

The Russian Red Cross in War and Revolution, 1904-1907: A National Aid Society Confronts the Public

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 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 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 concessions in Manchuria than even Witte 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. 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.¹

¹ Dietrich Geyer, *Russian Imperialism: The Interaction of Domestic and Foreign Policy, 1860-1914*, Bruce Little, trans. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), chap. 10; Bruce W. Menning, *Bayonets Before Bullets: The Imperial Russian Army, 1861-1914* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), chap. 5.

This essay analyzes the Russian Society of the Red Cross's participation in the conflict in Asia in 1904-5 and internal unrest afterwards to shed light on the development of and challenges to associational life and civil society in tsarist Russia. My intention is not to explain 1917 or, as Joseph Bradley put it in his article on voluntary associations, to identify "what did *not* happen" to lead tsarist Russia 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, associational activities intended to supplement the state's role in protecting the welfare of its citizens.² Even though the Russian Red Cross was closely linked to the tsarist regime, this organization still fulfilled many of the characteristics Bradley identified as necessary for voluntary associations in nineteenth-century Europe or America with one major caveat.³

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 lazarettos in rear areas. On the surface, the Russian Red Cross fit most of Joseph Bradley's criteria for modern voluntary associations, but this organization's most peculiar feature was how closely its mission and leadership was intertwined with the autocracy and state. The Russian Red Cross's titular heads up to the Bolshevik Revolution were Empresses Mariia Aleksandrovna and Mariia Fedorovna, and many of the other Romanov women held honorary positions. The Main Agency (Glavnoe upravlenie), a board of

² 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).

³ 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.

directors, made up of twenty-five generals, high-ranking civil servants, and a few court physicians and professors, managed the organization's funds, institutions, and charter in peacetime. Board members were elected by Red Cross subscribers at regular congresses. Headquartered in St. Petersburg at 9 Inzhenernaia Street, the Russian Red Cross published a journal that contained annual reports, news from international conferences, and articles on medical and philanthropic topics. Each province and many cities possessed Red Cross chapters, which were often headed by notable local figures. Provincial chapters raised funds through membership drives, maintained nursing societies (*obshchiny sester miloserdiia*) to train women as nurses and to provide medical aid to the needy, and managed warehouses to store medical supplies needed for war.

By the turn of the century this organization possessed an endowment of six million rubles and a membership that numbered around twenty thousand dues-paying members, numbers that made it Russia's largest charity.⁴ The Russian Red Cross organization was supposed to be "voluntary" because all of its financial resources came from individual contributions or corporate donations from zemstvos, philanthropic societies, and parishes. Last, this organization possessed the legal right to protect its logo, the red cross, and wartime privileges of neutrality and access to the wounded provided by the Geneva Convention.⁵ All of these qualities place the Russian Red Cross within Joseph Bradley's definition of a voluntary association participating in civil society in tsarist Russia. And Red Cross advocates frequently remarked that their organization was a

⁴ M. M. Fedorov and V. F. Botsianovskii, *Istoricheskii ocherk deiatel'nosti Rossiiskago obshchestva Krasnago Kresta* (St. Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1896), 137.

⁵ See *Ustav sostoiashchego pod vysochaishim pokrovitel'stvom Ee Imperatorskogo Velichestva Gosudaryni Imperatritsy obshchestva popecheniia o ranenykh i bol'nykh voynakh* (St. Petersburg: V. Golovin, 1867); "Obshchestvo popecheniia o ranenykh i bol'nykh voynakh," *Voennyi sbornik* (July 1867), 108-120; I. V. Egorysheva, "Novye dannye iz istorii Krasnago Kresta v dorevoliutionnoi rossii," *Sovetskoe zdavookhraneniie* (February 1981), 57-60.

“private society” (*chastnoe obshchestvo*) participating in the associational life (*obshchestvennost'*) of the country.

