to areas with better employment opportunities. The Red Cross boasted of sending thirty thousand men to work, a large portion of which seems to have been procuring medical supplies for wartime stores and producing clothing for the poor. Perhaps the most impressive achievement the Red Cross organized was a massive winter-time delivery by cart of three million puds of grain from the lower, navigable parts of the Volga to Kazan, Viatka, and Ufa. Again, during this campaign, Red Cross donations came mostly from the Romanov family, with Nicholas II providing 3 million rubles in aid, but local committees added another 1.75 million rubles.<sup>604</sup> In July 1899, it appeared that the harvest would succeed, so Shvedov began to close or transfer Red Cross facilities to the zemstvos. Reports differ, but the Red Cross seems to have spent between 3.9 and 4.7 million

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<sup>604</sup> *Rossiiskoe Obshchestvo Krasnogo Kresta, sostoiashchee pod Avgusteishim pokrovitel'stvom ee imperatroskago velichestva gosudaryni imperatritsy Marii Feodorovny. Ocherk vozniknoveniia i deiatel'nosti Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, 44-45.

rubles on delivering aid to the provinces wracked by crop failure in 1899, most of which went to peasants in Ufa, Kazan, Samara, and Simbirsk.<sup>605</sup>

Initial forecasts in 1900 indicated that Russia would enjoy a bountiful harvest, so the Red Cross concentrated activities in areas still suffering from crop failures, such as Kherson, or aided settlers whose empty stomachs had driven them to Siberia. By this time, the Red Cross had become more attuned to conducting famine relief, and the organization kept 780,000 rubles in its disaster relief budget. Late in the fall of 1900, however, the crops failed again in the Black Earth region, so the Red Cross came to the need of peasants without access to the state or zemstvo aid. During this campaign, the Red Cross opened 428 charitable committees, which operated 1,500 cafeterias and bakeries. This network fed over two million people during the next two years. Medical teams that included 42 doctors, 207 nurses, and 284 volunteers treated 155,000 patients as well. This campaign saw cooperation between the Red Cross and the state, as the Main Directorate won permission from the Ministry of Internal Affairs to appoint a representative to the state's Famine Relief Committee. The Ministry of Railroads provided the Red Cross with discounted shipping rates for grain and free tickets for sanitary workers, and the military seems to have donated stores of dried cabbage for areas affected by scurvy. This campaign's cost amounted to 1.2 million rubles for the Red Cross by January 1903.<sup>606</sup>

Red Cross agents viewed famine-relief work as preparation for war, and the Red Cross's performance during the 1890s did not bode well for wartime mobilizations in the

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<sup>605</sup> "Otchet deiatel'nosti obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta po okazaniiu pomoshchi, postradavshemu ot neurozhaia 1898 g.," *Vestnik Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, April 1, 1900, 107-8; "Pomoshch' Krasnogo Kresta postradavshim ot neurozhaia s 1874-1905 g.," *Vestnik Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, October 7, 1906, 545.

<sup>606</sup> GARF, f. 642, op. 1, d. 357, ll. 75-79; "Pomoshch' Krasnogo Kresta postradavshim ot neurozhaia s 1874-1905 g.," *Vestnik Rossiiskogo Krasnogo Kresta*, October 14, 1906, 560.

future. Agent R. A. Pisarev, who worked in Tula Province during the famine of 1891, complained that the cafeterias, bakeries, and sanatoriums for the sick suffered because they were set up in an “arbitrary” manner as the result of poor preparation. Still, the Red Cross, Pisarev conceded, managed to cope with famine relief, an activity outside its purview, but one that would help the organization prepare for “wartime philanthropy (*voinstvuiushchiaia blagotvoritel'nost'*).” Shortcomings in the Red Cross’s efforts might be prevented if the organization adopted a culture of “orderly discipline” and “permanent preparedness.” A militarized Red Cross would better serve in war and peace, and the best way to create this type of organization would be to collaborate further with the zemstvos and Ministries of War and Interior. Pisarev concluded that the Red Cross needed to balance its two obligations, to war and peace. Still, the solution to this problem lay in military preparedness for peacetime sanitary work, an activity Pisarev believed the zemstvos were too poor to undertake. He proposed that the Red Cross secure funds through public lotteries to spend on provincial sanitary brigades, a project he ambitiously estimated might save as many as one million lives per year.<sup>607</sup>

A report by Shvedov on famine-relief measures in 1903 in Starorusskii District, Novgorod Province, provides a window into how the Red Cross mobilized resources to provide relief to peasants. While this report presents a brief survey of these activities from the Red Cross’s perspective, it portrays the zemstvos and other local elites as willing and able to help the Red Cross with its famine-relief campaign. Later zemstvo advocates would attempt to monopolize relief work, but at this time, it seems, many provincial elites viewed the Red Cross as an ally. The trouble in Starorusskii District began after a succession of poor

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<sup>607</sup> RGIA, f. 892, op. 1, d. 1646, ll. 1-3.

harvests around the turn of the century. Crop failures had depleted the zemstvo's resources and left the peasants heavily indebted to the state for loan arrears, and the disastrous harvest of 1902 left the region impoverished by spring of 1903. The provincial governor reported that scurvy had broken out in the province in April 1903, which, with zemstvo resources already dwindled, prompted the Ministry of Internal Affairs in St. Petersburg to turn to the Main Directorate for Red Cross aid. The Main Directorate quickly dispatched Dr. S. A. Zil'berberg and four nurses from the Aleksandrovskii Nursing Society with equipment to open medical clinics and cafeterias.<sup>608</sup>

By May 13 Zil'berberg's brigade had diagnosed more than two thousand people with scurvy, and this news persuaded the Main Directorate to send Shvedov to the district to coordinate Red Cross activities with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and zemstvo. Shvedov arrived with ten advanced students from the Medical-Surgical Academy, who teamed up with zemstvo sanitary personnel to conduct surveys of the district and set up clinics. He attended a conference chaired by the governor made up of all the different aid organs in the district, such as the Ministry of Internal Affairs, zemstvo, nobility, Orthodox Church, and even schools. This conference raised several thousand rubles, the majority of which came from wealthy landowners. Next, Shvedov divided the district into eleven zones and arranged for a sanitary brigade, made up of one doctor and several nurses, to circuit each zone, treating scurvy patients and managing cafeterias. Shvedov was assisted by twenty-eight Red Cross nurses, thirty nuns from local monasteries, and forty-two village teachers, all of whom were hired at a rate of fifteen rubles per month to manage the ninety-one cafeterias in the district. These cafeterias served *shchi* (cabbage soup) and pea soup with meat as well as giving

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<sup>608</sup> N. K. Shvedov, *Pomoshch' Krasnogo Kresta postradavshim ot tsingi 1903 g. v. Starorusskom uezda Novgorodskoi gubernii* (St. Petersburg: Elektro-tipografiia N. Ia. Stoikovoi, 1903), 2-8.

lemons and vinegar to those suffering from scurvy. Operating for the summer and fall of 1903, this campaign fed nearly thirty thousand peasants over 1.2 million meals and treated as many as fifteen thousand persons afflicted with scurvy. The Red Cross spent nearly thirty-eight thousand rubles on this campaign. Shvedov believed this campaign was an overwhelming success since the number of peasants who succumbed to malnutrition or related diseases was low and the peasants' behavior improved as a result of the "moral influence" of the Red Cross, which reduced cases of village drunkenness and violence.<sup>609</sup>

After more than a decade of conducting periodic famine relief, Shvedov believed the Red Cross needed to normalize this type of activity by working out careful plans for different types of peacetime relief efforts. On the surface these recommendations only involved peacetime activities, but Red Cross planners might easily adopt Shvedov's designs in wartime to military ends. First, he suggested that the Main Directorate create a Mobilization Section to come up with detailed inventories for outfitting sanitary and famine-relief brigades and directing their operations. This section would also draw up detailed lists of all doctors, pharmacists, nurses, and even monks and nuns in each province or district to provide the Red Cross with an accurate picture of human resources at its disposal. Shvedov must have been aware that many members of the medical profession and segments within the zemstvo movement viewed the Red Cross with suspicion, which was why he found it useful to catalogue the human landscape within the country and no doubt identify loyal partners. Second, as a private organization divorced from the Church, the clergy were under no obligation to serve the Red Cross, but Shvedov viewed monasteries, especially nunneries, as wellsprings of untapped talent, where "[we] could, in institutions with clinics, train a

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<sup>609</sup> Ibid., 11-21.

trustworthy contingent of nurses, who would be useful in peace and wartime.” At only thirty kopecks per day—the wages the Red Cross paid nuns during the 1903 campaign—these women came at bargain prices, and their political loyalties were more trustworthy than zemstvo doctors or feldshers, whose political leanings might tilt toward the Third Element of provincial radicals.<sup>610</sup>

Most significantly, Shvedov’s appraisal of famine-relief efforts demonstrated that the Russian Red Cross was infected with the same militarism that gripped all national aid societies at the turn of the century. On the eve of the Russo-Japanese War, this Red Cross advocate was already planning for a war that would require unprecedented mobilization of nonstate resources. One method for maximizing the Red Cross’s potential was the careful cataloguing of all useful and loyal human resources. In this case, the Red Cross, under the guise of famine relief, devised plans to enlist support from potential allies and direct these efforts toward future campaigns in war or peace.<sup>611</sup>

Shvedov’s recommendations to militarize the Russian Red Cross fell on deaf ears until after the Russo-Japanese War, and the reason for this lack of concern may have been autocratic prerogative. Maria Fedorovna acted as the titular head of the Red Cross and generals manned the Main Directorate, but this organization always remained true to its charter that kept it at arm’s length from military. Even though they remained silent on the

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<sup>610</sup> Ibid., 23-25.

<sup>611</sup> The fallout from accounting scandals during the American Red Cross’s campaign during the Galveston Hurricane of 1900 prompted Congress to approve a new ARC charter that placed this organization under the close supervision of the War Department. Ironically, this close relationship with the state affected the ARC in two ways: this organization became a tool for American imperialism abroad and a means for the barons of industry to discipline and revamp industrial workers at home. The British Red Cross saw a similar militarization at the same time, as military planners transformed nursing from a humanitarian and philanthropic endeavor to an essential component of war plans. See Moser Jones, *The American Red Cross*, 110-15; Summers, *Angels and Citizens*, 231.

issue, the Romanov empresses appeared to have taken seriously the provisions in the Red Cross's charter that the organization remain neutral and private, stipulations that Dunant insisted on in the original Geneva Convention of 1864. The Russian military made little attempt to subsume the Red Cross under its tutelage, even though certain generals hungered for its sizable endowment, and the nurses in their quasireligious societies seemed easier to ignore than remake. Ultimately, by preserving its independence from the military, the Russian Red Cross retained its flexibility to engage in campaigns the patronesses and governors deemed fit. This independence from the whims of popular demand preserved the Red Cross's endowment so that resources were available when the empire found itself at war with Japan.

Ultimately, the Russian Red Cross had too few resources at its disposal to meet the needs of Russia's masses during the decade of famine and epidemic. A. I. Novikov, a land captain who witnessed the famines of the 1890s in Tambov Province, believed the Red Cross did all it could during the years of hunger. Although he admitted that bureaucratic regulations and reports to St. Petersburg slowed aid work, the land captains or peasants who cried the loudest received the most assistance, subverting the outsiders' attempts to deliver resources to those in the greatest need. He admired the sanitary brigades, whose nurses did outstanding work, but wrote little on this topic. With zemstvo doctors few and far between, greater numbers of nurses and feldshers needed to be on hand to flock to the countryside at the first sign of famine. For Novikov the Red Cross did not provide the answer for feeding peasants during periods of famine. The provincials more often duped the Red Cross, a stiff

organization led by outsiders to rural Russia, unsure of how best to deliver philanthropic aid to civilians.<sup>612</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The two decades between the Russo-Turkish War and the Russo-Japanese War saw the Red Cross expand its size and capacity to confront national emergencies during the decade of famines in the 1890s. Famine relief was not the Red Cross's *raison d'être*, and while fund raising efforts during this decade raised considerable sums, these monies often came from large donations from the Romanovs and the wealthiest elites. Still, the Red Cross expanded its presence throughout Russia by organizing canteens and food distribution points during periods of hunger and providing free medical care in hospitals and clinics. Many members of educated society likely welcomed this kind of activity, but two factors prevented this organization from more effectively confronting Russia's medical needs in peacetime. The Red Cross's overt *modus operandi* demanded that all philanthropic activities be directed toward war or preparation for it, which meant that famine relief and civilian campaigns never garnered serious attention from activists in St. Petersburg. But preparation for war was hampered by the Russian autocracy, which refused to grant women professional status as nurses. Red Cross nurses were supposed to perform their trade selflessly without remuneration. The lack of pay and security for these women coupled with opportunities for women to become doctors or *feldshers*, both positions that promised greater compensation and freedom surely estranged many talented nurses from Red Cross service. As a result of the Red Cross's peacetime underdevelopment, Russia again faced shortages of voluntary medical personnel when war broke out with Japan in 1904.

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<sup>612</sup> A. I. Novikov, *Zapiski zemskogo nachal'nika*, S. Ramer, ed. (Newtonville: Oriental Research Partners, 1980), 176-180, 224-25.



War in Asia again drew educated society to the Red Cross, which raised considerable funds to send dozens of sanitary brigades to the Far East. Still, much of Russia supported the Red Cross's mission, which was the application of private aid to warfare, rather than the organization headed by Maria Fedorovna. During the Russo-Japanese War, the zemstvos broke away from the Red Cross and formed their own, rival private aid organization. This additional agency, the General Zemstvo Organization, sought to portray the Red Cross as a corrupt organ of the autocracy and itself as the true aid organization for the Russian public.

## **CHAPTER 7 – THE RUSSIAN RED CROSS IN WAR AND REVOLUTION, 1904-07**

Tsarist Russia stumbled into a tragic war with Japan in 1904. Blinded by racism and imperial arrogance, statesmen in St. Petersburg scoffed at Japanese threats and overestimated Russia's military strength in Asia. Count Sergei Witte's economic policies demanded a push into Manchuria to finance industrialization, and the tsarist state regarded imperial expansion as a way to redirect public attention away from internal troubles and toward Russia's assumed strength, adventurism in the East. When the Chinese threatened Russian commercial interests by seizing much of the Chinese Eastern Railway in 1900, 170,000 tsarist troops pacified the Boxers and took greater land and commercial concessions in Manchuria than even Witte had anticipated. But this victory proved to be a short-lived gamble. The Japanese, embarking on their own imperial project in Asia, correctly appraised Russia's hold on the region as tenuous. After St. Petersburg wasted much of 1903 dodging Tokyo's proposals for a settlement over the territorial integrity of China and Russia's privileges in Korea, the Japanese commenced hostilities with a sneak attack on Port Arthur in January 1904.

Russia's burden of waging modern war thousands of miles from its European center as well as the tsarist military's traditional problems with mediocre leadership, inferior weaponry, and poorly-motivated soldiers led to a series of disappointments on land and sea in this conflict. The next year, military defeat in the Far East exacerbated long-standing political antagonisms at home, and 1905 saw unprecedented urban protest and rural unrest throughout Russia. Exhausted and startled by domestic violence, the tsarist regime excused

itself from this costly war in the summer of 1905 to rebuild the state's relationship with society.<sup>613</sup>

The first half of this chapter surveys the Russian Red Cross's involvement in the Russo-Japanese War. The first "total war" prompted the Red Cross to mobilize its resources on an unprecedented level in the Far East. Hundreds of doctors and nurses made the trek across Siberia to the eastern border of the empire, where they established a huge network of hospitals, lazarettos, mobile ambulances, and canteens. These facilities made use of state-of-the-art technologies, such as the x-ray machine, and experimented with new types of medical treatments, such as psychiatric care for mentally traumatized soldiers. Medically, despite much confusion and finger pointing, Russia performed better in this conflict than it had in previous wars in part because of greater attention to wartime sanitation and in part because of blind luck—infectious diseases, which had crippled tsarist armies in the Crimea, Balkans, and in World War I, took only a minor toll in the Far East. Instead, disputes between the military and the Red Cross tended to be over small, localized mishaps. But the breadth of the Trans-Siberian Railroad amplified rather than diminished any hints of incompetence or mismanagement by the Red Cross.

This chapter also analyzes a peculiar Russian problem—the General Zemstvo Organization's challenge to the Red Cross during this war and the famine that followed the Revolution of 1905. In this case, zemstvo advocates won a personal intervention by Nicholas II to enable provincial assemblies to man, outfit, and dispatch medical brigades to the Far East. These brigades set themselves apart from the Red Cross in that they claimed to represent the public's interest. Once peace with Japan had been concluded in early 1905, and

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<sup>613</sup> Geyer, *Russian Imperialism*, chap. 10; Menning, *Bayonets Before Bullets*, chap. 5.

with society's future role in the management of the Russian state very much in flux due to welcoming gestures from the autocracy, the General Zemstvo Organization (*Obshchezemskaia organizatsiia*, hereafter GZO) turned its eyes toward feeding the rural population suffering from crop failure, a task that had previously been conducted by the Ministry of Interior and Red Cross. What resulted was not a result of friction between state and society, a precursor of the struggle Lenin dubbed Russia's "*kto-kogo*" dilemma. True, the GZO won recognition by the state, which deemed the zemstvos the primary vehicle to conduct famine relief, but this decision did not signify the Red Cross's defeat, since it had never put up a fight with the zemstvos. Instead, I suggest that the tsarist Red Cross, weary from war work, may have been happy to take a step back from being on the hook for Russia's welfare in peacetime.

As I noted above, the Japanese attack on Port Arthur in January 1904 caught the Red Cross unprepared for war. Prior to the conflict, the Red Cross's only permanent facilities in the Far East were nursing societies with small hospitals in Port Arthur, Dalian, and Vladivostok. As tensions with the Japanese simmered throughout 1903, the Russian Ministry of War even refused to let the Red Cross send materials to the east so as not to provoke the Japanese. Once war came, the Red Cross jumped to action, and the educated society responded with large-scale donations for the war effort.<sup>614</sup>

To manage operations from the capital, Dowager Empress Mariia Fedorovna oversaw the creation of an Executive Commission made up of high-level Red Cross members to direct wartime operations. This commission was chaired until February 1905 by I. I. Vorontsov-Dashkov, a former general and the future viceroy of the Caucasus; later, A. D. Obolenskii,

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<sup>614</sup> RGVIA, f. 16,731, op. 1, d. 16, l. 1.

Witte's deputy minister of finance, took charge. Contrary to accusations that arose in the press, this commission was not devoid of medical minds. Famous physicians, such as V. N. Sirotinin, and former military medical inspectors V. K. Anrep and V. S. Kudrin held positions on this board.<sup>615</sup> Subcommittees appointed by the Executive Commission managed individual tasks such as fundraising, accounts, supplies, transportation, and recruitment. During the war, the Executive Commission met at least 245 times in 1904, 132 times in 1905, and 75 times in 1906; at these meetings, Vorontsov-Dashkov and his staff displayed great energy and a tact for cutting through bureaucratic red tape.<sup>616</sup> This managerial body oversaw the creation of independent sanitary brigades, established a network of warehouses to collect and store supplies destined for the theater of war, and outfitted railcars to evacuate wounded to the Russian interior. At first the military gave no instructions and asked nothing from the Red Cross, and this oversight forced bureaucrats in Petersburg and agents in the field to predict where shortcomings in the military medical services might occur.<sup>617</sup> After the first battles in the spring of 1904, the military medical services demonstrated they were ill-equipped for modern war, a painful realization that encouraged the Red Cross but also confused the delivery of private aid.<sup>618</sup>

In the theater of war, Red Cross agents directed operations. Empress Mariia Fedorovna first tasked General F. F. Trepov to serve as the chief agent of the Red Cross in

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<sup>615</sup> E. V. Egorysheva, "Novye dannye iz istorii Krasnogo Kresta v dorevoliutsionnoi Rossii," *Sovetskoe zdravookhranenie* 2 (1981): 57-60.

<sup>616</sup> P. M. fon Kaufman, ed. *Otchet o deiatel'nosti Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta vo vremia russko-iaponskoi voiny*, vol. I (St. Petersburg: Glavnoe upravlenie udelov, 1911), 9-10; B. V. Vasil'chikov, *Vospominaniia* (Pskov: Pskovskaia oblastnaia tipografiia, 2003), 157.

<sup>617</sup> P. M. fon Kaufman, *Krasnyi Krest v tylu armii: v iaponskuiu kampaniiu 1904-1905 godov*, vol. I, part 1 (St. Petersburg: Glavnoe upravlenie Rossiiskogo Krasnogo Kresta, 1909), 3.

<sup>618</sup> Vasil'chikov, *Vospominaniia*, 157.

the Far East in February 1904, but, two months later, Trepov resigned this post to serve as Chief Sanitary Inspector for the Manchurian Army. To manage operations on the ground, the Red Cross set up four districts in the Far East and Siberia. The Northeast District, immediately outside the theater of operations, spanned from Ussuriysk to Vladivostok, where B. A. Vasil'chikov, Stolypin's future minister of agriculture, served as the chief agent. P. M. von Kaufman, the former president of the Red Cross, oversaw the Western District that stretched across Siberia from Lake Baikal to Samara, while Prince Shcherbatov, an elderly Red Cross veteran of the Russo-Turkish War, headed operations with his wife, a former nurse, in the region that spanned from Baikal to Harbin. Lastly, S. V. Aleksandrovskii, the chief agent for the Red Cross campaign during the Boxer Rebellion, oversaw operations in Manchuria in 1904. These men were no doubt well intentioned, but all lacked professional medical training that might have helped them ward off criticisms of ineptitude and amateurism. And even though many of these individuals had served for the Red Cross as administrators in the past, they had taken few steps to ready the organization for this campaign. Former agents from the recent Chinese intervention had yet to publish their reports, and, instead of studying the recent past, the Executive Commission collected oral and written reports by veterans from the Russo-Turkish War.<sup>619</sup>

In late January 1904, the Executive Commission invited Russian nursing societies to outfit and staff hospitals for service in the Far East. Initial plans asked the seven St. Petersburg societies and another ten provincial committees to recruit personnel and acquire equipment for two-hundred-bed hospitals each, while a second tier of societies would deploy

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<sup>619</sup> See RGVIA f. 12651, op. 1, d. 12, ll. 329-63 for one of these lengthy reports. This author, M. E. Prozor suggested that the Red Cross should be subordinate to the military, but this suggestion fell on deaf ears in 1904. See also G. P. Oleinikov, "Krasnyi Krest na Dal'nem Vostoke letom 1904 goda," *Vrachebnaia gazeta* 8 (1904): 223.

smaller, more mobile facilities. Not knowing how many nursing societies would answer the call, the Executive Commission encouraged activity by drafting inventories of required supplies for the various facilities, distributing advances of up to ten thousand rubles for the purchase of medical supplies, and promising to help locate hard-to-find items. Russia's local committees answered this call quickly; seven brigades were formed and ready to dispatch by the end of the first week in February.<sup>620</sup>

The outburst of patriotism that followed the Japanese attack enabled the Red Cross to recruit personnel for war work with ease. Within the first month of the war, the Red Cross dispatched more than three hundred nurses from the nursing societies to work in military hospitals in the Far East. These women possessed nursing certificates, had trained by giving primary care to civilian populations in peacetime, and some had even served in the Russian intervention in China during the Boxer Rebellion. For most women, patriotic sentiments surely provided the key motivation for service since the salary of thirty rubles per month would not have enticed much talent. By the beginning of 1905, over 730 Red Cross nurses, or one-quarter the total number of nurses in Russia at war's outbreak, were serving in regular military hospitals.<sup>621</sup> With far too few trained nurses to satisfy the military's need and outfit its own brigades, the Executive Commission ordered many Red Cross societies to establish accelerated nursing courses in major cities. These courses lasted six weeks, and they familiarized women with bedside care and first aid.<sup>622</sup> The quality of the "volunteer" nurses varied greatly depending on the education level of the women and their commitment to the

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<sup>620</sup> M. Strukov, "K otchetu," *Vestnik Krasnogo Kresta* 6 (May 1912): 714-16.

<sup>621</sup> *Ibid.*, 711.

<sup>622</sup> See "Uskorennye kursy po uxodu za bol'nymi i ranenymi voinami pri Khar'kovskoi obshchine sester miloserdii Krasnogo Kresta," *Vestnik Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta* 29 (July 21, 1905): 437-440.

war effort. More than a few were wives and daughters of soldiers or reputed to be unseemly camp followers.<sup>623</sup> In total, the Red Cross had nearly 1,500 women serving as nurses in its own facilities during this conflict.<sup>624</sup>

Outfitting sanitary brigades with doctors posed a different type of challenge for the Red Cross. During peacetime, the Red Cross employed few doctors at the nursing societies, so a cohort had to be quickly secured in early 1904. The Executive Commission offered civilian doctors salaries of 500 rubles for senior surgeons and 350 rubles for hospitalists to staff its medical facilities, payments that would have seduced most doctors in tsarist Russia.<sup>625</sup> At the same time that the Red Cross sought civilian physicians, the army called forward its reservist cadre of doctors and even tried to hire civilian doctors to fill shortages. One account claimed the Russian army possessed 3,342 doctors in the theater of war during the conflict, and, of these, 2,364 had been reservists or military doctors sent from elsewhere to the Far East. By contrast, the Red Cross mobilized only 360 doctors for work in its own brigades.<sup>626</sup> In addition to these physicians, the Red Cross sent forty-four medical students and eighty-three feldshers to the Far East. Later studies indicate that the Russian army suffered deficiencies in the number of doctors in the Russo-Japanese War, and, as a result, military doctors often bickered that the private aid organizations had hired all of the best

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<sup>623</sup> E. V. Pavlov, *Na Dal'nem Vostoke v 1905 godu*, part 1 (St. Petersburg: Shmidt, 1907), 370; John Van Rensselaer Hoff, *Report on the Military Sanitation of the Russian Armies in the Far East, 1905* (Washington DC: Military Information Division, 1906), 31.

<sup>624</sup> Pavlov, *Na Dal'nem Vostoke*, part I, 371.

<sup>625</sup> Nancy Mandelker Frieden provides a survey of physicians' salaries in tsarist Russia. The Russian Red Cross's offerings in 1904 were far more remunerative than any civilian doctor's salary and much better than the military's paltry pay for physicians. See Frieden, *Russian Physicians*, 214-15; 336.

<sup>626</sup> Pavlov, *Na Dal'nem Vostoke*, part 1, 370-72.



physicians.<sup>627</sup> Red Cross agents responded that without their help the military would have suffered an even greater dearth of medical expertise.<sup>628</sup>

Most participants praised the talents of the Red Cross doctors and nurses, but male orderlies (*sanitars*) received rebuke from all sides. Orderlies played important roles in everyday hospital operations, and the Red Cross used them as porters and stretcher bearers. The majority of Red Cross volunteers in all of its interventions were orderlies, and planners always suffered problems with finding competent workers on a shoestring budget. At first the Executive Commission looked to the Petersburg Committee for First Aid in Disasters, a civilian organization that trained urban aid workers, for orderlies, but this organization lacked a ready pool of candidates that could fulfill the Red Cross's needs. Instead, the Red Cross had to rely on admitting candidates on the basis of recommendations and clean police records and then training these applicants in an accelerated course that touched on first aid and the transport of the wounded. The result was a varied quality of male orderlies. Some were undoubtedly proficient, but, with pay set at the low rate of thirty rubles a month, many earned such reputations as drunks, thieves, or hooligans. Railroad gendarmes even had to watch over this unruly bunch during the journey east and cull the worst offenders from the ranks.<sup>629</sup> Even a few radical members of the intelligentsia passed admission but were exposed

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<sup>627</sup>Gladkikh and Kriuchkov, *Ocherk istorii*, vol. II, 190.

<sup>628</sup> *Otzyvy Glavnoupolnomochennykh Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta na Dal'nem Vostoke v russko-iaponskuiu voinu 1904-5 gg. Kniazia B. A. Vasil'chikova, P. M. fon-Kaufmana i B. A. Khanenko na svedeniia o deiatel'nosti nazvannogo Obshchestva, pomeshchennye v otchete o deiatel'nosti Glavnoi Evakuatsionnoi Kommissii: za 1904-1907* (St. Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1911), 10-11.

<sup>629</sup> M. Strukov, "K otchetu," *Vestnik Krasnogo Kresta* 6 (May 1912): 712-14.

when they voiced their political opinions.<sup>630</sup> One estimate claimed the Red Cross hired 1,433 sanitars during the war and conscripted an additional 584 soldiers in this capacity.<sup>631</sup>

One of the great sanitary challenges in the Far East involved collecting and transporting large numbers of wounded across expansive battlefields. The front at battles such as Mukden stretched as far as sixty versts (39.6 miles), and, when defensive flanks were included, the deployed army's width measured nearly 120 miles.<sup>632</sup> Although the Prussians in 1870 had demonstrated the usefulness of special brigades of stretcher bearers and ambulance teams and the Russo-Turkish War had exposed this deficiency to the Russians, tsarist armies still suffered tremendous shortfalls of men and vehicles assigned to collect and remove the wounded from the battlefield in the Russo-Japanese War. The Red Cross approached these deficiencies from two angles. First, they purchased hundreds of ambulances and wheeled stretchers and directly donated these vehicles to the army.<sup>633</sup> The second solution involved private aid workers directly intervening on the battlefield.

The Red Cross again deployed mobile ambulances, believing that these brigades would best suit Russia's needs along a large, open front and they could set up isolated medical stations in mountains of Korea.<sup>634</sup> What they had not considered, was that, by the Russo-Japanese War, civilian volunteers operating on the battlefield while enjoying freedom from enemy fire was divorced from the reality of modern combat. Often the members of

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<sup>630</sup> G. P. Oleinikov, "Krasnyi Krest," *Vrachebnaia gazeta* 8 (1905): 229.

<sup>631</sup> Pavlov, *Na Dal'nem Vostoke*, part 1, 372.

<sup>632</sup> *Ibid.*, 380.

<sup>633</sup> M. Strukov, "K otchetu," *Vestnik Krasnogo Kresta* 6 (May 1912): 725-26.

<sup>634</sup> "Iz zasedanii Vremennago Meditsinskago Obshchestva na Dal'nem Vostoke v g. Chite," *Vrachebnaia gazeta* 18 (1905): 535; G. P. Oleinikov, "Letuchie otriady Krasnogo Kresta na Dal'nem Vostoke," *Vrachebnaia gazeta* 31 (1905): 863-64.

these sanitary teams became the victims of Japanese bullets themselves.<sup>635</sup> And the high cost of these units coupled with their long periods of inactivity caused observers and readers to cast doubt on whether the Red Cross should be deploying mobile ambulances at all.<sup>636</sup>

Aleksandrovskii sent these units to the front in spring 1904 because the regular army medical services were so overwhelmed; however, this concentration of resources at the front meant the Red Cross neglected setting up facilities in the rear, an absence that newspapermen made known widely.<sup>637</sup> As the war of movement and maneuver in 1904 bogged down into trench warfare around Mukden, a battle that foreshadowed the Western Front ten years later, the mobile ambulances converted to rear lazarettos and disappeared from Red Cross's arsenal.<sup>638</sup>

The number of Red Cross stationary facilities in the theater of war was unprecedented, and Trepov was correct when he telegraphed his superiors in St. Petersburg: "Never has the work of the Red Cross been as diverse and productive as in this war."<sup>639</sup> In the theater of operations and the Primorskaia region, the Red Cross had eighty-eight wartime hospitals and mobile ambulances that could accommodate over sixteen thousand patients. The largest concentration of these facilities was in Harbin, a city transformed by the war into a behemoth infirmary made up of thirty-three army hospitals and another twenty-five belonging to aid organizations. From June 1904 to April 1905, the facilities in Harbin treated

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<sup>635</sup> G. P. Oleinikov, "Letuchie otriady Krasnogo Kresta na Dal'nem Vostoke," *Vrachebnaia gazeta* 31 (1905): 863; *Trudy i protokoly zasedanii russkago khirurgicheskago Obshchestva Pirogova za 1905-1906 gg. God XXIV* (Saint Petersburg: P. P. Soikin, 1906), 19-20.

<sup>636</sup> G. P. Oleinikov, "Letuchie otriady Krasnogo Kresta na Dal'nem Vostoke," *Vrachebnaia gazeta* 31 (1905): 865-66.

<sup>637</sup> Vasil'chikov, *Vospominaniia*, 159-60.

<sup>638</sup> A. V. Kovalev, "Znachenie meditsinskoi sluzhby v obsepechenii beosposobnosti deistvuiushchei russkoi armii v period russko-iaponskoi voiny 1904-1905 gg.," (Ph.D. diss., Moskovskii Pedagogicheskii Universitet, 2002), 35.

<sup>639</sup> RGVIA 12651, op. 12, d. 138, l. 38.

and released or evacuated nearly 220,000 patients.<sup>640</sup> Other cities that featured large concentrations of Red Cross hospitals were Khabarovsk, Spassk, Ussuriysk, and Vladivostok.

Red Cross facilities had a reputation for extravagant food, personal care, and state-of-the-art medical devices.<sup>641</sup> O. P. Oleinikov, an observer of forty Red Cross hospitals from Harbin to Vladivostok, surmised that the care in these institutions was never worse, and often better, than the care in the best civilian facilities in St. Petersburg. The only patient complaint this reporter could recall involved less than satisfactory wine vintages.<sup>642</sup> Even though the Executive Commission recommended that the costs for outfitting a two-hundred-bed hospital should not exceed twenty-six thousand rubles, rumors ran that provincial committees had spent as much as sixty thousand rubles per hospital. And Red Cross institutions definitely spent more on food than their military counterparts; snippets in the press hinted at abundances of vodka, cured meats, and caviar in Red Cross facilities, a diet impossible to produce on the military's budget of forty-four kopecks per soldier per day and highly unlikely in private aid facilities with their fifty-kopeck daily budget for food.<sup>643</sup> A network of storehouses and workshops in Russia's cities supplied these facilities at the front with superior bedding and gowns, the most famous of which were produced by the sewing circle set up in Moscow by Princess Elizaveta Fedorovna. First meeting in the Rumiantsev Museum, this group of women soon moved to the Kremlin where they met day and night to sew dressings, bedclothes, and underwear.<sup>644</sup>

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<sup>640</sup> Pavlov, *Na Dal'nem Vostoke*, part 2, 4-5.

<sup>641</sup> G. P. Oleinikov, "Krasnyi Krest," *Vrachebnaia gazeta* 8 (1905): 229-230.

<sup>642</sup> G. P. Oleinikov, "Krasnyi Krest," *Vrachebnaia gazeta* 9 (1905): 247.

<sup>643</sup> G. P. Oleinikov, "Krasnyi Krest," *Vrachebnaia gazeta* 8 (1905): 229-230.

<sup>644</sup> M. Strukov, "K otchetu," *Vestnik Krasnogo Kresta* 6 (May 1912): 722.

Red Cross facilities possessed inventories of medical supplies superior to regular army hospitals because, as one postwar report stated, the military was unable to provide care tailored to seriously wounded or sick patients. Thus the Red Cross, with greater funds and fewer obligations, could give the most serious patients all that science demanded.<sup>645</sup> And again some civilian specialists flocked to the ranks of the Red Cross to gain access to challenging patients, whose successful treatment would win certain doctors prestige within the medical community. The Red Cross outfitted special hospitals and wards for patients suffering from venereal, otorhinolaryngological (ear/nose/throat), and dental ailments, as well as separate wards to study those with infectious diseases. They also dispatched individual teams to study sanitation and conduct water purification. Specialists such as N. A. Vel'iaminov experimented with x-ray technology to locate bullets in wounded bodies.<sup>646</sup>

To remove soldiers from the theater of operations and deliver them to medical facilities deep in the rear, the Red Cross outfitted twenty-five special sanitary trains. They also borrowed sixteen barges and seven tugboats from the Eastern Chinese Railroad and Resettlement Agency to transport evacuees along the Sungari and Amur rivers. By one estimate, Red Cross trains and barges evacuated more than 115,000 men.<sup>647</sup> The region around Lake Baikal posed a particular challenge because the Trans-Siberian railroad beside the lake had not been completed at the war's outbreak, so all trains coming from Russia had to stop and unload for the ferry journey across the lake before continuing on via the eastern section of track.<sup>648</sup> At first the Red Cross established twelve hospitals in the region for nearly

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<sup>645</sup> M. Strukov, "K otchetu," *Vestnik Krasnogo Kresta* 6 (May 1912): 716.

<sup>646</sup> Gladkikh and Kriuchkov, *Ocherk istorii*, vol. II, 193.

<sup>647</sup> *Doklad Ispol'nitel'noi Komisii Glavnago Upravleniia Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, 20.

<sup>648</sup> Fon Kaufman, *Krasnyi Krest v tylu armii*, 196-97.

two thousand beds, but the increasing number of casualties and delays with water transport forced them to expand the number of beds around the lake to over five thousand by 1905. In total, over forty-seven thousand patients entered hospitals in the Baikal District.<sup>649</sup>

Activities in Port Arthur provided a microcosm for the Red Cross's actions in the Russo-Japanese War as a whole and revealed how the Geneva Convention empowered private aid workers to play new roles as intermediaries in conflicts. Prior to the outbreak of hostilities, Port Arthur possessed a Red Cross committee with its own nursing society and small hospital. Once hostilities commenced on the Liaodong Peninsula, the local Red Cross official, I. P. Balashev, expanded its size from fifty to over three hundred beds. He also spent the nursing society's endowment on medical supplies and food, which he distributed among city's various medical facilities.<sup>650</sup> As the Japanese advanced down the Liaodong Peninsula in the spring of 1904, the Russians evacuated the city of Dalian, which brought another Red Cross brigade to Port Arthur. The Red Cross also housed patients on the hospital ship *Mongolia* but transferred this hospital onto land once the Japanese artillery came within range of the port. Since most civilian doctors had left the city by the time the siege began in August, the Red Cross took the lead in providing medical care for the local population as well as for soldiers who had found no space in the army lazarettos.<sup>651</sup> A report on the main Red Cross hospital indicated that they treated over two thousand wounded and sick patients in the hospital, and they gave ambulatory care to over ten thousand visitors.<sup>652</sup> With the

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<sup>649</sup> M. Strukov, "K otchetu," *Vestnik Krasnogo Kresta* 7 (September 1912): 1195-96.