But the Red Cross's close relationship to the tsarist state also challenges Bradley's paradigm for understanding civil society in tsarist Russia, and this anomaly caused trouble for the Red Cross during the Russo-Japanese War and Revolution of 1905.⁶ 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 increased the magnitude of violence armies could deliver.⁷ Therefore, the Russian Red Cross was hardly unique in that it was always under close preview 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 as well.⁸ 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 almost always voluntary, and Red Cross societies possessed much wider freedoms to choose which peacetime endeavors to undertake and how to conduct these campaigns. In many ways, national aid societies found themselves in a liminal position between state and society, and their responsibilities stretched between the different tasks public welfare asked during peacetime and mass mobilization demanded during wartime. If we view the Russian Red Cross not as a

⁶ This anomaly may explain why Joseph Bradley made no reference to the Red Cross in his recent monograph. See Joseph Bradley, *Voluntary Associations in Tsarist Russia: Science, Patriotism, and Civil Society* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

⁷ John F. Hutchinson, *Champions of Charity: War and the Rise of the Red Cross*, (Boulder: Westview, 1996), 27.

⁸ 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.

voluntary association, but as a quasi-public organization, a charity that outwardly claimed to protect the people's welfare while denying, under the auspices of autocratic privilege and military necessity, the public agency in the oversight of this organization's operations, we see the roots of much of the Russian Red Cross's trouble in 1905. Upset by reports of Red Cross corruption and poor performance in the Far East, the Russian public's demands for accountability briefly opened a window for the zemstvos to serve as protector of Russia's welfare. 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.

But the Russian Red Cross did not implode or disappear after 1905. As I demonstrate in this essay, despite structural handicaps and resistance from the military and many critics in society, the Red Cross mobilized resources on an unprecedented scale during the Russo-Japanese War and undertook new activities that expanded the possibilities for national aid societies to participate in future conflicts.

My second intention in this essay is to analyze 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 to represent the public's interest. Once peace with Japan had been concluded in early 1905, and 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 (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 precursor of Lenin'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 result did not signify the Red Cross lost since it never put up a fight. Instead, I suggest that the Russian Red Cross, weary from war work, may have been happy to take a step back from being on the hook for the public's welfare in peacetime.

The Russian Red Cross prior to 1904

Although Russia had a celebrated precedent for private aid in wartime - N. I. Pirogov had led detachments of nurses in besieged Sevastopol' during the Crimean War - Minister of War Dmitrii Miliutin seemed to find private aid workers' involvement in battlefield medicine a bridge too far in the 1860s. Miliutin addressed the first Geneva conference in 1863 by letter, warning the delegates not to touch issues of international law in the proceedings. Russia sent representatives to a second conference in Switzerland in 1864, the session that produced the first Geneva Convention, but the tsarist regime did not bother to adopt this accord for another three years. Miliutin, although he was silent on the subject, likely shared the same state-centered views on the military as many conservatives of his era: Military medical services needed to be improved to handle the demands of wartime; civilian volunteers, no matter how well-intentioned, served no purpose on or near the battlefield. But Prussian examples in the Wars of German Unification and pressure from humanitarians in the Romanov court persuaded Alexander II to join Russia to the Geneva compact by 1867.

The Russian Red Cross grew slowly during its first decade due to few opportunities to fulfill its legal purpose, wartime relief. Not until war broke out between Balkan Christians and Ottoman Turks in 1876 and Russia intervened to put an end to the bloodshed did the Russian Red Cross expand substantially in endowment and membership. Early international interventions met mixed success from the Russian press and public. Missions to the Montenegrins, participants

and commentators believed, taught Slavic brethren the benefits of Russian benevolence and modern medicine. The Serbs on the other hand expected the Russian Red Cross to outfit their armies with modern medical services rather than assisting the army medical corps already in place. As the war effort in Serbia failed, the Serbs bickered with the inexperienced Russian Red Cross, a conflict that reflected poorly in the press. Still, war with the Ottoman Empire over Bulgaria demanded the Red Cross supplement the tsarist military's medical services in the Balkans and Caucasus. During this conflict the Red Cross dispatched over a thousand medical volunteers to theaters of war and arranged a network of temporary medical facilities to transport and treat wounded and sick soldiers that stretched from the gates of Constantinople to Moscow. The Red Cross may have begun in 1877 with a modest endowment of less than one million rubles and limited public support, but, by war's end, this organization had spent over 16 million rubles on relief work and exceeded prewar projections in terms of its numbers of facilities, personnel, transportation, and patients treated. In total, the Red Cross operated hospital facilities for nearly 25,000 beds and treated as many as 125,000 patients.⁹ Despite Miliutin's initial misgivings about giving voluntary aid workers a role in war, the Ministry of War provided the Red Cross with monthly subsidies to support its operations throughout the conflict and occupation of Bulgaria in 1878.¹⁰

The military's admission of Red Cross workers to the battlefield did not mean that generals liked the idea of civilians intermingling with soldiers nor that Russia enjoyed medical success in the Russo-Turkish War. The same leadership failures that escalated the conflict and cost tens of thousands of lives undermined the Russian military medical service's performance.