<sup>650</sup> V. B. Giubbenet, *V osazhdennom Port-Arture: ocherki voenno-sanitarnago dela i zametki po polevoi khirurgii* (St. Petersburg: Glavnoe upralvenie udelov, 1910), 205-6.

<sup>651</sup> I. P. Balashev, "Otchet glavnoupolnomohcennogo Krasnogo Kresta na Kvantune Egermeistera I. P. Balasheva," *Vestnik Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta* 2 (1905): 28.

<sup>652</sup> Balashev, *Vestnik Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta* 6 (1905): 110.

Japanese siege tightened in the fall of 1904, Russian food stores ran low, and a large number of malnourished soldiers fell victim to scurvy and beriberi. After a month of bombardment from Japanese artillery, the Russians hoisted the white flag on 20 December.

As a neutral actor with rights protected by the Geneva Convention, I. P. Balashev, the Red Cross agent, intervened in capitulation negotiations in January 1905 to protect the large number of captured convalescents in the city. The Japanese enabled the Red Cross facilities to continue operations independently, but they regarded all military doctors and patients as prisoners of war. Balashev complained in his postwar report that the Japanese mistreated Russian military patients by transferring them to inferior facilities and placing them in the hands of Japanese doctors. He repeatedly protested these moves, which he claimed violated the Geneva Convention. In one incident, the Japanese proposed sending the Russian military medical staff back home but keeping the remaining two thousand Russian patients in Japanese care, a ploy to which the Russian military doctors shamefully agreed. Balashev threatened to leak word of this violation to outside powers and the press, and his insistence won the Red Cross personnel permission to evacuate with the remaining patients. In April 1905, with hostilities winding down, Balashev and the Red Cross volunteers boarded a neutral ship and traveled with the remaining eight hundred patients to Shanghai and then Odessa.<sup>653</sup>

The Russians' most significant contribution to military medicine in the early twentieth century was the application of psychiatry to war, and the Red Cross managed this project in 1904-05. Historian Jacqueline Friedlander credits G. E. Shunkov, a military doctor, with the creation of the first psychiatric ward at Harbin's First Consolidated Hospital in April

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<sup>653</sup> Balashev, *Vestnik Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta* 7 (1905): 127-28.

1904. This facility, staffed by army psychiatrists, gave care to 94 officers and 239 soldiers by the end of the year. Unable to cope with the large number of patients suffering from psychiatric ailments and unwilling to transform its institutional structure and culture to adopt to psychiatry, the Russian army transferred all mental health patients to the care of the Red Cross in the fall of 1904. Professor V. N. Sirotinin, a member of the Red Cross's Executive Commission, and P. M. Avtokratov formed a commission of able psychiatrists to organize the first comprehensive system of mental health care in a war zone. A review of statistics from the Franco-Prussian War predicted that psychiatric cases might increase to two thousand by the end of the 1904, so the Red Cross established a Central Psychiatric Hospital for fifty patients in Harbin. Here Dr. Avtokratov led a group of ten psychiatrists that treated evacuees with psychological trauma. This program worked well, so the Red Cross established additional facilities in Chita, Omsk, Krasnoyarsk, Mukden, Gundzhulin, and other points.<sup>654</sup> In total, these psychiatric wards treated and evacuated at least eight hundred patients during the war. Russia mobilized around one million men for service in the Far East, and P. M. Avtokratov suspected far more men suffered from psychiatric problems than this small number.<sup>655</sup> Russian psychiatrists deserve credit for developing the modern practice of treating psychiatric cases as soon as they appeared in special facilities near the front. Many of the diagnostic categories for psychological ailments that European armies used during the First World War likely came from the Russian experiment in the Far East.<sup>656</sup>

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<sup>654</sup> P. M. Avtokratov, "Otchet Doktora Meditsina P. M. Avtokratova. Prizrenie, lechenie i evakuatsiia dushevno-bol'nykh vo vremia Russko-Iaponskoi voiny v 1904-1905 godakh," pts. 1-6, *Vestnik Krasnogo Kresta*, 33 (August 19, 1906): 476-78; 34 (August 26, 1906): 483-85; 35 (September 2, 1906): 492-93; 37 (September 16, 1906): 515; 38 (September 23, 1906): 522; 41 (October 14, 1906): 555-99.

<sup>655</sup> Jacqueline Lee Friedlander, "Psychiatrists and Crisis in Russia," 220-30.

<sup>656</sup> Richard A. Gabriel and Karen S. Metz, *A History of Military Medicine*, vol. II (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992), 237-38.



The Red Cross's tremendous engagement in the war effort came at an unprecedented cost. In total, the Red Cross spent 31.7 million rubles on operations during the Russo-Japanese War.<sup>657</sup> A postwar financial report indicated that most of the Red Cross's income came as individual donations from private sources. The Main Directorate raised 8.3 million rubles, and the provincial committees contributed another 12.3 million. Contributions peaked at around 2.5 million rubles per month in February and March 1904, when the public's enthusiasm for war was at its highest. After the disappointments of summer 1904 and scandalous reports appeared in the press, private contributions to the Red Cross fell to levels under one million rubles per month in September and never recovered. Fearing a loss of services, the state intervened to support the Red Cross by requiring purchasers of telegraphs, passports, and first-class railway tickets to make mandatory donations. These taxes raised 1.42 million rubles for the Red Cross, a small but not insignificant sum. Direct state subsidies contributed far more to the Red Cross's budget. The Ministry of War transferred 4.3 million rubles to the Red Cross throughout the war as payments for treating the wounded, and the Ministry of Finance added a subsidy of 3.75 million rubles on 29 June 1905, the date of which indicates how badly this organization needed funds by the end of the war.<sup>658</sup>

As the Russian army demobilized in autumn 1905, the Red Cross altered its mission to aid civilians negatively affected by the war and by the uprisings that came in response to the frustrating defeat. For three days beginning on 30 October, soldiers and sailors in Vladivostok joined the local riffraff (*sbrod*) in a series of pogroms that targeted shops and taverns and left much of the Chinese quarter of the town in ashes. At first targeting Chinese-

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<sup>657</sup> Gladkikh and Kriuchkov, *Ocherk istorii*, vol. II, 193, note 26.

<sup>658</sup> *Doklad Ispol'nitel'noi Kommisii Glavnago Upravleniia Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, 4-5.

owned taverns and brothels, the drunken soldiers moved on to one of the Red Cross warehouses, which contained wine and other medical items destined for Russian prisoners in Japan. As a result of the violence, much of the Russian civilian population fled the scene, but many Chinese residents remained in the city without food or shelter.

In response to this troublesome incident, and surely aware that continued violence against the Chinese might undermine Russia's imperial holdings in the Far East, the local Red Cross agent, V. A. Vasil'chikov, moved to address the needs of wounded civilians and some military men in the town. On the first day of the pogrom, he opened a dressing station in a home previously used as a naval headquarters to treat civilians wounded by the mob and officers injured trying to restore order. Once the mobs had dissipated after November 1, the Red Cross met with the governor to agree on a plan for distributing food and clothing in coordination with the local militia. To avoid exacerbating tensions in the future, Vasil'chikov planned to open two free teahouses for Chinese and Russians, with a Chinese resident in charge of the facility for his co-nationals. He later established a free cafeteria and shelter for homeless civilians, some of whom were Russians evicted from Sakhalin by the Japanese. By the end of the month, a Chinese Red Cross delegation visited Vladivostok and provided ten thousand rubles in additional funds out of concern that needy Russians received an unequal share of the aid.<sup>659</sup>

### **Problems with the Red Cross in the Russo-Japanese War**

Despite the numerous achievements, the Russians' lack of plans for how to use private aid in war harmed medical care, caused much consternation among military doctors and generals, and resonated negatively in the press. The first problem the Red Cross faced

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<sup>659</sup> RGVIA, f. 16273, op. 3, d. 16, ll. 1-10.

was cooperation with the military. At the outset, the military refused to give the Red Cross instructions on how and where to deliver aid, in part because the High Command hoped for a short war. But, as the conflict escalated, mounting casualties compelled the military to turn to the Red Cross to relieve overtaxed army medical services. G. P. Oleinikov reported that the First Consolidated Military Hospital in Harbin, one of the largest medical facilities assembled during the war, suffered from shortages of medicines, but army doctors refused to turn to the Red Cross for help.<sup>660</sup> Military doctors whispered of circulars that forbade them from reaching out to the Red Cross, as doing so would be admission that the Ministry of War failed to outfit its hospitals properly and could lead to charges of sedition. Army doctors were allowed to accept supplies from the Red Cross only in cases of absolute necessity. Any exchanges required clearance from the Military Medical Department, which feared that material assistance from the Red Cross would lead to wastage and undermine discipline. The contrast between the Red Cross's abundance of material and the military's poverty led to an unhealthy rivalry between the two medical agencies.<sup>661</sup> And they fought over personnel as well, the most common complaint being that the Red Cross overpaid its personnel. One commentator remarked that the Red Cross paid feldshers 125 rubles per month, while the army feldshers got 90 rubles per year.<sup>662</sup>

For military commanders, the Red Cross could not operate in a zone of operations as an independent agency. V. B. Giubbenet, the chief army surgeon in Port Arthur, expressed a

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<sup>660</sup> G. P. Oleinikov, "Kransyi Krest," *Vrachebnaia gazeta* 9 (1905): 244-45.

<sup>661</sup> RGVIA, f. 16,731, op. 1, d. 15, ll. 3-4. O. A. fon Baumgarten, a nurse in Port Arthur, mentioned these hostilities as well. See O. A. fon Baumgarten, *V osazhdennom Port-Arture: Dnevnik sestry miloserdiia* (St. Petersburg: A. S. Suvorin, 1906), 18.

<sup>662</sup> S. A. Shaniavskii, "Letuchie otriady na voine," *Voенно-meditsinskii zhurnal* (March 1905): 97.

commonly held view in his postwar report: “The activity of the Red Cross in wartime should be more strictly demarcated and defined by a predetermined framework.”<sup>663</sup> The army surgeon V. V. Vreden located the problem in the Red Cross’s “abnormal status (nenormal’noe polozhenie).”<sup>664</sup> Professor E. V. Pavlov summed up the opinion that many military men surely shared: “If the Red Cross is a governmental, state (*gosudarstvennyi, kazennyi*) organ, then it should be under state control.”<sup>665</sup> The impoverished army objected to the private nature of Red Cross aid and felt the army could best determine how to use civilian resources.

Once it became clear to the Russians that the Japanese were committed to a protracted war, the army began to make arbitrary and unexpected demands of the Red Cross. P. M. von Kaufman, the Red Cross agent for Siberia, found it impossible to house and staff hospitals in Irkutsk for the fifteen thousand patients the army wanted to evacuate to the city in the fall of 1904.<sup>666</sup> General Kuropatkin, for example, asked that the Red Cross establish an ice factory in Harbin in May 1904. The Red Cross agreed to this request but acknowledged that it might not be operational until September due to difficulties transporting supplies along the Trans-Siberian Railroad.<sup>667</sup>

Another complaint was that the Red Cross encouraged the military to neglect its medical facilities and, by extension, the health of its troops. Many Red Cross facilities

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<sup>663</sup> Giubbenet, *V osazhdennom Port-Arture*, 205.

<sup>664</sup> V. V. Vreden, “Iz nabliudeniia khirurga v Russko-iaponskuiu voinu,” *Russkii vrach* 50 (1905): 1567-68.

<sup>665</sup> Pavlov, *Na Dal’nem Vostoke*, part 1, 8.

<sup>666</sup> RGVIA f. 16273, op. 1, d. 16, ll. 3, 21-22.

<sup>667</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 12, d. 123, ll. 4-5.

doubled or even tripled their patient capacities as the war escalated but struggled to hire additional medical personnel. The Georgievskii Hospital in Liaonian increased its capacity from two hundred patients to five hundred, but it was only able to increase the number of physicians from five to seven and nurses from fifteen to twenty-seven. By the end of the month, this facility housed up to 680 patients. The agent for the region, Aleksandrovskii, justified the Red Cross facilities' expansion on the grounds that the military had not opened additional hospitals, but a writer from the medical press surmised that the Army Medical Department refused to expand its operations because the Red Cross had shown it was willing to bear a greater burden.<sup>668</sup>

Within the Red Cross, doctors often quarreled with the nonmedical agents tasked with managing hospitals or ambulances. This rivalry was nothing new for tsarist Russia. Professional bureaucrats headed the Ministry of Interior's health department and the Military Sanitation Department, much to the doctors' chagrin, and amateurs at the top of the Red Cross had upset doctors in the Russo-Turkish War.<sup>669</sup> Professor E. V. Pavlov lamented that Red Cross agents had started to read guides on military sanitation after the war had begun. He conceded that many had come to grasp hospital management by war's end, but the learning curve had wasted time, resources, and lives. Dr. Prussuen remarked that the Red Cross had more aristocrats in its upper ranks than the ruling houses of Europe. These agents knew nothing about medicine and won little respect from doctors.<sup>670</sup> The Red Cross often

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<sup>668</sup> G. P. Oleinikov, "Krasnyi Krest," *Vrachebnaia gazeta* 9 (1905): 248.

<sup>669</sup> N. I. Pirogov commented in 1878 that disputes often broke out between the agents and senior doctors over the management of hospitals. He visited several lazarettos where they senior doctor managed the entire facility after driving off the agents. Pirogov, *Voenna-vrachebnoe deloe*, vol. 1, 351.

<sup>670</sup> *Trudy i protokoly zasedanii russkago khirurgicheskago Obshchestva Priogova za 1905-1906 gg. God XXIV* (St. Petersburg: P. P. Soikin, 1906), 30-31; R. R. Vreden, a key military doctor, shared this view. See R. R. Vreden, "Iz nabliudenii khirurga v Russko-iaponskuiu voinu," *Russkii vrach* 50 (1905): 1567.

assigned doctors to perform tasks for which they were ill-suited. Unable to find surgeons to man mobile ambulances, Aleksandrovskii allegedly gave this duty to psychiatrists and hygienists. Mariia Fedorovna sponsored her own Red Cross hospital, whose staff included a gynecologist and pathologist, but no surgeon. When Prussuen requested a surgeon for his mobile ambulance, he got a pharmacist.<sup>671</sup>

To many participants and commentators, these mishaps were proof the Red Cross was nothing more than an inept finger of the autocracy. Bureaucratic immobility and a culture that required strict standards of decorum slowed and stymied aid work at the front. Every innocuous act required permission from multiple superiors. The purchaser of a horse, for example, needed multiple signatures before he could exchange money, and regulations stipulated that doctors be subjected to endless paperwork, a habit that detracted from the physicians' ability to practice medicine. And the Executive Commission in St. Petersburg tried to micromanage every decision in the field.<sup>672</sup> One doctor, fired for insubordination, complained that the Red Cross reduced him to "an errand boy."<sup>673</sup>

Red Cross agents sometimes disdained the medical staff they supervised. Agent Aleksandrovskii complained to the Executive Commission that many of the doctors sent his way were untrustworthy Jews who might undermine morale. The Executive Committee responded by enabling agents to fire any doctors they found unsuitable.<sup>674</sup> The result was a rash of dismissals for charges such as cowardice, sedition, and scandalous behavior.<sup>675</sup> Von

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<sup>671</sup> *Trudy i protokoly*, 12.

<sup>672</sup> G. P. Oleinikov, "Krasnyi Krest," *Vrachebnaia gazeta* 9 (1905): 252

<sup>673</sup> Dessler, *Vrachebanai gazeta* 15 (1905): 450.

<sup>674</sup> G. P. Oleinikov, "Krasnyi Krest," *Vrachebnaia gazeteta* 9 (1905): 251.

Kaufman fired Dr. Rezanov from the Odessa brigade in Harbin for slandering the Red Cross in a public lecture. Rezanov responded to these charges in editorials of his own, claiming everyone knew these problems existed since the General Zemstvo Organization's separation from the Red Cross was intended to avoid them. Women fell victim to slander as well. The newspaper *Syn otechestva* (Son of the Fatherland) reported on the 18 July 1905 that a nurse, Berenshtein, was sent home from the theater of war for immoral behavior, an act that symbolically pinned on her a "yellow ticket," thereby labelling her a prostitute, even after a medical examination performed by three doctors and two pharmacists deemed this woman's virginity intact. The author of this article warned readers not to let their daughters serve in this institution or give donations to a charity outside public control.<sup>676</sup>

For civilian critics, public accountability provided the only antidote to these shortcomings. Rumors circulated in the press that the Red Cross was "bureaucratic" and "not public (*ne obshchestvennyi*)."<sup>677</sup> Public control (*obshchii kontrol*) was the only feasible solution to righting this slipshod organization and ensuring that the public donations (*obshnie sredstva*) were spent in an appropriate manner.<sup>678</sup> This moment, when Russia struggled at war and educated society clamored against autocracy and its aid organization, gave zemstvo activists the perfect opportunity to fashion themselves as the true representatives of Russia's welfare.

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<sup>675</sup> G. P. Oleinikov, "Letuchie otriady Krasnogo Kresta na Dal'nem Vostoke," *Vrachebnaia gazeta* 30 (1905): 843; G. P. Oleinikov, "Krasnyi Krest," *Vrachebnaia gazeta* 9 (1905): 250.

<sup>676</sup> "Krasnyi Krest' v roli klevetnika," *Vrachebnaia gazeta* 29 (1905): 828.

<sup>677</sup> G. P. Oleinikov, "Krasnyi Krest," *Vrachebnaia gazeta* 8 (1905): 225.

<sup>678</sup> *Trudy i protokoly*, 32.

## **The General Zemstvo Organization (GZO)**

The Japanese strike on Port Arthur prompted discordant groups within Russian society to rally behind the state in support of the war effort in the winter of 1904. This support would not last long; military failures in the Far East soon united Russian society against the regime and non-Russian minorities, but zemstvo moderates used the empire's cry for help during wartime as a means for winning themselves a wider role in Russia's future governance. In the spring of 1904, a group of zemstvo boards established the General Zemstvo Organization to unite resources and sponsor medical brigades in the Far East. The autocracy at first resisted union among the zemstvos, but problems with the Red Cross and demands by outside actors to intervene in the war effort wore down the state's resolve. As the war slowed and Russia descended into revolutionary chaos in 1905, the state recognized the zemstvos as useful agents to conduct famine relief campaigns and help restore order to the Russian countryside.<sup>679</sup>

Zemstvo intervention in the Russo-Japanese War affected the Red Cross in two ways. No longer could the Red Cross promote itself as Russia's sole national aid organization. Mismanagement, bad press, and the tremendous burden of supplementing military medical services ill-suited for twentieth-century warfare had tarnished the Red Cross's reputation before the public. From below, the zemstvos asserted themselves as more trustworthy agents to conduct philanthropy on a national scale. Peace with Japan in no way led to a pause in the zemstvo men's activities; instead, the GZO used famine relief in the years following the Revolution of 1905 as a means to supplant the autocracy's moral mandate to promote

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<sup>679</sup> See Thomas Earl Porter, *The Zemstvo and the Emergence of Civil Society in Late Imperial Russia 1864-1917* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1991), chap. 2-4; Tsuchiya Yoshifuru, "Unsuccessful National Unity: The Russian Home Front in 1904," in *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero*, vol. I, ed. David Wolff, et al. (Boston: Brill, 2007), 326-334.



Russia's welfare. When Russia went to war in 1914, the Red Cross continued its traditional mission of delivering aid to wounded soldiers alongside an assortment of aid organizations from the zemstvos, towns, and nobles' organizations.<sup>680</sup>

The zemstvos' enterprise also compelled the Red Cross to temporarily change its structure. Heeding calls from the press for greater transparency, the Red Cross's Executive Commission created the Oversight Committee to subject itself to more careful scrutiny. Following the war, Red Cross supporters called for a conference of former aid workers to identify problems and suggest needed changes.<sup>681</sup> Neither of these moves prompted the reformation critics demanded, but, during the decade that followed the Russo-Japanese War, the Red Cross acknowledged some of its shortcomings in the pages of *Vestnik Krasnogo Kresta* and communicated with the military on future war plans.

By an unlucky twist of fate, Nicholas II and his government enjoyed some of their greatest popularity in the moments after Russia committed to ruinous war with Japan. In the first months of 1904, the zemstvos offered the Red Cross over a million rubles and set aside millions more to assist the families of soldiers on the home front.<sup>682</sup> Red Cross leaders encouraged zemstvos to go even further. I. I. Vorontsov-Dashkov welcomed outside assistance in the form of money and entire sanitary brigades in a letter addressed to zemstvo leaders. Red Cross leaders attended zemstvo congresses in February 1904 to provide instructions for how to outfit brigades and offered help in locating sanitary items. These brigades would operate "under the flag of the Red Cross," which in Vorontsov-Dashkov's

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<sup>680</sup> John Hutchinson, *Politics and Public Health*, 112-15.

<sup>681</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 743, 1-2.

<sup>682</sup> Yoshifuru, "Unsuccessful National Unity," 327, note 11.

understanding enabled them to enjoy the benefits to private aid workers codified in the Geneva Convention, such as neutrality and protection from enemy fire.<sup>683</sup> The Red Cross had a precedent for this type of private initiative, as Romanov women and other prominent individuals had sponsored sanitary brigades in the Russo-Turkish War and did so as well in 1904. Patronage, in the Red Cross's eyes, ensured that all sanitary brigades in the theater of war followed orders from agents, directed every effort toward the state-sanctioned mission of treating the wounded, and upheld standards of professional competency. The Red Cross did not want inconsistent aid at the front delivered by untrustworthy actors. When a group of miners in Irkutsk queried soldiers on their needs and delivered requested items, Red Cross agents dashed to root out this popular "separatism" and reminded subjects that all aid should be "under the flag of the Red Cross."<sup>684</sup>

For zemstvo activists, the "under the flag of the Red Cross" meant they paid for the brigades while bureaucrats in St. Petersburg directed operations and took the credit for the accomplishments. If the zemstvos were to intervene, they demanded full freedom from the state and any of its appendages. Thus, the zemstvo activists pledged not to accept any material aid or funds from the Red Cross. To avoid overlap with the Red Cross, the zemstvo activists organized their brigades as rear-area relief stations, which would not deploy at the front as mobile ambulances or open large hospitals in central transit points such as Harbin.<sup>685</sup> To coordinate activities in the Far East, eight zemstvos formed a committee in Moscow

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<sup>683</sup> T. I. Polner, *Obshchezemskaia organizatsiia na Dal'nem Vostoke*, vol. I (Moscow: Russkoe tovarishchestvo pechatnago I izdatel'skago dela, 1908), 5-6, 8-10.

<sup>684</sup> G. P. Oleinikov, "Krasnyi Krest," *Vrachebnaia gazeta* 8 (1905): 225-26.

<sup>685</sup> Polner, *Obshchezemskaia organizatsiia*, vol. I, 19-21; Porter, 77, 88-89.

under the chairmanship of D. N. Shipov, a move that led these activists into direct conflict with the minister of internal affairs.

Archconservative V. K. Plehve, who had stymied several zemstvo attempts at self-initiative in 1903, recognized this move as a violation of the 1890 statute that forbade any inter-regional collaboration among zemstvo boards. Alexander III had enacted this policy to keep empire-wide campaigns the exclusive preserve of the state out of concern that zemstvo coordination might encourage the provincial boards to supplant the autocracy. To skirt this provision, the zemstvo delegates in Moscow pledged that each sanitary brigade would be funded exclusively by its sponsoring zemstvo, thereby avoiding any allegations that they had created institutions parallel to the tsarist state. Plehve, however, was too clever to fall for this ploy; in March he demanded the delegates in Moscow cease all activities without permission from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and barred new zemstvos from admission to this committee. With the zemstvos' schemes to bypass the law exposed, the activists moved to dodge the policeman. On 27 April, Tula zemstvo representative Prince G. E. L'vov met with Nicholas II and convinced the tsar to allow the zemstvos to continue their war relief work. The tsar's blessing encouraged delegates from thirteen boards to rename their committee the General Zemstvo Organization in Moscow on May 2. This committee quickly amassed over one million rubles from member and non-member zemstvos and devised plans to outfit twenty-one sanitary detachments for relief work in the Far East. L'vov pledged to serve as the chief agent for the zemstvo detachments in the theater of war and traveled with the first brigades that arrived during the spring of 1904.<sup>686</sup> In the Far East, the Red Cross put few

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<sup>686</sup> Polner, *Obshchezemskaia organizatsiia*, vol. I, 16-18, 40, 73-4; Porter, *The Zemstvo*, 83-87.

limits on the zemstvos, recognized their freedom of action and independence, and even offered them a seat on the Executive Commission.<sup>687</sup>

The deluge of casualties during the summer of 1904 compelled Red Cross physician E. S. Botkin to turn to the zemstvo brigades for help. Initially, L'vov sought to isolate all activities to rear areas to avoid any contact with Red Cross brigades, but, after touring the front with Botkin, L'vov decided to enable zemstvo detachments to operate anywhere sanitary aid was needed.<sup>688</sup> As a result, zemstvo brigades were converted, sometimes with material support from the Red Cross, from evacuation relief points into stationary hospitals or mobile lazarettos.

The GZO's campaign received a boon when a terrorist's bullet downed Plehve in July 1904. Plehve's replacement as minister of internal affairs, P. D. Sviatopolk-Mirskii, took a hands-off approach in dealing with the zemstvos.<sup>689</sup> Greater freedom of action in the Far East enabled these brigades to unite with one another and pool funds without police interference. In November, six additional brigades departed from Moscow. Sviatopolk-Mirskii's laissez-faire attitude toward private aid empowered other groups, such as nobles' and merchants' organizations, students and faculty of Kazan University, and even a group of Odessa Jews, to outfit sanitary brigades to conduct aid "under the flag of the Red Cross."<sup>690</sup>

Overall, the Red Cross conducted war relief on a much larger scale than the zemstvos in the Far East. Zemstvo brigades provided twenty-seven medical brigades and four sanitary

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<sup>687</sup> Polner, *Obshchezemskaia organizatsiia*, vol. I, 12-14.

<sup>688</sup> Polner, *Obshchezemskaia organizatsiia*, vol. I, 108-9; Porter, *The Zemstvo*, 107-8.

<sup>689</sup> Porter, *The Zemstvo*, 103-5.

<sup>690</sup> Pavlov, *Na Dal'nem Vostoke*, part 2, 29; Valery Harvard, "Notes on the Russian Red Cross Society," *The Military Surgeon* 20, no. 1 (January 1907): 4-5.

trains during the conflict. The GZO spent over two million rubles on relief work by September 1905 and treated over fifty thousand patients throughout the war.<sup>691</sup> Zemstvo relief work won support from Red Cross leaders such as Aleksandrovskii and the Russian army commander A. N. Kuropatkin.<sup>692</sup> Zemstvo brigades won admirers in the press, who remarked on their equality between doctors, cordial attitudes toward the patients, and cheaper costs.<sup>693</sup>

The zemstvo challenge compelled the Red Cross to flirt with reform. To combat scandals in the press and mistrust from the zemstvos, the Red Cross created a new Oversight Committee in the spring of 1904. This board consisted of fourteen members, some of whom came from the GZO and the nobles' and other aid agencies. Senator A. A. Bobrinskii, a longtime Red Cross activist, headed this committee, which allegedly subjected the Red Cross to "public oversight" (*obshchestvennyi kontrol'*) by reviewing agents' reports from the field and comparing performance with expenditures.<sup>694</sup> There is no evidence that this reform, coming as it did at the end of the war, inspired greater scrutiny over Red Cross coffers, but the move toward public oversight sent a message that Russia's national aid organization did not exist in a vacuum. Educated society yearned for a role in the management of Russia's largest charity.

The year 1905 saw Russian society weaken the autocracy with violence and then force Nicholas II to concede to greater outside involvement in politics. Peace with the Japanese finally came in August, but for the Russian army, demobilization brought no end to

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<sup>691</sup> Polner, *Obshchezemskaia organizatsiia*, vol. II, 408, 414, 451.

<sup>692</sup> Polner, *Zhiznennyi put'*, 67, 79.

<sup>693</sup> G. P. Oleinikov, "Krasnyi Krest, *Vrachebnaia gazeta* 9 (1905): 251-2; *Trudy i protokoly*, 7.

<sup>694</sup> *Vestnik Rossiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta* 15 (14 April 1905): 232.

conflict. Soldiers and sailors set their sights on authority figures and demanded improvements in the ranks and for the peasantry at home.<sup>695</sup> Medical professionals, long silent in political debates, stunned educated Russia by demanding a long list of political and economic reforms at the Ninth Conference of the Pirogov Society.<sup>696</sup> Amid this climate, Prince Vasil'chikov met with angry medical professionals in Chita, who decried Russia's application of private aid in wartime. This group demanded a general congress of representatives from all of the aid organizations and the ministry of war that would set empire-wide policies regarding medical care during war.<sup>697</sup> Veterans from the zemstvo brigades proposed to D. N. Shipov, the former president of the GZO, to hold their own congress in Moscow. Shipov, rather than consent to these demands and attempt to outmaneuver the Red Cross, suggested that the Main Directorate needed to participate in any policy discussions, so he recommended the zemstvo doctors participate in Vasil'chikov's proposed congress.<sup>698</sup>

In the fall of 1905, doctors and administrators from the Red Cross, zemstvo and other brigades, and military met to discuss forming a program for the first All-Russian Congress of Former Aid Workers for the Sick and Wounded in the Russo-Japanese War. Vasil'chikov chaired the preliminary meeting, which determined that this congress would review errors in the past war, determine appropriate relations between voluntary aid organizations and the military, and work out a plan for how Red Cross committees should prepare for war work

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<sup>695</sup> John Bushnell, *Mutiny amid Repression: Russian Soldiers in the Revolution of 1905-1906* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), chaps. 3-4.

<sup>696</sup> Frieden, *Russian Physicians*, 242-59.

<sup>697</sup> RGVIA f. 12651, op. 1, d. 743, l. 6.

<sup>698</sup> RGVIA f. 12651, op. 1, d. 743, l. 7.

during peacetime. The most interesting item of discussion would be public control for the Red Cross, which the planners regarded necessary because the lack of oversight during the last campaign had led donors to feel that their donations were wasted.<sup>699</sup> Domestic turmoil followed by indifference prevented this congress from meeting for nearly another decade.

The traditional narrative of 1905 in Russia focuses most attention on military defeat and revolutionary violence, but a third crisis, in the form of crop failure and famine, threatened millions of peasants living in agricultural regions of central Russia and along the Volga. Russia had faced widespread hunger before, most notoriously in 1891-92, when famine affected twenty-five provinces, and the tsarist state responded by mobilizing the Red Cross as an important component in the peacetime relief campaign. This time, Russia possessed an additional philanthropic instrument in the GZO, which clamored for a role addressing national issues in peacetime.

By the summer of 1905, it had become apparent that crop failures and rural unrest would damage the harvest. The GZO took the first step toward addressing the crisis by demanding the government permit the zemstvos to conduct relief work at a conference in Moscow on 8 July. The most pressing question was whether the zemstvos would work again “under the flag of the Red Cross” or conduct their work independently. In August, L’vov met with members of the Red Cross’s Main Directorate to discuss another coordinated campaign to target rural hunger. Wartime necessity had compelled the GZO to coordinate with the Red Cross, but this time Red Cross intervention in the zemstvos’ activities prompted provincial activists to cry foul.

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<sup>699</sup> RGVIA f. 12651, op. 1, d. 743, l. 16.

At a 30 August conference, recalcitrant zemstvo advocates complained that the Red Cross enjoyed no support from the public, that local Red Cross chapters were under the influence of the governors and police and could thus not be trusted, and that the Red Cross would obstruct any efforts at famine relief. L'vov and his supporters took a more calculated approach by insisting that famine required the zemstvo advocates to set aside their political struggle to relieve the peasants. The Red Cross's flag enabled the zemstvos to operate freely in the provinces without police interference, coordinate with other provincial boards, share funds, and accept donations of clothing and other supplies, and ship freight on state-owned railroads at discounted prices.<sup>700</sup> In the end, zemstvo moderates won a split vote over whether to work with the Red Cross. The following day, L'vov again met with the Main Directorate of the Red Cross, which admitted the GZO to operate under its flag and pledged not to interfere with the zemstvos' famine relief efforts.<sup>701</sup> Mariia Fedorovna justified this decision in a 29 September letter to the Minister of Finance on the grounds that the Red Cross had expended much of its resources during the war and could not handle famine relief by itself on the scale needed.<sup>702</sup> Further discussions centered on how to coordinate activities between the two institutions so their aid work would not be redundant.<sup>703</sup> Over the next year and a half, governing members of the Red Cross and the leaders of the GZO met at least ninety-eight times to coordinate famine relief activities.<sup>704</sup>

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<sup>700</sup> The Red Cross enjoyed discounts on railway freight for medical supplies during war. This benefit had been extended to peacetime endeavors during the famines of 1891-92.

<sup>701</sup> Porter, *The Zemstvo*, 177-79.

<sup>702</sup> RGIA, f. 1482, op. 1, d. 20, l. 9.

<sup>703</sup> GIM, f. 18, op. 1, d. 117, ll. 267a-275; T. I. Polner, *Zhiznennyi put' Kniazia Georgiia Evgenievicha L'vova: lichnost', vzgliady, usloviia deiatel'nosti* (Paris: V. V. Vyburov, 1932), 190.

<sup>704</sup> "Deiatel'nost' glavnogo upravleniia," *Vestnik Krasnogo Kresta*, (January 1907): 83.



In October 1905, the GZO began to arrange a network of cafeterias, bakeries, and other charitable institutions in the regions affected by famine. Zemstvo activists set up management boards at the provincial and county levels. In the counties and villages, activists sought help from teachers, priests, and rural elites to oversee the canteens. The Red Cross arranged a similar network of cafeterias that operated beside zemstvo institutions on a smaller scale in 1905, in part because many personnel returned slowly from the Far East. Coordination between the GZO and the Red Cross's Executive Commission attempted to prevent the duplication of efforts, but Red Cross organizers at times complained that they received no information on the activities the zemstvos had already conducted or agents they dispatched to the countryside.<sup>705</sup> The Red Cross alarmed zemstvo advocates by dispatching a Red Cross agent to inspect zemstvo work in Penza, Samara, and Viatka in early 1906. This move drew a telegram of protest from the GZO, which feared the Red Cross was spying on its activities. If a degree of mistrust or concern between the two was understandable, bureaucratic interference in this campaign should not be overstated.<sup>706</sup>

Instead, the two organizations worked together on several projects. Nicholas II early in the campaign transferred one hundred poods of hard tack (*sukhar'*) from the navy to the Red Cross to distribute to the needy. L'vov asked the Red Cross for these victuals, and the Red Cross shipped the hard tack to affected provinces for the GZO activists to distribute.<sup>707</sup> When local zemstvo doctors asked for Red Cross brigades to treat typhoid among the Bashkirs of Samara Province, the GZO approved of the plan, and the medical teams set

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<sup>705</sup> RGIA, f. 1482, op. 1, d. 20, ll. 13,16.

<sup>706</sup> RGIA, f. 1482, op. 1, d. 20, ll. 49-50.

<sup>707</sup> RGIA, f. 1482, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 45, 48.

out.<sup>708</sup> Lastly, the Red Cross satisfied requests from the GZO for advances on monies owed them from the Ministry of War for wartime relief. As of May 1906, the Ministry of War still owed the GZO 186,000 rubles for operating hospitals at the Battle of Shaho in the Far East, and, when L'vov pleaded that they needed the funds to continue work in provinces, the Red Cross forwarded the sum.<sup>709</sup>

The scale of expenditures reveals the great disproportion between the GZO's and Red Cross's contributions to the 1905 campaign. The Red Cross spent a total of 238,774 rubles on famine relief, while the GZO spent 600,000 rubles that remained in their coffers from war work and received at least two grants from the Ministry of Finance for one million rubles each. The Ministry of Internal Affairs distributed the overwhelming majority of aid, thirty-five million rubles worth, as non-repayable seed loans disbursed by provincial zemstvos individually. Donations to the Red Cross failed to eclipse a measly sixty thousand rubles in 1905, which likely indicates the low regard many tsarist subjects had for this organization in the wake of the Russo-Japanese War.<sup>710</sup> The Red Cross was far from broke at this time, as wartime reserve capital exceeded five million rubles, but the organization's charter forbade the use of these funds for peacetime endeavors without special permission from the Main Directorate. With Russia's armies still deployed in the Far East, it should come as no great surprise that the Red Cross embraced famine relief slowly in 1905.

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<sup>708</sup>RGIA, f. 1482, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 72-3.

<sup>709</sup> RGIA, f. 1482, op. 1, d. 1. ll. 90-91.