⁹ *Rossiiskoe Obshchestvo Krasnogo Kresta, sostoiashchee pod Avgusteishim pokrovitel'stvom ee imperatorskoe velichestva gosudaryni imperatritsy Marii Feodorovny. Ocherk vozniknoveniia i deiatel'nosti Rossiiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta* (St. Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1913), 25-6.

¹⁰ RGVA, f. 12,651, op. 1, d. 40, ll. 9-10,30, 66

Miliutin had made reforming the medical services a component of his transformation of the army, but if military sanitation in 1877-78 were used as a litmus test, then the results of these efforts appear decidedly ambiguous. The Russians, eager to repeat the Germans' medical performance in 1870, failed to overcome the scourge of wartime epidemic diseases, the single biggest killer in major conflicts prior to Prussians' remarkable feat.¹¹ Tsarist observers and the historians that came later have 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.¹² Nikolai Pirogov toured medical facilities in Romania, Moldavia, and the Ukraine during the conflict, but he was powerless to stop a typhus epidemic. As a result, in 1904 the Russian public and military, stirred by unflattering press reports and disturbed by memories from a quarter-century prior, were much more apt to rebuke the Red Cross as amateurs who interfered with war-making and wasted donations.

Famine relief was a secondary activity that the Russian Red Cross slowly admitted to its purview. This aid society first contributed to relief efforts in Samara Province in 1873, but only during the great crop failures of 1891-2 did it put forth a widespread effort to fight rural hunger. During these campaigns, the Red Cross opened cafeterias (*stolovaias*), bakeries, and shelters in two dozen provinces and spent over 4.5 million rubles feeding five million peasants.¹³ The Red

¹¹ 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% of the men mobilized to illnesses. Russia suffered a fatality rate of 11% of the total men it mobilized for the Russo-Turkish War to contagions, which represents an improvement from the Crimean experience, where roughly 27% 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 P. F. Gladkikh and O. A. Kriuchkov, *Ocherki istorii otechestvennoi voennoi meditsiny: Meditsinskaia sluzhba russkoi armii, 1853-1905 gg.*, vol. II (St. Petersburg: Petropolis, 2009), 104, table 4.

¹² Gladkikh and Kriuchkov, vol. II, 91-2; 103-107, 111-112.

¹³ *Rossiiskoe Obshchestvo Krasnogo Kresta*, 44-45.

Cross repeated famine relief efforts on a smaller scale in 1898, 1900, and 1902. Although the public encouraged this type of work, there was always tension within the Red Cross over whether or not to engage in expensive campaigns to combat peacetime disasters. Crop failures struck Russia frequently and ferociously, and some members of the Red Cross feared that its squandering resources on peacetime endeavors distracted this organization from the original purpose: medical aid to sick and wounded soldiers in war. Still, efforts to improve or sustain the peasants' health appeared to Red Cross advocates such as N. I. Pirogov and I. V. Bertenson as worthy endeavors that won the organization new supporters and donations.¹⁴

The Russo-Japanese War

The Japanese attack on Port Arthur caught the Red Cross unprepared for war in January 1904. Prior to this time 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 public responded with large-scale donations for the war effort.¹⁵ 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, and later A. D. Obolenskii, 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,

¹⁴ *Osnovanie Rossiskogo Obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta i razvitie ego deiatel'nosti v period 1867-1875: sistematicheskii sbornik materialov*, vol. 1 (Kiev: I. F. Tupits, 1881), 272.

¹⁵ RGVIA, f. 16,731, op. 1, d. 16, l. 1.

and former military medical inspectors V. K. Anrep and V. S. Kudrin held positions on this board.¹⁶ 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.¹⁷ This managerial body oversaw the creation of independent sanitary brigades, it established a network of warehouses to collect and store supplies destined for the theater of war, and it outfitted railcars to evacuate wounded to the Russian interior. At first the military gave no instructions and asked nothing from the Red Cross, which forced bureaucrats in Petersburg and agents in the field to predict where shortcomings in the military medical services might occur.¹⁸ 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.¹⁹

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 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

¹⁶ E. V. Egorysheva, "Novye dannye iz istorii Krasnogo Kresta v dorevoliutsionnoi rossii," *Sovetskoe zdravookhranenie* 2 (1981), 57-60.