<sup>710</sup> "Obzor literatury i periodicheskoi pečati," *Vestnik Krasnogo Kresta*, (January 1907), 73, 85-87; A Red Cross report from 1908 put the amount spent on aid to the provinces in 1905 at even lower numbers, but this account also admitted that substantial aid went to sanitary brigades and shipping supplies and foodstuffs. See *Otchet Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta, sostoiashchego pod Avgusteishim pokrovitel'stvom gosudaryni imperatritsy Marii Feodorovny, ob okazanii pomoshchi naseleniiu Imperii, postradavshemu ot nedoroda khlebov v 1905-1906 gg.* (St. Petersburg: Glavnoe upravlenie udelov, 1908), 813.

The year 1905 had produced a disappointing harvest, and rural unrest disturbed planting and destroyed stocks of seed, guaranteeing problems the following year. By June 1906, reports had reached St. Petersburg that crop failure would affect at least twenty-three provinces. Facing a greater disruption in agriculture than in 1905, the tsarist state followed the precedent set in 1891 by forming a permanent commission made up of representatives from the Ministries of Internal Affairs, Finance, and State Domains along with members of the Red Cross, GZO, and *Trudovaia Pomoshch'*, a state-sponsored labor initiative. The Red Cross's representative was M. E. Nirod, and Prince L'vov again stood in for the zemstvos. Spurred on by state encouragement and subsidies, and likely concerned by accusations in the press of inactivity and indifference, the Red Cross greatly expanded its famine relief campaign in 1906. At a 30 July congress, the Main Directorate apportioned one million rubles from its wartime reserves for famine relief. In early October, they added another million rubles to famine relief and began directing all mandatory Red Cross donations from the sale of train tickets and passports toward immediate aid to the peasants. A post-campaign report cited that the Red Cross spent at least five million rubles of its own funds and state grants in 1906, with Samara, Simbirsk, Kazan, and Ufa receiving the most aid.<sup>711</sup> One estimate claimed the Red Cross provided 358,086 meals per day from October 1906 to July 1907.<sup>712</sup> As the Red Cross expanded its work in the countryside, the GZO encountered unexpected troubles from provincial nobles, who criticized L'vov for mismanagement of funds and demanded no further zemstvo monies be used for famine relief in early 1906.<sup>713</sup>

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<sup>711</sup> *Otchet Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, 8-9. Later, this report stated that the Red Cross spent 6,931,495 rubles in 1906, see pp. 818-19.

<sup>712</sup> *Otchet Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, 832.

<sup>713</sup> Porter, *The Zemstvo*, 186.

On the ground, the Red Cross work mirrored efforts in 1891-92 to combat hunger among the neediest strata of the population. The Main Directorate instructed provincial chapters to appoint village and hamlet agents to oversee distribution of aid alongside the zemstvos. In some villages, teachers, priests, or trustworthy peasants could not be found, so the Red Cross again relied on land captains, tax assessors, or police constables, a decision that drew ire from the zemstvo advocates and surely little love from the peasants.<sup>714</sup> Aid work targeted women, children, and the elderly, who were ineligible for seed loans from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The Red Cross preferred to feed the population in cafeterias because these institutions provided better control over the delivery of aid; free distribution of bread or flour still occurred in many places without cafeterias, but charity workers avoided handing out cash alms at all costs. In some cases, Sisters of Mercy in the service of the Red Cross, many of whom had recently returned from the Far East, worked in lazarettos set up by the zemstvos in areas affected by typhus and scurvy.<sup>715</sup>

Even though the Red Cross put forth greater efforts at combating hunger in 1906, problems still undermined the efficiency of this campaign and stirred tensions with the GZO. Samara Province, the most devastated by the 1906 famine, might serve as a case study for the challenges that the Red Cross and zemstvos faced in their relief campaign. To begin with, the assassination of Governor I. L. Blok in June by a terrorist's bomb and the subsequent confusion that followed over the nomination of a replacement delayed Red Cross work until autumn 1906. When the new governor took over, he found Red Cross relief in the province lacked coordination and was exceeding budget forecasts. The GZO had established cafeterias

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<sup>714</sup> "Obzor literatury i periodicheskoi pechati," *Vestnik Krasnogo Kresta* (January 1907): 73.

<sup>715</sup> *Otchet Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, 254-59.

and bread distribution points the following year, but, when zemstvo finances ran dry, they transferred many of these stations to the Red Cross for management. The new governor, V. V. Iakunin, streamlined the aid distribution to reduce expenditures and increase accountability, but these improvements did little to relieve the situation in the northern three uezdy of the province, where famine had struck the non-Russian population particularly hard and far more people were relying on the cafeterias than activists had intended. And Mother Nature harmed work as well, as heavy snowfalls in November delayed the Ministry of Internal Affairs' deliveries of grain to peasants, which drove many more families to Red Cross aid stations. Despite these problems, the Red Cross claimed it took the lead in handing out free meals in Samara Province in 1906: By the end of the year, the Red Cross operated 1,178 cafeterias or bread distribution points, whereas the GZO managed 190 and the Samara provincial zemstvo 450. As this author estimated, 240,000 of the 300,000 needy in Samara received aid from the Red Cross in 1906.<sup>716</sup>

If the total amount of state subsidies provides any indication of favor, then the GZO triumphed over the Red Cross in 1906. By the end of the year, the Red Cross claimed to have spent as much as 7 million rubles, and only 2.5 million of this amount came from state subsidies.<sup>717</sup> During the same year, the GZO raised nearly nine million rubles with six of these coming from state subsidies. L'vov faced resistance from members within the zemstvo boards and the state, which believed he had overstepped the bounds of what was permissible in an autocracy. But L'vov had supporters as well. The new Minister of Interior, Petr Stolypin, may have viewed the GZO as an appropriate organ of civil society by 1906 and one

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<sup>716</sup> G. A. Tobiznen, "Doklad Glavnoupolnomohcennogo Krasnogo Kresta po Samarskoi gubernii gofmeistera G. A. Tobiznena," *Vestnik Krasnogo Kresta* (February 1907): 41-50.

<sup>717</sup> *Otchet Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, 819.

that the Kadets in the Second Duma, the liberal party whose support the reformer minister sought, deemed willing to back. In spring 1907, the state came forth with an additional six million rubles for famine relief, and much of this appropriation went to the GZO, while the Red Cross received no mention.<sup>718</sup>

The harvest of 1907 recovered, and the GZO scaled back its famine relief activities by the autumn. The Red Cross, overlooked for major state subsidies, continued to provide medical aid and famine relief on a smaller and much cheaper scale to areas on the periphery of the empire that had no zemstvo presence.<sup>719</sup> It seems likely that the Red Cross may have wanted to cease managing large-scale famine relief campaigns by 1907. As we already saw, the Red Cross reluctantly dipped into the coffers of its wartime relief funds only when the scale of the disaster was tremendous and press reports demanded this organization do more to help the needy. Throughout 1906, the Red Cross struggled to raise donations for famine relief and had to rely on state subsidies and compulsory donations from taxes on passports and train tickets. In at least one case, the Saratov Provincial Red Cross Committee discussed outsourcing the operation of several cafeterias in the city to private individuals, but this idea ran counter to the practices of past famine relief campaigns and might draw charges of corruption.<sup>720</sup> With no political agenda to prove, many Red Cross activists were probably relieved that three years of hardship were coming to an end.

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<sup>718</sup> Porter, *The Zemstvo*, 206-11.

<sup>719</sup> V. V. Volkov, "Doklad Glavnoupolnomocennogo Krasnogo Kresta v Donskoi oblasti general-leitenanta v otstavke V. V. Volkova," *Vestnik Krasnogo Kresta* (February 1907): 51-63. "Deiatel'nost' vrachebno-pitatel'nogo otriada, komandirovannogo v Akmolinskuiu oblast' Glavnym Upravleniem Krasnogo Kresta v 1907," *Vestnik Krasnogo Kresta* (October 1908): 17-27.

<sup>720</sup> "Stolovye Krasnogo Kresta v g. Saratove. (Sostavil po dokumentam zavedyvaiushchii stolovymi voennyi vrach V. V. Zaglukhinskii), *Vestnik Krasnogo Kresta* (November 1907): 60-68.

The Red Cross's lengthy post-famine report did not shy away from the fact that the GZO took the lead in civilian relief efforts following the Russo-Japanese War.<sup>721</sup> The next major famine to hit Russia occurred in 1910, and, by this time, many leading figures within the autocracy had turned against the zemstvos. In this campaign, the Red Cross enjoyed renewed support from the state, but the new Prime Minister V. N. Kokovtsev relegated the GZO to fundraising only, an activity the zemstvo activists still undertook successfully.<sup>722</sup> A national zemstvo organization did not reemerge until events in the Balkans put Russia on a seemingly unstoppable path to war in the summer of 1914.

### **Conclusions**

To many zemstvo advocates, the famine relief campaigns of 1905-07 took on the dichotomy of the state-society struggle, the “kto-kogo,” that colored most political and social issues in late tsarist Russia. The members of the GZO believed the confrontation with empire-wide tragedies had won this political organ a role in governance beyond the borders of the province or county. This passion would upset the tsarist regime as its political mood shifted from an openness to experiment with a constitution and civil rights to a reaffirmation of autocracy. For the Red Cross, zemstvo advocates' behavior during the campaign may have seemed confusing and improper. Founded to supplement the military medical corps in war, the Red Cross seemed naturally poised to fulfill a supplementary and supportive role to the Ministry of Internal Affairs when peacetime disasters struck, as it had in 1874 and 1891. This attitude may help explain M. Burdukov's reaction to the GZO advocates' arrival in Ufa in the winter of 1906, when they refused to coordinate efforts with existing institutions and sought

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<sup>721</sup> *Otchet Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, 1-2.

<sup>722</sup> Polner, *Zhiznennyi put'*, 103.

only to work according to a preordained program tailored to the region and their fixed budget.<sup>723</sup> But the reluctance by the Red Cross to undertake anything more than a private role also helps explain why members of the press protested whenever Russia's national aid society failed to solve or even address its many problems. Upset by reports of Red Cross failures in the Far East in 1904 and empowered by the First Duma's decision to support the GZO in 1905, a different faction within educated Russia, in this case zemstvo liberals, briefly positioned themselves as protector of Russia's welfare. For the Red Cross this may have been a welcome respite. This organization, staffed mostly by volunteers, was exhausted from the Russo-Japanese War. Famine relief was not the Red Cross's *raison d'être*, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs had traditionally handled this problem in concert with the zemstvos. Still, for the tsarist public in 1905, Russia's aid society did not unite the tsar and people, but instead incited the latter against the former.

The decade before World War I saw the Red Cross's journal publish many accounts that identified its shortcomings in the Russo-Japanese War, but the Main Directorate undertook no restructuring to make this organization accountable to the public. These authors wanted the conference Vasil'chikov had proposed in 1905 to come to terms with past problems. Calls for this reckoning became most pronounced in 1908 after M. S. Tolmachev, a former GZO doctor, published an article titled "On the Needs of Private Aid in War" that outlined the failures of 1904.<sup>724</sup> Soon after this article appeared in print, Tolmachev died, which added to the impetus to hold this conference while veterans from the Far East were

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<sup>723</sup> M. Burdukov, "Ocherk," *Vestnik Krasnogo Kresta* (November 1907): 53.

<sup>724</sup> M. S. Tolmachev, "O nuzhdakh chastnoi pomoshchi na voine," pts. 1-3, *Vestnik Krasnogo Kresta* (May 1908): 1-9; (June 1908): 1-11; (September 1908): 1-11.



still alive.<sup>725</sup> Instead, the Red Cross answered the demands for accountability by publishing its own lengthy account of the Russo-Japanese War justifying much of its activities, while former agents penned individual rejoinders to their critics.<sup>726</sup> The last peaceful years of tsarist Russia saw the Red Cross continue to plod along with autocratic protection, intervening in famines in 1911 and 1912, and dispatching medical teams to intervene in the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913. Not until these conflicts alarmed the State Duma to the immanence of a European conflagration did the special congress of military planners, veterans of the Russo-Japanese War, and Red Cross officials convene in February 1913. This group met on several occasions in 1913 and devised timetables and locations for Red Cross facilities to deploy based on the experiences in Russia's last two conflicts.<sup>727</sup> Unlike in 1877 and 1904, when tsarist generals ignored the Red Cross until after war had broken out, Russia possessed detailed plans for how to use its aid society on the eve of World War I.

If the original Red Cross advocates in Russia such as Pirogov sought to provide an avenue for tsarist educated society to play a greater role in the management of the empire, by spring 1914 the Russian state had taken the lead devising plans to hasten voluntary associations' resources toward military ends. Once under the purview of the Romanov women and a small clique of bureaucrats, the Red Cross now was held responsible for tasks far greater than its talents, resources, or level of preparedness. When compared to two of the

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<sup>725</sup> P. D. Dolgorukov, "Krasnyi Krest v mirnoe vremiia," *Vestnik Krasnogo Kresta* (Octobre 1908): 28-34.

<sup>726</sup> P. M. fon Kaufman, ed. *Otchet o deiatel'nosti Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Krestavo vremia russko-iaponskoi voiny*, vol. I (St. Petersburg: Glavone upralenie udelov, 1911); *Otzyvy Glavnoupolnomochennykh Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta na Dal'nem Vostoke v russko-iaponskuiu voynu 1904-5 gg. Kniazia B. A. Vasil'chikova, P. M. fon-Kaufmana i B. A. Khanenko na svedeniia o deiatel'nosti nazvannogo Obshchestva, pomeshchennye v otchete o deiatel'nosti Glavnoi Evakuatsionnoi Kommissii: za 1904-1907* (St. Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1911).

<sup>727</sup> See RGVIA f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1079, ll. 1-2; RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 3, d. 303, ll. 1-10.

world's most prominent national Red Cross societies at the turn of the twentieth century, the American Red Cross and the Japanese Red Cross, the Russian Red Cross appears to have been less a product of the tsarist regime's bureaucratic inflexibility toward civil society and much more an example of an underdeveloped state trying to mobilize the public for large-scale military and philanthropic ends. What the tsarist state failed to understand was that, by the turn of the twentieth century, educated Russia believed it could conduct relief work better on its own and wanted nothing to do with a state that resisted accountability and flexibility. The most outstanding Red Cross of the era, the Japanese Red Cross, enjoyed its success because of state control, compulsion, and discipline. At the same time, even the American Red Cross, the envy of Russian advocates of private aid from Pirogov onward for its enlightened commitment to public health and Texas-sized fundraising capacity, saw its independent characteristics cast aside by Washington bureaucrats after scandals following the Galveston Earthquake of 1904.<sup>728</sup> In this sense, Russia was not unusual because the state meddled so much in its Red Cross, but instead exceptional because the Old Regime seemed so indifferent to calls from the public for reform of its aid society.

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<sup>728</sup> Olive Checkland, *Humanitarianism*, 8-11; Julia F. Irwin, *Making the World Safe*, 29-33; Marian Moser Jones, *The American Red Cross*, 114-15.

## **CHAPTER 8 – TSARIST HUMANITARIAN MISSIONS ABROAD, 1896-1913**

As a signatory of the Geneva Convention of 1864, the Russian Red Cross possessed the right to send medical workers to intervene in foreign conflicts involving member nations. In 1876, Pan-Slavic newspapers stirred up trouble by inspiring a large number of Russians, including Maria Aleksandrova and other members of the court, to support humanitarian interventions in Montenegro and Serbia, two Orthodox nations that had recently adopted the Geneva Convention to attract outside aid. On the surface, the Russian missions intended to provide medical care for the wounded and awaken the South Slavs to the benevolence of Russian hegemony in the Balkans. In actuality, for many Pan-Slavs, these missions sought to escalate conflicts between Serbia, Montenegro, and the Ottoman Empire and draw Russia into a larger war over the Balkans. The Balkan volunteers were successful in this endeavor, and humanitarian aid served as one component of the diplomatic and military series of events that pulled Russia into a war with the Ottomans, a conflict the tsarist Ministries of War and Foreign Affairs did not wish to wage in 1877.

The mandate to intervene in foreign conflicts never went away, and following the Russo-Turkish War, Russia sent medical teams to provide sanitary aid to belligerents in several wars. Most of these missions were popular with the Russian public. In each case, however, the tsarist state carefully controlled the sanitary brigades to avoid disrupting the empire's foreign relations or causing embarrassing incidents. This chapter examines four cases when the Russian Red Cross dispatched aid workers to work in foreign conflicts—the Italo-Abyssinian Conflict of 1896, the Boer War, and the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913—to

see what Russia hoped to gain from these interventions. For the Red Cross, these wars provided the opportunities to practice medicine in foreign war zones and affirm Russia's commitment to the international humanitarian movement. The Russian public viewed these missions as exciting opportunities to back underdogs in anticolonial wars of resistance and promote Russia's stature abroad as a benevolent, civilized empire. For the autocracy, these interventions served as diplomatic gestures of good will, they allayed domestic pressures at home, and they affirmed Russia's standing in the country club of European powers and Geneva Convention signatories.

### **The Italo-Abyssinian War of 1896**

An observer in St. Petersburg in 1895 would have been surprised by how much tsarist Russia's standing in international affairs had unexpectedly improved since the hangover that followed the inglorious Treaty of Berlin in 1878. Recent foreign developments, such as the conclusion of an alliance with France and St. Petersburg's normalization of relations with Sophia in 1895, coupled with the successes of Witte's economic reforms, prompted tsarist subjects to revisit the intoxicating allure of imperial expansion. Much attention has been paid to Nicholas II's ill-fated push into East Asia, but the Russians endeavored an unexpected southern diversion to the Eastern Question as well. In 1896, in hopes of courting the Abyssinian Christian state led by Emperor Menelik II, which had just bested an Italian expeditionary force at the Battle of Adwa, the Russian Red Cross dispatched a team of doctors and nurses to treat the wounded and spread the benefits of scientific medicine to the not-yet-enlightened indigenes.

Russian newspapers, drunk on the elixir of the “journalism of imperialism,” enthusiastically backed the Abyssinians in this conflict.<sup>729</sup> Eyewitness reports in *Novoe vremia* informed readers that the Abyssinians were hardly a ragtag group of “barbarians” but instead were “legitimate,” “well-armed,” “united,” and ready to continue the “holy war” until the enemy was driven from their lands. Similar to Russia’s late adoption of European civilization, one journalist remarked, Adwa was Abyssinia’s Poltava: Both battles marked the coming-out parties for the Eastern progenies.<sup>730</sup> Menelik recognized that the superiority of European arms, railroads, and the telegraph, and he “must be considered seriously.” Another writer chided those who sympathized with the Italians, noting that Italy had abandoned its admirable “classical character” by committing this folly.<sup>731</sup>

Even before Italian General Oreste Baratieri lost his army at Adwa, Russian newspapers encouraged the public to support the plight of the Abyssinian wounded. An exposé in *Novoe vremia* on 24 February, six days after the battle, sparked the Russian public’s desire for a humanitarian response. This article noted that the “Italian colony” of expatriates in Odessa had begun collecting donations for the Italian Red Cross. Outraged that patriotic Russians were asked to support the Goliath in this conflict, a group of Slavophiles, who included publicist Aleksandr Aksakov, war correspondent Viacheslav Rossolovskii, and mystic Aleksandr Nikol’skii beseeched readers of *Novoe vremia* to donate for a Red Cross brigade for “our coreligionists,” the Abyssinian wounded.<sup>732</sup> The next day, rumors hit the

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<sup>729</sup> I borrow this term from McReynolds, *The News*, 170-71.

<sup>730</sup> “Porazhenie italiantssev v Afrike,” *Novoe vremia*, February 22, 1896, 1.

<sup>731</sup> “David i Goliath (Pis’mo v redaktsiiu),” *Novoe vremia*, March, 20, 1896, 1.

<sup>732</sup> *Novoe vremia*, February, 24, 1896, 2.

press that Menelik had adopted the Geneva Convention, which enabled foreign Red Cross societies to provide assistance to the estimated ten thousand Abyssinian wounded.<sup>733</sup> *Novoe vremia* suggested that the Russian Red Cross in the past would have followed the examples of tsarist philanthropy in the Franco-Prussian War and Serbo-Bulgarian conflict of 1885 and outfit equal sanitary brigades for each side. But this author conveniently reinterpreted the Geneva Convention for the present conflict, insisting that the Russians should not waste efforts or materials on the Italians. Instead, all of the Russian aid should go to the Abyssinians, since Italian charitable societies were already collecting donations in Russia and Italian troops would surely receive enough help from their own Red Cross society. While acknowledging that the Italian Red Cross had the right to collect donations in Russia, this author stressed that only the Russians cared about the Abyssinians. Furthermore, Italian weapons were the most advanced and surely produced more harm to Abyssinian bodies than the Africans' weapons would have on the Italians.<sup>734</sup>

Since no one was looking out for the African Christians, *Novoe vremia* began a collection drive to fund a Red Cross sanitary brigade for the Abyssinians, and this decision drew rebuke from foreign newspapers as well as Russian statesmen and liberals who saw it as an affront to the international standard that aid under the Geneva Convention must be offered equally to each side in a conflict. In the first twenty days, this drive raised over eight thousand rubles for the Abyssinians. Donors, *Novoe vremia* boasted, came from all strata of society, and parents allegedly took the liberty to explain to their children that the donations are for "the struggle for the *rodina*, for its freedom and independence," even though Italy was

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<sup>733</sup> "Pomoshch' ranenym abissintsam," *Novoe vremia*, February 25, 1896, 2.

<sup>734</sup> "Primet li uchastie russkii 'Krasnyi Krest' v pomoshchi ranenym abissintsam," *Novoe vremia*, March 3, 1896, 3.

defeated and never threatened Russia. True, the collection drive may have violated the spirit of the Geneva Convention, but the editors of *Novoe vremia* believed, “The widespread participation assures us that we have proceeded correctly with the project and movement.” They denied allegations that they were trying to turn the Red Cross into a “political tool” and emphasized that they would trust General Shvedov, the leader of the sanitary brigade, to use the funds as he saw appropriate.<sup>735</sup>

The Newspaper *Moskovskie vedomosti* took up the Abyssinian cause in Russia’s second capital. The author A. I. Elishev warned readers that the British would intervene in the conflict by sending forces from Egypt to Abyssinia. Europe clearly sided with the Italians, since Britain, Germany, and Austria were sending sanitary brigades and France was doing nothing. Thus, it was up to Russia to protect the poor Abyssinians, who “did not possess European science or medicine.” Elishev acknowledged that the Geneva Convention prevented the Russian Red Cross from giving aid solely to the Abyssinians while remaining neutral in the conflict, but he justified Russia’s violating the convention’s rules by stressing the great inequality in foreign aid the two belligerents would likely receive from outside actors.<sup>736</sup> A week later, a reader from Odessa connected the Abyssinian conflict with the Eastern Question and identified the Red Cross as a powerful weapon in this struggle. Evgenii L’vov, who had visited Red Cross hospitals in Belgrade and Sofia in 1885, believed medical volunteers produced “an influence stronger than that of the pope in Bulgaria” and that his ten-ruble donation would heal a wounded Abyssinian who will “again raise his sword against

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<sup>735</sup> *Novoe vremia*, March, 15, 1896, 2.

<sup>736</sup> *Moskovskie vedomosti*, March, 7, 1896, 2.

the modern Saracens in defense of the motherland and Orthodoxy.”<sup>737</sup> The “journalism of imperialism,” these excerpts make clear, enabled Russian readers to view the Red Cross as an arm with which to engage the Eastern Question on the Abyssinian front, and these incensed subjects demanded action.

In contrast to the aggressive public, the Red Cross took a careful approach toward intervention in this conflict by selecting trustworthy brigade members and ensuring that the mission followed international standards. The scholar A. V. Khrenkov argued that tsarist state eagerly directed the bureaucratic machinery to create and dispatch sanitary brigades with the utmost speed, and this haste was surely in part an attempt to placate public fervor.<sup>738</sup> The meeting notes from the Main Directorate state that on February 25, a Liubov’ Pratasveta brought to the committee’s attention *Novoe vremia* articles from the same day that claimed that the Abyssinians had recently adopted the Geneva Convention, there were twelve thousand wounded from Adwa in need of treatment, and the Abyssinians would welcome Russian aid.<sup>739</sup> This same issue of *Novoe vremia* announced the newspaper’s collection drive for Abyssinian wounded.<sup>740</sup> *Novoe vremia*’s intelligence on Abyssinia predated that of the Red Cross, which responded to the newspaper’s initiative by requesting further information on Abyssinia’s needs for aid from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Asian Division of the General Staff, and the Swiss government.<sup>741</sup> Replies from the Swiss government show that,

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<sup>737</sup> *Moskovskie vedomosti*, March, 15, 1896, 2.

<sup>738</sup> A. V. Khrenov, *Rossiiia i efiopiia: Razvitie dvustoronnykh sviazei (ot pervykh kontaktov do 1917 goda)* (Moscow: Institut Afriki RAN, 1992), 84.

<sup>739</sup> RGVIA, f.12651, op. 3, d. 150, l. 3.

<sup>740</sup> “Pomoshch’ ranenym abissintsam,” *Novoe vremia*, February 25, 1896, 2.

<sup>741</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 3, d., 150, l. 4.



after brief confusion, Menelik had asked the Geneva Committee of the Red Cross for Abyssinia to be included in the Geneva Convention shortly after Adwa.<sup>742</sup> During this same period, the Russian Red Cross ran announcements calling for volunteers in the major newspapers, and dozens of individuals submitted petitions to join the sanitary brigade. These applicants came from all segments of the Russian population—Sofia Gomberg, a Jewish doctor from Elizavetgrad, even sent in a petition—and these individuals frequently cited professional experience, personal contacts, and special skills or languages they would bring to the mission.<sup>743</sup> Educated Russians yearned to take part in this adventure indeed.

The Red Cross staffed the sanitary brigade with trusted personnel. By 6 March, Maria Fedorovna, the patroness of the Red Cross, had named General Shvedov the leader of the brigade. Konstantin Zviagin, Georgii Kokhovskii, and A. K. Bulatovich, both officers, acted as deputy agents, and the medical staff was made up of seven military doctors, ten feldshers, twenty-two orderlies, twelve trained nurses, a priest, and several other attendants, which brought the cohort up to sixty-one people.<sup>744</sup> Shvedov was a logical selection to lead the mission since he had ample experience as an agent of the Red Cross during the Russo-Turkish and Serbo-Bulgarian Wars.<sup>745</sup> Zviagin had traveled Abyssinia before as a member of one of Leont'ev's missions to Menelik.<sup>746</sup> Several other members even consulted with

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<sup>742</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 3, d. 150, ll. 8-10.

<sup>743</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 3, d. 152, ll. 2,3,5,7,10,11,37,41,43,50-51.

<sup>744</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 3, d. 150, ll. 38-39.

<sup>745</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 10, d. 5, ll. 17-18.

<sup>746</sup> Iu. L. Elets, *Imperator Menelik i voina ego s Italiei: po dokumentam i pokhodnym dnevniam N. S. Leont'eva* (St. Petersburg: E. Evdokimov, 1898), 20.

Russia's premier specialist on Abyssinia, Professor V. V. Bolotov, before embarking.<sup>747</sup>

When selecting personnel, the Red Cross gave preference to military medical workers or veterans because these individuals were better disciplined, experienced with wartime injuries, and acclimated to long marches and camp life.<sup>748</sup> The Ministry of War permitted the use of its personnel, even preserving ranks and giving credit for time served for soldiers on this expedition, but it refused to provide any funds for the expedition.<sup>749</sup> The Main Directorate delegated 130,000 rubles for the project and quickly acquired the necessary instruments, medicines, tents, clothes, and food in the capital. According to one account, the brigade had enough supplies to treat between eight and ten thousand patients and operate for three to four months in the theater of war.<sup>750</sup> Additionally, the Ministry of War provided the brigade with rifles and ammunition.<sup>751</sup> By the end of March, the brigade was equipped and ready to begin its journey to Africa.

The Russians' plan was to travel from Odessa to the Eritrean port of Massova, an Italian possession, where the brigade would split in two, in order to comply with the provisions of the Geneva Convention. The first group would stay in Massova to treat the Italians, while the second group would pass through Italian Eritrea to the Abyssinian capital Addis Ababa. This plan, unpopular with the Russian press, was necessary because "our Red Cross must not forget that its humanitarian tasks and formal responsibilities forbade it from

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<sup>747</sup> M. V. Right, "Russian Red Cross Expedition to Ethiopia," in *Russia and Africa*, ed. A. V. Davidson, D. A. Olderogge, V. G. Solodovnikov (Moscow: Nauka, 1966): 168.

<sup>748</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op., 10, d. 5, ll. 18-19.

<sup>749</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 3, d. 150, l. 42.

<sup>750</sup> "Ekspeditsiia 'Krasnogo Kresta' v Abissiniu," *Novoe vremia*, March, 22, 1896, 2.

<sup>751</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 3, d. 150, l. 61.

giving different quantities of aid to the victims of war depending on nationality.”<sup>752</sup> Approval of the project was needed from the Italians, who, according to the Geneva Convention, had the right to refuse foreign aid. On 6 March, the Russian Red Cross sent a formal request to the Italian government via the embassy in Rome asking to let the brigade proceed to Massova. On 22 March, Rome replied with permission for the tsarist brigade to proceed through Massova, but this telegram also asked that the Russians redirect their brigade to Naples.<sup>753</sup> There were two reasons for this divergence. First, Italy had relocated most of its wounded from Adwa to Naples. Second, reports in British, German, and Italian newspapers claimed that the Russian sanitary brigade contained over two hundred armed soldiers intended to reinforce Abyssinian ranks.<sup>754</sup> It is unlikely the Italians seriously believed that the Russian brigade harbored a secret military agenda. Menelik’s army numbered over one hundred thousand at Adwa, so two hundred Russians would provide token reinforcement at best, and the Russian brigade planned to pass through Italian territory, so whatever military threat it posed would be obvious. More likely, it was the Russian press that frayed Italian nerves; *Novoe vremia* ostentatiously celebrated the outcome of Adwa and publicly endorsed supporting only the Abyssinians with material and medical aid, a position even the Russian Red Cross privately acknowledged would offend the Italians.<sup>755</sup>

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<sup>752</sup> “Russkii Krasnyi Krest v Abissinii,” *Vestnik Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, January, 4, 1897, 4-7.

<sup>753</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 3, d. 150, l. 121-2; “Ekspeditsiia ‘Krasnogo Kresta’ v Abissiniiu,” *Novoe vremia*, March, 22, 1896, 2.

<sup>754</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 3, d. 150, l., 150-1; RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 3, d. 150, l. 249; “Otraid russkago ‘Krasnogo Kresta i organi Krispi,” *Novoe vremia*, March 28, 1896, 2; “Russkii ‘Krasnyi Krest i Italiia,” *Novoe vremia*, March 30, 1896, 1.

<sup>755</sup> *Novoe vremia*, March, 15, 1896, 2; “Ekspeditsii ‘Krasnogo Kresta’ v Abissiniiu, *Novoe vremia*, March 22, 1896, 1; RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 3, d. 150, l. 213.

To quiet any suspicions, the Russians sent a detailed description of its brigade to Aleksei Lobanov-Rostovskii, ambassador to Rome, in which they emphasized that the brigade had an “exclusively sanitary character” and the few armed sanitary workers were needed to defend the personnel from “wild beasts and outlaw gangs in the desert.”<sup>756</sup> Suspecting that Italy might renege on its promise of free passage, the Russians devised a contingency plan, whereby the brigade would continue its cruise along the Horn of Africa to the French possessions of Djibouti. From Djibouti, the Russians would travel to Addis Ababa via the longer and more difficult land journey through Harar.<sup>757</sup> On 26 March, the Italians called off Russian and German sanitary brigades, claiming they were not needed in Naples.<sup>758</sup> Two days later, Lobanov-Rostovskii informed St. Petersburg that the Italians denied the Russian brigade permission to travel through Massova due to public outrage over the expedition’s “military character.”<sup>759</sup> While this confusion played out, the Russian sanitary brigade waited anxiously in Alexandria, Egypt.

With Italian possessions closed to the Russian brigade, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sought and won permission from the French to travel through Djibouti on 1 April.<sup>760</sup> Facing a longer and more arduous journey through desert and mountains, St. Petersburg informed the brigade to send the nurses home from Alexandria.<sup>761</sup> Without the women, the

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<sup>756</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 3, d.150, ll. 147-48.

<sup>757</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 3, d. 150, ll., 211-12.

<sup>758</sup> “Russkii ‘Krasnyi Krest’ v Abissinii,” *Vestnik Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, April, 21, 1896, 326-30.

<sup>759</sup> “Russkii ‘Krasnyi Krest’ i Italiia,” *Novoe vremia*, April 9, 1896, 2; “Protokol obshchego sobraniia chlenov Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnago Kresta 7-go apreliia 1896 goda,” *Vestnik Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, April 28, 1896, 130.

<sup>760</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op.3, d. 150, l. 237.

<sup>761</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 3, d. 150, l. 244.

Russian detachment continued to Djibouti, where it landed on 18 April. In the French port, Shvedov faced several unforeseen difficulties. First, war had depleted the local stocks of pack animals. Only with the help of the French governor, Legarde, and at a great cost was Shevdov able to procure the mules and camels needed for the caravan.<sup>762</sup> Second, time was of essence for the Russians, since the onset of the rainy season in June would make travel to Addis Ababa nearly impossible.<sup>763</sup> The French helped the Russians hire Abyssinians, Arabs, and Somalis to serve as guides, guards, and interpreters to expedite the passage to Harar.

The first caravan loaded with freight left for Harar on April 20. In hopes of aiding the movement of the personnel through the desert and informing the Abyssinians that the Russians were coming, the Russian agent Bulatovich pleaded with Shvedov to permit him to scout the route to Harar by camel. Shvedov acquiesced to the request mostly because the expensive sojourn to Djibouti depleted the brigade's cash and it was likely that the Russians would face similar problems finding the animals to outfit a large caravan in Harar. Bulatovich traversed the distance of 350 versts in just under four days to deliver news of the Russians' arrival.<sup>764</sup> A week later, Shvedov and the remaining Russians left for Harar. The considerable size and length of the main caravan meant that travel through the desert was slow and uncomfortable, especially because over half the brigade suffered from

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<sup>762</sup> V. A. Krokhin and M. V. Rait, eds., "Nekotorye novye dokumenty o russko-efiopskikh otnosheniakh," *Problemy vostochnovedeniia*, (No. 1, 1960), 158.

<sup>763</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 3, d. 150, l. 284.

<sup>764</sup> F. Krindach, *Russkii kavalerist v Abissinii: iz Djibuti v Kharar* (St. Petersburg: Obshchaia pol'za, 1897), 95.

gastrointestinal maladies, but they encountered no unexpected difficulties and arrived in Harar on May 15.<sup>765</sup>

The Abyssinians showed the Russians warm hospitality upon their arrival in Harar and provided the guests with lodging, but this friendly reception masked Menelik's uncertainty over the Russians' true intentions in Africa. Menelik had after all requested military aid from Nicholas II shortly after Adwa for dealing with continued violence by the Italians in the Tigre region; however, the Russians had failed to reply with an answer on whether arms were forthcoming.<sup>766</sup> Shvedov recorded that he initiated negotiations with Menelik's deputy and the governor of Harar on further travel to Addis Ababa, but the Russians received belated and confusing replies from the Abyssinian authorities on how to proceed. In response to this delay, the Russians opened a clinic in Harar to demonstrate to the mistrustful Abyssinians that the medical brigade had no masked intentions. The local residents first looked at this facility with reservation; few patients sheepishly visited the Russian doctors. Soon, as Shvedov wrote his superiors in St. Petersburg, friendly appeals to Makonen and successful treatment of sick Abyssinians won over the locals to Russian medicine, and the clinic was treating up to 250 patients daily.<sup>767</sup> Also, the Russians again dispatched Bulatovich as the missionary to Addis Ababa to goad Menelik with diplomacy.<sup>768</sup> Bulatovich reported back to Shvedov via courier that a party in Addis Ababa was intriguing against the Russian's presence in the country. A Russian adventurer, Leont'ev, then residing

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<sup>765</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 3, d. 153, l. 39, 48; "Russkii Krasnyi Krest v Abissinii," *Vestnik Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, January 4, 1897, 4-7.

<sup>766</sup> Krokhin and Rait, eds., "Nekotorye novye dokumenty," 152-58.

<sup>767</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 3, d. 153, l. 104.

<sup>768</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 3, d. 153, l. 63.

at Menelik's court, probably was the source of this trouble because, as Shvedov reported, "the Emperor has known about the arrival [of the Red Cross] brigade to Djibouti since April, and up to this point T. Leon'tev has done nothing for the Russian Red Cross"; moreover, "all of the reports that they had received in Petersburg [from Leont'ev] on Abyssinia have been untrustworthy."<sup>769</sup> Finally, on 12 June, a notification from Menelik arrived, asking the Russians to hasten to Addis Ababa. Six days later, and with the help of the Abyssinians, the brigade had gathered the necessary pack animals and departed in two caravans. Shortly after departing, Shvedov was approached by a delegation of Abyssinians, which informed the Russians that up to 1,500 wounded were being transported to Harar and requested that a contingent of medical personnel stay behind in the city to treat the patients, who had not yet arrived. Shvedov left several doctors and staff members behind to open a hospital in Harar.<sup>770</sup>

The trip from Harar to Addis Ababa proved more difficult than the first leg of the journey, due to its route over mountain passes and through patches of desert with no watering holes. Seasonal rains flooded streams and slowed travel as well. Numbering 842 animals in total, the caravan was by no means small or agile.<sup>771</sup> On the way, the medical personnel provided medical aid to local inhabitants, treating several hundred patients.<sup>772</sup> At the end of July, the sanitary brigade entered Addis Ababa. Menelik had outfitted the single European

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<sup>769</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 3, d. 153, ll. 108-10.