¹⁷ P. M. fon Kaufman, ed. *Otchet o deiatel'nosti Rossiiskago Obshchestva Krasnago 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.

¹⁸ P. M. fon Kaufman, *Krasnyi Krest v tylu armii: v iaponskuiu kampaniiu 1904-1905 godov*, vol. I, part 1 (St. Petersburg: Glavnoe upravlenie Rossiiskago Krasnago Kresta, 1909), 3.

¹⁹ Vasil'chikov, 157.

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. Last, 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 men 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.²⁰

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 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 help to locate hard-to-find items. Russia's local committees answered this call

²⁰ See RGVA f. 12,651, op. 1, d. 12, ll. 329-363 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.

quickly; seven brigades were formed and ready to dispatch by the end of the first week in February.²¹

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.²² 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.²³ The quality of the volunteer nurses (*volonterki*) varied greatly depending on the education level of the women and their commitment to the war effort. More than a few were wives and daughters of soldiers, or reputed to be unseemly camp followers.²⁴ In total, the Red Cross had nearly fifteen hundred women serving as nurses in its own facilities during this conflict.²⁵

²¹ M. Strukov, "K otchetu," *Vestnik Krasnago Kresta* 6 (May 1912), 714-16.

²² M. Strukov, "K otchetu," *Vestnik Krasnago Kresta* 6 (May 1912), 711.

²³ See "Uskorenyye kursy po uxodu za bol'nymi i ranenymi voynami pri Khar'kovskoi obshchine sester miloserdi Krasnago Kresta," *Vestnik Rossiiskago Obshchestva Krasnago Kresta* 29 (July 21, 1905), 437-440.

²⁴ E. V. Pavlov, *Na Dal'nem Vostoke v 1905 godu* (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.

²⁵ Pavlov, part 1, 371.

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 for hospitalists to staff its medical facilities, payments that would have seduced most doctors in tsarist Russia.²⁶ At the same time 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.²⁷ In addition to these physicians, the Red Cross sent 44 medical students and 83 paramedics (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 that private aid organizations had hired all of the best physicians.²⁸ Red Cross agents responded that without their help the military would have suffered an even greater dearth of medical expertise.²⁹

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

²⁶ 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 Nancy Mandelker Frieden, *Russian Physicians in the Era of Reform and Revolution, 1856-1905* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 214-15; 336.

²⁷ Pavlov, part 1, 370-72.

²⁸ Gladkikh and Kriuchkov, vol. II, 190.

²⁹ *Otzyvy Glavnoupolnomochennykh Rossiiskago Obshchestva Krasnago Kresta na Dal'nem Vostoke v rusko-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 Komissii: za 1904-1907* (St. Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1911), 10-11.

of all Red Cross volunteers in all of its interventions were orderlies, and they always suffered problems with finding competent workers on 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 cadre 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 sincere, but, for thirty-rubles, many earned such reputations as drunks, thieves, or hooligans that railroad gendarmes had to watch over them during the journey east and cull the worst offenders from the ranks.³⁰ Even a few radicals (*intelligenty*) passed admission and were exposed when they voiced their political opinions.³¹ One estimate claimed the Red Cross hired 1433 sanitars during the war and conscripted an additional 584 soldiers in this capacity.³²

One of the great sanitary challenges in the Far East was 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.³³ Although the Prussians in 1870 had demonstrated the usefulness of special brigades of stretcher bearers and ambulance teams, and the Russo-Turkish War 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 Russian Red Cross approached these deficiencies from two angles. First, they

³⁰ M. Strukov, "K otchetu," *Vestnik Krasnago Kresta* 6 (May 1912), 712-14.

³¹ G. P. Oleinikov, "Krasnyi Krest," *Vrachebnaia gazeta* 8 (1905), 229.

³² Pavlov, part 1, 372.

³³ Pavlov, part 1, 380.

purchased hundreds of ambulances and wheeled stretchers, and directly donated these vehicles to the army.³⁴ The second solution involved private aid workers directly intervening on the battlefield.