<sup>770</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 3, d. 153, l., 172.

<sup>771</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 3, d. 153, ll. 124-27.

<sup>772</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 3, d. 153, l., 131.

estate house for the brigade and arranged a celebration to greet the newcomers. He also issued a decree to gather the wounded in one place for treatment.<sup>773</sup>

The Red Cross hospital in Addis Ababa opened on 1 August, and, according to Russian sources, it won acclaims from the locals. Featuring a surgical ward, electrotherapy division, massage facility, and an ambulatory as well as over thirty permanent beds, this was the first European hospital in Abyssinia. Shvedov wrote in his report that Menelik was grateful for the medical assistance and the emperor obliged all of the Russians' requests for help constructing the facility, manning it with janitors and laundresses and satisfying the Russians' need for comforts in the capital. The emperor "now sees and values the unselfish friendship of Russia to Abyssinia and remains steadfast in his feelings of thanks to Russia."<sup>774</sup> Red Cross Agent Glinskii enjoyed similar assistance from the governor in Harar. After thieves made off with over five thousand francs from the Red Cross station in Harar, Abyssinian authorities found the culprits and returned nearly all of the money to Glinskii.<sup>775</sup> The Empress Taitu consulted with Shvedov on forming a Red Cross organization for her country and requested that the Russians train Abyssinians in medical techniques.<sup>776</sup> Menelik himself made frequent visits to the hospital, revealing an interest in medical devices, treatments, and drugs.<sup>777</sup> At the clinic in Harar, local officials as well observed the surgical removal of a bullet.<sup>778</sup>

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<sup>773</sup> "Russkii Krasnyi Krest v Abissinii," *Vestnik Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, January 11, 1897, 20-23.

<sup>774</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 3, d. 153, ll. 144-45.

<sup>775</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 3, d. 153, ll. 145, 152-53.

<sup>776</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 3, d. 153, l. 209.

<sup>777</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 3, d. 153, l. 210.

<sup>778</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 3, d. 153, l. 425.



The Russians ceased their activities on 5 October, when the hospital was formally transferred to the Abyssinian Red Cross under the patronage of Empress Taitu, but Doctor B. A. Rozevich and several other personnel remained in Addis Ababa to continue treating Abyssinian patients and Italian prisoners. With the creation of the Abyssinian Red Cross, the Russians reminded Menelik and Taitu about the Geneva Convention's guarantees of neutrality for enemy medical professionals, and the Abyssinians allegedly enabled the few Italian doctors in their captivity to treat Italian prisoners of war.<sup>779</sup> Also, as a final gesture of goodwill, the Russians placed an order for smallpox vaccine, which the detachment of personnel remaining in Addis Ababa would use to inoculate Abyssinians. The Russians left Addis Ababa on 10 October after working there for two months. They arrived in Harar on 8 November and closed the sanitary station, which had operated for four and a half months. From Harar, the combined brigade traveled to Djibouti, where they departed for Russia on 30 November and arrived in St. Petersburg on 23 December.<sup>780</sup> The Russian medical team that stayed in Addis Ababa left on 11 January after it transferred the last of its patients to an Italian Red Cross team that arrived to treat Italian prisoners.<sup>781</sup> All remaining medical supplies stayed with the Abyssinian Red Cross.<sup>782</sup> During this period, a Russian doctor, P. V. Shchusev, authored a volume titled *Medical Advice for Abyssinians*, which was translated into Amharic and printed in St. Petersburg in 1897. This short guide, published by the

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<sup>779</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 10, d. 5, 27-28.

<sup>780</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 10, d. 5, ll. 28-29.

<sup>781</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 10, d. 5, l. 29.

<sup>782</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 10, d. 5, l. 30.

General Staff, contains basic instructions on cleaning and dressing wounds, setting broken bones, following a healthy diet, and avoiding venereal diseases.<sup>783</sup>

Shvedov produced statistical reports for authorities in St. Petersburg, and the Red Cross published accounts of the brigade's activities, both of which justified the expenses of the brigade to the public. The statistics differ between archival and published sources, but it seems clear that the Russians treated around thirty thousand patients at both facilities. Of these patients, not more than 761 were wounded and only 191 required major surgeries at the hospitals. The overwhelming majority of patients treated in the ambulatory clinic appear to have been ordinary civilians, but the Russians also treated Italian prisoners as well.<sup>784</sup> Shvedov remarked that there was a noticeable increase in the number of "repeat customers (*povtornye bol'nye*)" to the ambulatory clinics, which he attributed to the Abyssinians' learning to trust in "the benefits of rational medical aid, so they come again for directions from the doctor."<sup>785</sup> In total, the Russians spent about 159,000 rubles on the expedition, a sum that was higher than that forecasted due to complications involving travel to Abyssinia.<sup>786</sup>

Following the return of the brigade in December 1896, Shvedov and the Red Cross published a brochure on the expedition's activities in Abyssinia. In print, the Red Cross justified its intervention in Abyssinia on the grounds that, as a signatory of the Geneva

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<sup>783</sup> P. V. Shchusev, *Vrachebnye sovety dlia Abissintsev*, trans. Ilias Ato Bazabykh (St. Petersburg: Voennaia tipografiia Glavnogo shtaba, 1897).

<sup>784</sup> Published statistics and archival totals differ slightly, with the archives revealing slightly higher numbers for each category. See RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 10, d. 5, ll. 29-30; "Russkii Krasnyi Krest v Abissinii," *Vestnik Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, January 11, 1897, 20-23.

<sup>785</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 3, d., 153, l., 172.

<sup>786</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 10, d., 5, l. 30.

Convention, Russia was obligated to provide aid to the wounded of warring nations as it had done during past conflicts. This brochure was supposed to be enlarged into a book, and the Red Cross set aside several thousand rubles for the project, but no monograph on the expedition ever appeared. One member of the brigade proposed to the Main Directorate that they create an exposition that would familiarize the Russian public with this “little known country and its inhabitants.” His account of organizing the exposition in St. Petersburg shows that the members of the brigade sought to teach the Russian public the benefits of humanitarian aid to Abyssinia.<sup>787</sup> In the first hall of the exposition, visitors were shown examples of indigenous, Abyssinian medical treatments, such as copper plates for closing wounds or powders for treating eye infections. The inadequacy of Abyssinian medicine was underlined in this room by the consequences of modern weaponry. Display cases showed bullets and shrapnel removed by Russian doctors from Abyssinian bodies. In the second hall, visitors became part of the Russian medical brigade, seeing modern medical instruments, medicines, tents, water purification filters, and other items used in Abyssinia. The third and final section provided an ethnographic journey to Africa, on which visitors were treated to exotic clothes, jewelry, weapons, money, religious items, as well as the mandatory stuffed animals, hides, and tusks from wild beasts.<sup>788</sup> This exposition ran for thirty-two days from 31 January to 3 March 1897 and attracted 6,500 visitors.<sup>789</sup>

As I noted earlier, a small detachment from the brigade stayed in Addis Ababa to treat the remaining wounded after the main group left in October. Over the next three months, this

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<sup>787</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1376, l. 57.

<sup>788</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1376, ll. 57-69.

<sup>789</sup> M. V. Rait, “Russkie ekspeditsii v Efiopii v seredine XIX – nachale XX vv. i ikh etnograficheskie materialy,” *Afrikanskii etnograficheskii sbornik* 34, no. 1 (1956): 246.

group performed over one hundred operations before it left for Russian in January 1897.<sup>790</sup> Menelik had requested additional help from the Red Cross in the future and even offered to cover some of the costs for these workers, but, at first, the Russians waived in how forthcoming they would be with medical aid.<sup>791</sup> M. P. von Kaufman, the chairman of the Red Cross, wanted to preserve this detachment because the original brigade did not fulfill its mission of treating all of the wounded from Adwa. When he petitioned the necessary government ministries for fifteen thousand rubles per year in funding and five medical staffers for the outpost, he was met with refusals. In several petitions to P. S. Vannovskii, the minister of war, von Kaufman asked for additional military doctors and insisted that state support was needed because the charter of the Red Cross provisioned neither “general medical aid to a population outside of Russia,” nor did it account for foreign aid during peacetime.<sup>792</sup> Vannovskii refused von Kaufman’s requests on the grounds that the war was over and the Red Cross must pay for its own activities.<sup>793</sup> The Ministry of Finance also walked away from the mission, claiming state funds would henceforth only be spent on efforts to counter public health problems within Russia.<sup>794</sup> But state coffers did not dry up, and the Russian medical mission in Addis Ababa continued its activities into the twentieth century.

In 1897, the Russian Red Cross again established a small hospital in Addis Ababa that lasted until 1902, when it was replaced with a medical staff attached to the tsarist

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<sup>790</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1374, l. 40.

<sup>791</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1374, l. 35.

<sup>792</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1374, ll. 39-40.

<sup>793</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1374, l. 34.

<sup>794</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1374, ll. 34, 41.

diplomatic consulate. The facility was popular, and Menelik looked on it with pride. One former doctor wrote, “in the dark consciousness of the people, it brought light, not with violence but with reason and the highest human virtue of giving aid to the sick and wounded.”<sup>795</sup> A brief memoir by a military physician who served at this facility describes how the Red Cross won Abyssinians over to European medicine and Russian doctors in particular.<sup>796</sup> This trust drew envy from other Europeans, and soon the French, Italians, and British joined the Russians in courting Menelik with medical diplomats. British travelers to the region complained of the gaudy Russian facility and chided the Abyssinians for flocking to it.<sup>797</sup> This clinic continued its operations until 1907, when domestic problems within Russia and disagreements with the Abyssinians over import duties on medicine caused the Russians to retreat.

The Russian Red Cross’s expedition to Abyssinia helps identify several sinews in the nexus between humanitarianism and imperialism in late tsarist Russia. First, the Russian state and public viewed the Red Cross as an important tool of soft-power imperialism. The Red Cross sent medical volunteers to Montenegro, Serbia, or Abyssinia to bolster friendly diplomatic relations with ethnic groups or political movements with which Russians sympathized, whether it be Orthodox Christians or Africans. The secondary, and unstated, goal of some of these endeavors was to enable weaker belligerents to conduct wars favorable

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<sup>795</sup> M. I. Lebedinskii, “Pervyi gosptal’ v Abissinii (Iz lichnikh vospominanii),” *Istoricheskii vestnik* (November 1912): 825.

<sup>796</sup> RGVIA, f. 12651, op. 3, d. 224, l. 4-7; 225.

<sup>797</sup> Richard Pankhurst, “The Russians in Ethiopia: Aspirations of Progress,” In *Africa in Russia, Russia in Africa: Three Centuries of Encounters*, Maxim Atusevich, ed., (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2007), 225-26.

to Russian interests. In this case, Russia had a vested interest in seeing Abyssinia best Italy, Germany's ally and therefore Russia's continental rival.

Second, the Red Cross channeled popular fervor for empire toward stable ends as well. Neutered by an autocratic system that prevented the Russian public from engaging political problems at home, foreign adventures provided the readers of *Novoe vremia* with opportunities to release their frustrations on easy targets abroad. Humanitarianism was one of many possible weapons Russia could use to engage in and interfere with foreign lands. The state was well aware of the benefits and pitfalls of these humanitarian endeavors abroad. Since the Red Cross was nominally headed by Maria Fedorovna and managed by bureaucrats and court favorites, the tsarist autocracy prudently controlled which foreign conflicts volunteers intervened in and who was selected to partake in these missions. Within Russia, the Red Cross enabled patriotic individuals to direct their energies toward making donations for and proclaiming solidarity with the Orthodox Abyssinians.

Third, participation in this endeavor clearly elevated tsarist subjects' sense of self in two ways. Educated Russia may have been burdened by the afflicted peasantry and stymied by the obdurate autocracy, but the 1896 mission to Abyssinia enabled Russians to reaffirm their membership in the fraternity of European empires and, for the moment, occupy the paramount moral position within this hierarchy. As the newsletter of the Russian Red Cross reported, this brigade "performed a service that raises the prestige of the Europeans in the eyes of the uncultured people" and "spread civilization to a country and prepared it to transition from a primitive to a cultured way of life (*form obshchezhitia*)."<sup>798</sup> The Russian

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<sup>798</sup> "Protokol obshchego sobraniia chlenov ROKK," *Vestnik Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, February 1, 1897, 66.

doctors earned the right to strut in front of the other Europeans in Addis Ababa because Russia was the first to “discover” the Abyssinians.

The mission to Abyssinia also shows a desire by imperial Russia to work within a system of international norms and conventions that governed international philanthropy. Russian subjects may have disdained the fact that the Europeans seemed to line up to support Italy with aid, but the tsarist state made sure to plan a brigade to treat Italian soldiers in Naples. Tsarist Russia believed it was waging a war over hearts and minds in Abyssinia, and the best method to win over coreligionists was to demonstrate a commitment to abiding by international laws and Christian morality. Collections for the Italian Red Cross in Russia may have upset *Novoe vremia*'s readers' sense of propriety, but only after Italy refused Russian aid did St. Petersburg commit all of its Red Cross resources to Addis Ababa.

Russia's attachment to Abyssinia was short-lived and largely symbolic. Even judged by lax nineteenth-century standards, seven doctors had little chance of providing medical care for an army of one hundred thousand. The Russian public's interest in Abyssinia faded quickly as well. The daily news ticker shrank attention spans a century ago as it does today, but fresh fighting meant new adventures. By the time the Red Cross brigade returned for Christmas 1896 from Addis Ababa, wire reports from Transvaal already beckoned tsarist subjects to the next exotic undertaking, and this time the insidious British were the opponents.<sup>799</sup>

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<sup>799</sup> Apollon Davidson and Irina Filatova demonstrate that the Anglo-Boer War left a significant imprint on the Russian popular imagination. See Apollon Davidson and Irina Filatova, *The Russians and the Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902* (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 1998), 177-94.

## The South African War

The outbreak of the Second Anglo-Boer War in 1899 prompted another outpouring of support in the Russian press. The Boer colonies of Transvaal and the Orange Free State had both adopted the Geneva Convention in 1896 and 1897, which made them eligible for outside assistance, and the European powers lined up to dispatch ambulances to these romantic guerrillas resisting British colonialism. The Dutch, German, Swiss, Austrian, Swedish, and Belgian Red Cross societies all offered to send medical teams, and the French proffered medical supplies to outfit a field hospital. Russia followed the precedent it set for the Abyssinian intervention and initially offered equal medical units to the Boers and the British. However, Whitehall, which mobilized its own national aid society for its first imperial campaign, declined assistance from outsiders.<sup>800</sup> The Russian Red Cross outfitted one sanitary team, composed of six doctors, nine nurses, and two dozen or so other members, and dispatched it to the port of Lourenço Marques in January 1900. This conflict saw unofficial Red Cross brigades travel to South Africa as well. The Dutch parish in St. Petersburg raised funds for a joint Russo-Dutch ambulance, and even a group of Irish-Americans in Chicago sent their own medical team.<sup>801</sup>

Led by State Councilor N. I. Kushkov, a professor at the Medical-Surgical Academy and senior surgeon at the Mariinskaia Hospital in St. Petersburg, the official Russian Red Cross brigade traveled through the East African port of Lourenço Marques and then by train to Pretoria. At the railway station, President Paul Kruger of Transvaal greeted the Russians

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<sup>800</sup> Anne Summers, *Angels and Citizens*, 215.

<sup>801</sup> J. C. DeVilliers, *Healers, Helpers and Hospitals: A History of Military Medicine in the Anglo-Boer War*, vol. I (Pretoria: Protea Book House, 2008), 57.



and promised to provide them food and hotel lodging, both of which had become costly due to the war.<sup>802</sup> But hospitality was not what the Russians sought. After a period of idleness in Pretoria, the Transvaal Sanitary Command finally gave the Russians instructions to open a hospital at Colesberg, near the southern front, but the Boers apparently selected a Russian-Jewish émigré to deliver the message to Kushkov, a gaffe that offended the highfalutin professor. Vexed with the Boers for their impudence and poor planning, Kushkov came up with his own design to set up a hospital in Newcastle, a town he erroneously believed was close the front. Instead, this poor placement earned the Russians a reputation for shirking from danger. With few soldiers to make use of the facility, the Russians welcomed the Boer population to use the hospital. Records indicate they treated nearly one thousand patients and performed 120 surgeries from February to April.<sup>803</sup>

As the Boer front collapsed in the spring of 1900, the Russian brigade retreated inland to Pretoria and later along the rail line to the town of Waterval-Boven. They split the ambulance into smaller teams, which supplemented work at existing hospitals, dispatched a mobile ambulance to the front, and outfitted a sanitary train, but it soon became clear to diplomats in St. Petersburg that the Boer forces had disintegrated and a conventional war was turning into a guerrilla insurgency. On August 10 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ordered the Red Cross brigade to evacuate via Lourenço Marques. This unexpected message disappointed one participant, who felt that the brigade performed its best work during the summer months.<sup>804</sup> In total, the Russian brigade treated over one thousand serious cases and

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<sup>802</sup> A. I. Sadovskii, "Vospominaniia o Transvaale i putevye vpechatleniia," *Voenna-meditsinskii zhurnal* (May, 1902): 1505-6.

<sup>803</sup> Davidson and Filatova, *The Russians and the Anglo-Boer War*, 151-52; DeVilliers, *Healers, Helpers and Hospitals*, 480-84.

<sup>804</sup> Sadovskii, "Vospominaniia," 1532.

five thousand ambulatory patients during its six months of operations. The total cost for this campaign came to 112,096 rubles.<sup>805</sup>

The Boers excited the Russian public, but this campaign did little more than provide symbolic support for the anticolonial war with Britain. Kushkov's failure, however, was not shameful to Russian readers. Most important for Russia was that they, too, participated alongside the other European powers to help the Boer wounded. An article in the Red Cross's newsletter surveyed the activities conducted by all of the foreign brigades and situated Russia's contribution within the larger European project to intervene in warfare.<sup>806</sup> By sending a medical brigade to South Africa, Russia affirmed its European power status and reminded other states, in Europe and abroad, that it stood behind the Geneva principles. But Russia's contribution to this conflict had been small, a calculation no doubt intended to minimize expenses and footprint. When tide turned against the Boers, and St. Petersburg worried it might not be able to get its brigade out, the Russians quickly retreated to avoid any further involvement in South African adventures.

### **The Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913**

The Russian Red Cross's final campaigns prior to the outbreak of World War I occurred during the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913. The first of these conflicts featured the Balkan Christians driving the last of the Ottomans from Europe, a conflict that won popular support in Russia from the press and engagement from the Red Cross. But the Balkan Christians could not agree on the spoils of war, and all of the former allies renewed conflict

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<sup>805</sup> "Russkii Krasnyi Krest v Iuzhnoi Afrike," *Vestnik Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, December 23, 1901, 449; Sadovskii, "Vospominaniia," 1534.