The most controversial type of Red Cross assistance came from the mobile ambulances or “flying brigades” (*letuchye otriady*), small groups of ambulances designed to operate at the front. 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 that 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 defensive needs in the Far East. Mobile ambulances could follow cavalry units on raids deep within enemy territory and set up isolated medical stations in mountains of Korea.³⁵ The Red Cross had deployed these units in the Russo-Turkish War with mixed success; when they delivered much needed aid outside of Plevna, it was because the military’s own dressing stations had either failed to show up or were overburdened by the huge numbers of casualties. By the Russo-Japanese War, the idea of civilian ambulances following armies into the field and tending to hard-to-reach wounded, while enjoying freedom from enemy fire by displaying the red cross symbol, was divorced from the reality of modern combat. Often the members of these sanitary teams became the victims of Japanese bullets themselves.³⁶ And the high cost of these units coupled with their long periods of inactivity caused observers and readers

³⁴ M. Strukov, “K otchetu,” *Vestnik Krasnago Kresta* 6 (May 1912), 725-26.

³⁵ “Iz zasedanii Vremennago Meditsinskago Obshchestva na Dal’nem Vostoke v g. Chite,” *Vrachebnaia gazeta* 18 (1905), 535; G. P. Oleinikov, “Letuchie otriady Krasnago Kresta na Dal’nem Vostoke,” *Vrachebnaia gazeta* 31 (1905), 863-64.

³⁶ G. P. Oleinikov, “Letuchie otriady Krasnago 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.

to cast doubt on whether the Red Cross should be deploying mobile ambulances at all.³⁷

Aleksandrov 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 the newspapermen made known widely.³⁸ 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.³⁹

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."⁴⁰ In the theater of operations and 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 and released or evacuated nearly 220,000 patients.⁴¹ 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.⁴² O. P. Oleinikov, an observer of forty Red Cross hospitals from Harbin to

³⁷ G. P. Oleinikov, "Letuchie otriady Krasnago Kresta na Dal'nem Vostoke," *Vrachebnaia gazeta* 31 (1905), 865-66.

³⁸ Vasil'chikov, 159-60.

³⁹ 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.

⁴⁰ RGVA 12.651, op. 12, d. 138, l. 38.

⁴¹ Pavlov, part 2, 4-5.

⁴² G. P. Oleinikov, "Krasnyi Krest," *Vrachebnaia gazeta* 8 (1905), 229-230.

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 satisfactory wine vintages.⁴³ 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, tapas, and caviar in Red Cross facilities, a diet impossible to produce on the military's budget of forty-four kopeks per soldier per day and highly unlikely in private aid facilities with their fifty-kopeks daily budget for food.⁴⁴ 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 was the sewing 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.⁴⁵

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 for 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.⁴⁶ And 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,

⁴³ G. P. Oleinikov, "Krasnyi Krest," *Vrachebnaia gazeta* 9 (1905), 247.

⁴⁴ G. P. Oleinikov, "Krasnyi Krest," *Vrachebnaia gazeta* 8 (1905), 229-230.

⁴⁵ M. Strukov, "K otchetu," *Vestnik Krasnago Kresta* 6 (May 1912), 722.

⁴⁶ M. Strukov, "K otchetu," *Vestnik Krasnago Kresta* 6 (May 1912), 716.

otorhinolaryngological (nose/ear/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 located bullets in wounded bodies.⁴⁷

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.⁴⁸ 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.⁴⁹ At first the Red Cross established twelve hospitals in the region for nearly two thousand beds, but 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.⁵⁰

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

⁴⁷ Gladkikh and Kriuchkov, vol. II, 193.

⁴⁸ *Doklad Ispol'nitel'noi Komissii Glavnago Upravleniia Rossiiskago Obshchestva Krasnago Kresta Obshchemu Sobraniuu chlenov Obshchestva 28 Maia 1906 goda* (St. Petersburg: V. Kirshbaum, 1906), 20.

⁴⁹ Fon Kaufman, 196-97.

⁵⁰ M. Strukov, "K otchetu," *Vestnik Krasnago Kresta* 7 (September 1912), 1195-96.

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.⁵¹ 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 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 soldiers who found no space in the army lazarettos.⁵² 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 over ten thousand times.⁵³ With the 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 Russian 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

⁵¹ V. B. Giubbenet, *V osazhdennom Port-Arture: ocherki voenno-sanitarnago dela i zametki po polevoi khirurgii* (St. Petersburg: Glavnoe upralvenie udelov, 1910), 205-6.

⁵² I. P. Balashev, "Otchet glavnoupolnomocennogo Krasnago Kresta na Kvantune Egermeistera I. P. Balasheva," *Vestnik Rossiiskago Obshchestva Krasnago Kresta* 2 (1905), 28.

⁵³ Balashev, *Vestnik Rossiiskago Obshchestva Krasnago Kresta* 6 (1905), 110.

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 intended to keep the remaining two thousand Russian patients in Japanese care, a ploy the Russian military doctors shamefully agreed to. Balashev threatened to leak word of this violation to outside powers and the press, and his insistence won permission for the Red Cross personnel 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.⁵⁴

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. 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 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 military transferred mental health care to 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

⁵⁴ Balashev, *Vestnik Rossiskago Obshchestva Krasnago Kresta* 7 (1905), 127-28.

psychiatrists that treated evacuees with psychological trauma. This program worked well, so the Red Cross established additional facilities in Chita, Omsk, Krasnoiarsk, Mukden, Gundzhulin, and other points.⁵⁵ 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.⁵⁶ 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 came from the Russian experiment in the Far East.⁵⁷

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.⁵⁸ A postwar financial report indicated that most of the Red Cross's income came as individual donations from private sources. The Main Agency 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

⁵⁵ 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 Krasnago 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), 555-599.

⁵⁶ Jacqueline Lee Friedlander, "Psychiatrists and Crisis in Russia, 1880-1917" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2007), 220-230.

⁵⁷ Richard A. Gabriel and Karen S. Metz, *A History of Military Medicine. Volume II: From the Renaissance Through Modern Times* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992), 237-38.

⁵⁸ Gladkikh and Kriuchkov, vo. II, 193, note 26.

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 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.⁵⁹

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 was coordination with the military. At the outset the military refused to give the Red Cross instructions for 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.⁶⁰ 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 only allowed to accept supplies from the Red Cross in cases of absolute necessity. Any exchanges required clearance from the Military Medical Department, which feared that material assistance from the Red Cross

⁵⁹ *Doklad Ispol' nitel' noi Kommisii Glavnago Upravleniia Rossiiskago Obshchestva Krasnago Kresta Obshchemu Sobraniuu chlenov Obshchestva 28 Maia 1906 goda* (St. Petersburg: V. Kirshbaum, 1906), 4-5.

⁶⁰ G. P. Oleinikov, "Kransyi Krest," *Vrachebnaia gazeta* 9 (1905), 244-45.

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.⁶¹ V. B. Giubbenet, the chief army surgeon in Port Arthur, expressed a 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."⁶² 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."⁶³ The impoverished army objected to the private nature of Red Cross aid and felt it could best determine how to use civilian resources.

Once it became clear to the Russians 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 1904.⁶⁴ 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.⁶⁵ 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 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

⁶¹ RGVIA, f. 16,731, op. 1, d. 15, ll.3-4.

⁶² Giubbenet, 205.

⁶³ Pavlov, part 1, 8.

⁶⁴ RGVIA f. 16,273, op. 1, d. 16, ll. 3, 21-2.

⁶⁵ RGVIA, f. 12,651, op. 12, d. 123, ll. 4-5.

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.⁶⁶

Within the Red Cross doctors often quarreled with the non-medical 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.⁶⁷ Professor E. V. Pavlov lamented that Red Cross agents began 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. Doctor Prussuen remarked that the Russian 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.⁶⁸ The Red Cross often assigned doctors to perform tasks they were ill-suited for. Unable to find surgeons to man mobile ambulances, Aleksandrovskii allegedly gave this duty to psychiatrists and hygienists. Mariia Fedorovna sponsored her own

⁶⁶ G. P. Oleinikov, "Krasnyi Krest," *Vrachebnaia gazeta* 9 (1905), 248.

⁶⁷ 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. N. I. Pirogov, *Voenna-vrachebnoe delo i chastnaia pomoshch' na teatre voiny v Bolgarii i v tylu deistvuiushchei armii v 1877-1878 gg.*, vol. 1 (St. Petersburg: Glavnoe upravlenie Obshchestva popecheniia o ranenyykh i bol'nykh voynakh), 351.