<sup>806</sup> "Krasnyi Krest neutral'nykh derzhav v Iuzhnoi-afrikanskoi voine," *Vestnik Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, February 12, 1901, 49-51; idem., May 27, 1901, 170-71.

with an enlarged Bulgaria in 1913. Russian popular opinion greeted the second war with much less enthusiasm, and the Red Cross's commitment to the conflict reflected this drop in morale. Russia's interventions in these conflicts came from the humanitarian mandate to provide aid in war, affirm Russia's status as a power, and channel domestic pressures toward the Pan-Slavic goal of freeing the Balkans for Eastern Orthodoxy.

Historian Galina Shevtstova's recent monograph argues that popular pressure from the press provided the impetus for the Red Cross to intervene in the Balkan Wars. Similar to Russia's humanitarian involvement in the Italo-Abyssinian War and South African War, the newspapers demanded action when Orthodox coreligionists found themselves in a crisis. The Red Cross first hesitated to organize brigades in 1912 because they feared the empire would soon be at war with the Ottoman Empire or Austria-Hungary over the Balkans. Public opinion took the initiative to intervene. The Main Directorate only began preparations to dispatch brigades after the St. Petersburg and Moscow City Dumas threatened to dispatch their own brigades "under the flag of the Red Cross." The Russian state first tolerated similar private initiatives to fund wartime sanitary brigades in the Russo-Japanese War, when it acceded to the General Zemstvo Organization's petition to Tsar Nicholas II. Fearing that popular initiative from below might spread to the provinces coalesce around liberal opposition groups in the zemstvos and towns, the Russian state spurred its Red Cross to oversee all medical relief brigades beginning in October 1912.<sup>807</sup> Similar to Russia's past efforts in the Balkans and Africa, the Main Directorate sought to control all medical aid to

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<sup>807</sup> Galina Shevtstova, *Russkii gumannyi pokhod na Balkany 1912-1913* (Moscow: OAO "Tipografia Novosti, 2012), 38-41.

the belligerents to ensure that the distribution of relief followed international standards and the behavior of volunteers was kept carefully in check.

The Russians again mobilized sanitary brigades capable of operating as independent hospitals for fifty or two hundred patients. Organizers had developed careful inventories for each type of facility during the Russo-Japanese War, and they had stockpiled the needed supplies in warehouses in St. Petersburg. All nurses came from the trained ranks of the nursing societies, and the doctors were military men, professors, or employed by the nursing societies, so their loyalties and talents were vetted.<sup>808</sup> In the First Balkan War, private individuals and associations funded a couple of the brigades, but the Main Directorate controlled how all of the medical teams would be composed and deployed.<sup>809</sup> To oversee operations in Balkans, the Red Cross appointed General P. A. Tyrtov to act as its plenipotentiary. In turn, Tyrtov delegated much of his management responsibilities in Serbia to A. P. Gartvig, the wife of a Russian diplomatic envoy to the country.

The press again took great pride in its Red Cross's mission to the Balkans in 1912. The *Vestnik Krasnogo Kresta*, the Red Cross's journal, reprinted newspaper articles that described how locals in Bulgaria and Serbia welcomed the Russians with open arms and how these interventions had inspired women to take on new public roles in supporting private aid in wartime.<sup>810</sup> The reality on the ground may have differed from these assessments since the Russians kept Serbian female volunteers under close supervision and deemed them suitable

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<sup>808</sup> *Deiatel'nost' Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta na balkanskom teatre voennykh deistvii v 1912-1913 g.g.* (St. Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1914), vii-ix.

<sup>809</sup> *Ibid.*, xi.

<sup>810</sup> For example, see *Vestnik Krasnogo Kresta* 8 (October 1912): 1618, 1631.

for housekeeping duties only.<sup>811</sup> Russian nurses, another report indicated, impressed foreign observers with their medical talents and admiration from male physician peers.<sup>812</sup>

In total, the Russians sent four large hospitals, twenty small lazarettos, and outfitted one sanitary ship for these conflicts.<sup>813</sup> Since Russian planners deemed that Bulgaria would suffer the worst casualties in the First Balkan War due to its location and the size of its army, the Russians dispatched fourteen medical facilities to the country, the most aid of any nation. Serbia received several hospitals, Greece three small lazarettos, Montenegro two, and Turkey one lazaretto. These numbers clearly show which side the Russians supported in this conflict. Russian medical staff numbered nearly seven hundred, with over one hundred doctors and two hundred nurses partaking in the campaign, Russia's largest humanitarian mission in any foreign conflict.<sup>814</sup> All of the medical facilities were stationary hospitals located in rear areas, and, unlike in Serbia decades before, the local authorities were responsible for delivering the patients to these facilities. In Bulgaria, the Russians treated 3,004 sick soldiers and 5,442 wounded. Serbia followed with 822 sick soldiers and 2,457 wounded treated in Russian hospitals, and Montenegro tasked the Russians with looking after 333 sick patients and 412 wounded. In total, Russia hospitalized 4,300 sick and 8,722 wounded patients during this conflict.<sup>815</sup>

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<sup>811</sup> Shvetsova, *Russkii gumannyi pokhod*, 114-15.

<sup>812</sup> RGVIA f. 12651, op. 1, d.1482, ch., 2, l. 36.

<sup>813</sup> *Deiatel'nost' Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, xiv.

<sup>814</sup> *Ibid.*, xix-xx, xxvii-xxviii.

<sup>815</sup> *Ibid.*, xxx-xxxi.

Peace negotiations began in December 1912, and the Russians began to shutter Red Cross facilities in January the following year. A. P. Gartvig requested that the Russians slow the liquidation process in mid-January because infectious diseases had broken out among Serbian troops, but the Main Directorate insisted it did not have funds to keep brigades in operation. Still, many of the Russian brigades remained in the Balkans until patients had been transferred to local facilities by the spring of 1913.<sup>816</sup> In April 1913, the Russian state paid the Red Cross to rent and outfit the Odessa-based steamer *Peterburg* to transport about 850 Serbian patients from Durrës, Albania, to the Greek port of Thessaloniki, an action that would be Russia's last humanitarian gesture in the First Balkan War.<sup>817</sup>

News of the Second Balkan War prompted a more somber response in the Russian press. Slavic brothers were not supposed to fight one another, and the Red Cross feared that further involvement in the Balkans would waste resources needed when the great European conflagration broke out. Still, in response to Gartvig's solicitations for help and the need to keep up appearances as a concerned great power, the Russians sent two large hospital teams to Serbia and Bulgaria in the summer of 1913.<sup>818</sup>

These interventions did not come cheaply. At the beginning of the conflict, the Main Directorate permitted the use 650,000 rubles from the Red Cross's wartime reserve fund to pay for the campaign. Donations, they hoped, would make up for these monetary expenses. The Main Directorate demanded control of all expenditures on this campaign. When the Red Cross's chairman, A. Il'in, received word that provincial chapters were also spending

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<sup>816</sup> Shvetsova, *Russkii gumannyi pokhod*, 150-53.

<sup>817</sup> *Ibid.*, 154-55.

<sup>818</sup> *Ibid.*, 157-58, 164-65.

wartime reserves to outfit brigades, the Main Directorate ordered these expenditures halted immediately.<sup>819</sup> In total, the Red Cross spent 1,058,450 rubles on the campaigns in 1912 and 1913. During these conflicts private donations only provided 326,566 rubles with another 68,918 rubles coming from a special fund that had been set up for Balkan operations in 1876. Of the costs, about 400,000 rubles went to acquiring supplies, 250,000 rubles funded salaries for the staff, and 130,000 rubles were spent on food for the patients and personnel.<sup>820</sup> The Russian public's calls for intervention vastly exceeded the popular enthusiasm needed to fund these missions.

### **Conclusions**

The Russian Red Cross's interventions in foreign wars reveal that the tsarist regime took its membership in the Geneva Convention seriously. As a great power, Russia felt obligated to offer aid to its European rivals when they found themselves at war and to support lesser powers, so long as these nations agreed to the legal terms of the Geneva Convention. Members of the Red Cross believed that the humanitarian movement acted as a civilizing agent for its little brother nations because it encouraged the South Slavs and Abyssinians to observe the rules of warfare, develop modern medical services, and allow women to serve as nurses. Russia was always open to expanding the Geneva club of nations so long as new members possessed states and militaries that to some degree corresponded with European standards. But Russia, like its European rivals, offered aid only to other Red Cross members, a convenient interpretation of the Geneva Convention that made interventions in imperial wars verboten. This gentlemen's agreement ensured that the British

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<sup>819</sup> RGVIA f. 12651, op. 1, d. 1070, l. 17.

<sup>820</sup> *Deiatel'nost' Rossiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta*, lxviii-lxxi.

Red Cross stayed out of Central Asia, while the Russians looked away from their European rivals' most unseemly actions in Africa and Asia. This habit explains why the Russians pulled out of South Africa once the Boers campaign dissolved into a guerilla war. In its own backyard, Russia had no intention of giving anyone the pretext to recognize a Polish Red Cross.

Educated Russia backed the Red Cross as a means of influencing foreign policy. Few Russians outside the medical or military communities followed the doctors who went to Germany for the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, but when Orthodox coreligionists found themselves in need of assistance, the tsarist public pressured its Red Cross to send aid to the Balkans. Often these missions countered the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' strategy of nonintervention, especially in the Balkans, where too much Russian interference might provoke the Europeans to respond with escalations of their own, a repeat of the mishaps that led to defeat in the Crimean War. In a sense, Russia's humanitarian missions abroad placated its public's calls for action while limiting the tsarist regime's risk of escalating foreign conflicts or inflaming domestic opposition against the autocracy. At the same time, however, the aid missions abroad probably contributed to giving the Serbs too great a sense of expectation that Russian aid would always be forthcoming. Russian benevolence, to a degree, contributed to Serbian overconfidence, a cause of World War I and the downfall of the tsarist regime nearly three years later.

Finally, Russia learned how to improve the delivery of foreign aid during these decades. No one knew how to assist the Germans in 1870 and the campaign to Serbia in 1876 was bungled by amateurism, adventurism, and poor planning, but, by the twentieth century, the Russia Red Cross had professionalized and streamlined operations to deliver professional



medical aid at reasonable costs and without embarrassment. Careful coordination between the Russian state and Red Cross to outfit and control the foreign aid missions led to these improvements. And, despite what consumers of newsprint probably believed, the Russian public had little ability to alter this situation. Concerned Russians enthusiastically called for foreign interventions, but these same subjects time and again failed to come up with the cash to fund such expeditions, a pattern that enabled the tsarist regime to minimize its humanitarian obligations beyond the empire's borders.

## CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation argues that the Russian autocracy welcomed the idea of private aid in war as a means for involving educated society in the maintenance of the empire's well-being. This project began with Elena Pavlovna's endeavor to dispatch nurses in the Crimean War to care for the wounded. Following this conflict, Pirogov and others publicized accounts of these nurses' feats to convince elite Russia to embrace the idea of women working alongside men in military medicine. In this case, the Russian autocracy took the initiative in establishing a voluntary patriotic organization, and members of educated Russia worked to give this nursing order a permanent peacetime role in military medicine. Soon after the Crimean conflict, numerous European powers adopted the Geneva Convention of 1864, an international compact that established guidelines for treating the wounded and promised aid societies a place in wartime relief. Even though tsarist officialdom expressed concerns about opening the battlefield to civilian aid workers, subjects within the court persuaded Alexander II to join this compact and create an official aid society for the empire. For the Romanovs, the Red Cross provided an opportunity to demonstrate publicly the ruling family's benevolence. This organization also created a means to involve educated society in the autocracy's moral imperative to aid the empire's needy.

In the 1870s, the Red Cross began to experiment with peacetime measures to promote the health of the empire in order to gain publicity and display the Romanovs' generosity. Since the Red Cross was associated with the autocracy, it offered this organization's members a degree of freedom from state agencies to test new projects,

whether they be temporary hospitals to treat peasants or public campaigns to deliver food to famine-stricken regions. The Red Cross often suffered internal tensions over what its true mission should be, and nearly all of the peacetime activities the tsarist humanitarians devised had secondary military applications. Some initiatives enjoyed modest success in delivering aid, in part because the empire was poor and rival aid organizations were underdeveloped. The Red Cross's expansion in the years after the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 reveals that a group of elite tsarist subjects found participation in these endeavors worthwhile and exciting.

When Russia waged the Russo-Turkish and the Russo-Japanese Wars, educated society initially supported the Red Cross with donations and volunteers, so long as the press delivered positive news from the front. In both of these conflicts, the Red Cross overcommitted its resources, and the state had to intervene to subsidize and direct private aid work. The military certainly resented enthusiastic volunteers interfering with armies at the front, but, despite the Ministry of War's best efforts to reform its medical services, Russian troops always lacked the necessary supply of doctors, hospital beds, and ambulances in wartime. The regime's decisions to give the empire's aid society a role in war show that statesmen and war planners begrudgingly recognized that Red Cross relief work was needed to protect Russia's conscript soldiers. Still, as the Red Cross's role in war increased in importance, the autocracy grasped this organization more firmly in its own hands and deprived educated society and the army voices in this aid society's structure or operations. Hence, it became increasingly obvious to everyone that "private aid" had become "autocratic aid."

The Red Cross's campaign to relieve peasants during the famines of 1891-92 exposed the organization to new doubts after the Russo-Turkish War. In the famine-relief campaign, Tsarevich Nicholas oversaw the Special Committee tasked with coordinating relief work between the state and private charities, one of which was the Red Cross. Despite considerable efforts by the state and Special Committee to deliver aid, the Old Regime failed to convince many Russians that the autocracy was the best instrument to oversee the empire's welfare. Even though the Red Cross's endowment continued to grow in the 1890s, this organization struggled with mobilizing outside support for peacetime missions. Nicholas II attempted to blot this stain by spending his personal funds on famine-relief campaigns in the late 1890s, but vocal critics of the Red Cross instead wanted a Russia that would not need the Romanovs' charity to survive.

Educated society demanded greater oversight, transparency, and competent leadership before it would embrace the Red Cross. Still, the idea of a national aid society resonated with many nonstate actors in tsarist Russia. As soon as the empire found itself at war with Japan in 1904, members of the zemstvos organized a parallel national aid society to benefit Russia's soldiers in the Far East. This institution, the General Zemstvo Organization, continued to operate alongside the Red Cross during the famine relief campaigns that followed the Revolution of 1905. For the planners of the GZO, addressing the empire's greatest problems offered a means to win popular backing for the zemstvos' role in empire-wide politics. For the Red Cross, the zemstvos decision to take on a role in peacetime aid work probably came as a welcome reprieve for an exhausted voluntary organization. The autocracy tolerated the GZO's efforts at famine relief during the brief constitutional experiment in Russian after the October Manifesto and Duma elections of 1905 and then quickly put an end to this

organization's aspirations of grandeur on the empire-wide stage. Still, military mobilization plans for medical aid created on the eve of World War I indicate that state agents envisioned the zemstvos would participate alongside the Red Cross in wartime medical work in an extended conflict.

This dissertation suggests that the Red Cross's medical endeavors at home and abroad produced a paradoxical effect on many of its members. Service in Red Cross brigades created opportunities for civilian physicians to advance their scientific interests and authority in medicine. Red Cross doctors studied wounds, disease, and psychological ailments in war, and they published their findings in Russia's leading medical journals. But the benefit for doctors came at the expense of the Red Cross's rank-and-file, the nurses. Nurses in tsarist Russia suffered from cultural mores and budgetary constraints that prevented them from making the most of their medical talents. Unpaid, quasireligious nursing orders, the Sisters of Charity, often struggled to attract talented volunteers and financial support from educated Russia, especially during mundane periods of peace. At the same time, the Red Cross had to compete for educated women with the feldsher trade, which became increasingly feminine as the decades progressed, and the few spaces in Russian medical schools for women to train as physicians.

Since the Geneva Convention of 1864 enabled signatory states to participate in foreign conflicts as neutral aid workers, Russia used its Red Cross as a tool to promote the empire's benevolence abroad and advance the state's foreign policy ambitions. Too much humanitarianism abroad caused problems for the state's foreign policy ambitions, as Russia learned from its interventions in the Balkans in the 1870s that helped draw the empire into the Russo-Turkish War. In this case, enthusiastic tsarist subjects used the Geneva Convention

as cover to escalate conflicts in Serbia and Montenegro, efforts that ran counter to St. Petersburg's wishes to keep the peace in Europe. In 1877, Alexander II felt compelled to go to war on behalf of Orthodox Christians in the Balkans after it had become apparent that Pan-Slavists' support for the South Slavs only prompted more Turkish violence in the region.

These humanitarian interventions in foreign lands also enabled Russia to assert its position as a great power and use medical relief to demonstrate its benevolence to smaller nations. In all of the Red Cross's interventions after 1876, however, the autocracy carefully controlled the missions to promote Russia's image abroad without wasting the empire's resources or drawing it into a situation the Ministry of Foreign Affairs could not manage. Russians took great pride in the fact that they were the only European nation to provide humanitarian assistance to Abyssinia in 1896. And the tsarist regime had to affirm its great power status by providing aid to the Boers in the South African War and Balkan Christians during their conflict with the Ottomans in 1912. In all three of these cases, the autocracy oversaw the amount of aid dispatched and the workers chosen to travel abroad to ensure that adventurers would not besmirch the reputation of the Red Cross or Russian humanitarianism more broadly.

In August 1914, Russia entered a war it was medically unprepared to wage. Hoping to avoid conflicts between the army and civilian medical services, the autocracy placed all medical resources—military and civilian—in the hands of its own agent, Prince A. P. Ol'denburgskii, who reported directly to the commander of the army, Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich, and the tsar. Ol'denburgskii, who happened to be chairman of the Red Cross, privileged this organization, earmarking areas directly in the rear of the front as the sole preserve of Russia's official aid society. He confined similar medical organizations set up by

the zemstvos and towns to areas deep inside European Russia. Many Russians reacted to this conflict with compassion for the wounded. By the end of 1914, as many as ten thousand subjects had entered Red Cross nursing courses, and three years later Russia employed three times this number to treat the nearly five million wounded and sick soldiers in hospitals run by the Red Cross, army, and civilian organizations. And this war saw impressive medical innovations by civilian doctors in Red Cross service. Despite these achievements, poor management and organization ensured that World War I turned into a public health catastrophe for tsarist Russia and contributed to the political upheaval that overturned the Old Regime in 1917. Still, the concept of private aid or a national relief organization did not disappear with the autocracy after 1917. The Russia Red Cross continued to operate after the February Revolution and during the Civil War, albeit in slightly different forms, and, in spite of Lenin's initial suspicions, the Bolsheviks organized their own Soviet Red Cross, which continued the missions of training nurses and providing wartime and disaster relief during the decades that followed.<sup>821</sup>

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<sup>821</sup> A. D. Tiuliandin, *Z. P. Solov'ev, Predsedatel' Rossiiskogo Krasnogo Kresta, 1876-1928* (Moscow: Meditsina, 1980), 10-12; Hutchinson, *Politics and Public Health*, 109-16; Stoff, *Russia's Sisters of Mercy*, 44-53.

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