⁶⁸ *Trudy i protokoly zasedanii russkago khirurgicheskago Obshchestva Priogova za 1905-1906 gg. God XXIV* (St. Petersburg: P. P. Soikin, 1906), 30-31.

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.⁶⁹

To many participants and commentators, these mishaps were proof the Russian 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.⁷⁰ One doctor, fired for insubordination, complained that the Red Cross reduced him to "an errand boy."⁷¹

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 moral. The Executive Committee responded by enabling agents to fire any doctors they found unsuitable.⁷² The result was a rash of dismissals for charges such as cowardice, sedition, and scandalous behavior.⁷³ P. F. von Kaufman fired Doctor 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*

⁶⁹ *Trudy i protokoly*, 12.

⁷⁰ G. P. Oleinikov, "Krasnyi Krest," *Vrachebnaia gazeta* 9 (1905), 252

⁷¹ Dessler, *Vrachebanai gazeta* 15 (1905), 450.

⁷² G. P. Oleinikov, "Krasnyi Krest," *Vrachebnaia gazeteta* 9 (1905), 251.

⁷³ G. P. Oleinikov, "Letuchie otriady Krasnago Kresta na Dal'nem Vostoke," *Vrachebnaia gazeta* 30 (1905), 843; G. P. Oleinikov, "Krasnyi Krest," *Vrachebnaia gazeta* 9 (1905), 250;

otchestva 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 nor give donations to a charity outside of public control.⁷⁴

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*).⁷⁵ Public control (*obshchii kontrol*) was the only feasible solution to righting this slipshod organization and ensuring that the public donations (*obshie sredstva*) were spent in an appropriate manner.⁷⁶ 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 the public’s welfare.

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 (*Obshchezemskaia organizatsiia*, hereafter GZO) to unite resources and sponsor medical brigades in the Far East.

⁷⁴ “‘Krasnyi Krest’ v roli klevetnika,” *Vrachebnaia gazeta* 29 (1905), 828.

⁷⁵ G. P. Oleinikov, “Krasnyi Krest,” *Vrachebnaia gazeta* 8 (1905), 225.

⁷⁶ *Trudy i protokoly*, 32.

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.⁷⁷

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 position the zemstvos as the true representatives of public 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.⁷⁸

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

⁷⁷ 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.

⁷⁸ John Hutchinson, *Politics and Public Health in Revolutionary Russia, 1890-1918* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 112-15.

identify problems and suggest needed changes.⁷⁹ 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 critics in the pages of *Vestnik Krasnago Kresta* and communicated with the military on future war plans.

By an unlucky trick of fate, Nicholas II and his government enjoyed its greatest popularity in the moments after Russia committed to ruinous wars. 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.⁸⁰ Red Cross leaders encouraged zemstvos to go even further. I. I. Vorontsov-Dashkov, the president of the Red Cross, 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 understanding enabled them to enjoy the benefits to private aid workers codified in the Geneva Convention, such as neutrality and protection from enemy fire.⁸¹ 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. What the Red Cross did not want was inconsistent aid at the front delivered by untrustworthy actors. When a group of miners (*gornyi kruzhek*) in Irkutsk queried soldiers on

⁷⁹ RGVIA, f. 12,651, op. 1, d. 743, 1-2.

⁸⁰ Yoshifuru, 327, note 11.

⁸¹ T. I. Polner, *Obshchezemskaia organizatsiia na Dal'nem Vostoke*, vol. I (Moscow: Russkoe tovarishchestvo pachatnago I izdatel'skago dela, 1908), 5-6, 8-10.

their needs and delivered requested items, Red Cross agents dashed to root out this popular “separatism” and reminded citizens that all aid should be “under the flag of the Red Cross.”⁸²

For zemstvo activists 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.⁸³ To coordinate activities in the Far East, eight zemstvos formed a committee in Moscow 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. Pleve, 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 enacted this policy to keep empire-wide campaigns the exclusive preserve of the state out of concern that zemstvo coordination would 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 parallel institutions to the tsarist state. Pleve, however, was too clever to fall for this ploy; in March he demanded the delegates in Moscow cease all activities without permission from the MVD 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

⁸² G. P. Oleinikov, “Krasnyi Krest,” *Vrachebnaia gazeta* 8 (1905), 225-26.

⁸³ Polner, *Obshchezemskaia organizatsiia*, vol. I, 19-21; Porter, 77, 88-89.

representative 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 1904.⁸⁴ In the Far East the Red Cross put up few limits on the zemstvos, recognized their freedom of action and independence, and even offered them a seat on the Executive Commission.⁸⁵

The deluge of casualties during the summer of 1904 compelled Red Cross doctor 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.⁸⁶ As a result, zemstvo brigades 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 Pleve in July 1904. Pleve's replacement, P. D. Sviatopolk-Mirskii, took a hands-off approach in dealing with the zemstvos.⁸⁷ Greater freedom of action in the Far East enabled these brigades to unite with one another and pool funds without police interference. In November an additional six more brigades departed Moscow. Sviatopolk-Mirskii's laissez-faire attitude toward private aid empowered other groups, such as nobles' and merchants' organizations, students and faculty of

⁸⁴ Polner, *Obshchezemskaia organizatsiia*, vol. I, 16-18, 40, 73-4; Porter, 83-87.

⁸⁵ Polner, *Obshchezemskaia organizatsiia*, vol. I, 12-14.

⁸⁶ Polner, *Obshchezemskaia organizatsiia*, vol. I, 108-9; Porter, 107-8.

⁸⁷ Porter, 103-5.

Kazan University, and even a group of Odessa Jews to outfit sanitary brigades to conduct aid “under the flag” of the Red Cross.⁸⁸

Overall, the Russian 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 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 course of the war.⁸⁹ Zemstvo relief work won support from Red Cross leaders such as Aleksandrovskii and the Russian commander Kuropatkin.⁹⁰ Zemstvo brigades won supporters in the press, who remarked on equality between doctors, cordial attitudes toward the patients, and cheaper costs.⁹¹ 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 (*Nabliudatel'nyi komitet*) in the spring of 1904. This board consisted of fourteen members, some of whom came from the General Zemstvo Organization 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.⁹² Coming at the end of the war, there is no evidence that this reform 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. Society yearned for a role in the management of Russia's largest charity.

⁸⁸ Pavlov, part 2, 29; Valery Harvard, “Notes on the Russian Red Cross Society,” *The Military Surgeon* 20, no. 1 (January 1907), 4-5.

⁸⁹ Polner, *Obshchezemskaia organizatsiia*, vol. II, 408, 414, 451.

⁹⁰ T. I. Polner, *Zhiznennyi put'*, 67, 79.

⁹¹ G. P. Oleinikov, “Krasnyi Krest, *Vrachebnaia gazeta* 9 (1905), 251-2; *Trudy i protokoly*, 7.

⁹² *Vestnik Rossiskago Obshchestva Krasnago Kresta* 15 (14 April 1905), 232.

The year 1905 saw Russian society weaken the autocracy with violence and then force Nicholas II to concede to greater public involvement in politics. Peace with the Japanese finally came in August, but for the Russian army, demobilization brought no end to violence. Soldiers and sailors set their sights on authority figures and demanded improvements in the ranks and for the peasantry at home.⁹³ Medical professionals, long silent in political debates, stunned educated Russia by demanding a long list of political and economic reforms at the Ninth Pirogov Conference.⁹⁴ 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 in wartime.⁹⁵ 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 Main Agency of the Red Cross needed to participate in any policy discussions, so he recommended the zemstvo doctors participate in Vasil'chikov's proposed congress.⁹⁶ 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 during

⁹³ John Bushnell, *Mutiny amid Repression: Russian Soldiers in the Revolution of 1905-1906* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), chaps. 3-4.

⁹⁴ Frieden, 242-59.

⁹⁵ RGVIA f. 12,651, op. 1, d. 743, l. 6.

⁹⁶ RGVIA f. 12,651, op. 1, d. 743, l. 7.

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 led donors to feel that their donations were wasted.⁹⁷ Domestic turmoil followed by indifference prevented this congress from meeting for nearly another decade.

The master 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 1891-2, 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, Prince L’vov met with members of the Red Cross’s Main Agency to discuss another coordinated campaign to target rural hunger. The Red Cross encouraged the zemstvos to carry out relief work “under its flag,” a status that provided the GZO with the ability to pool resources between provinces and entitled the zemstvos to ship freight on state-owned railroads at discounted prices.⁹⁸ Wartime necessity had compelled

⁹⁷ RGVIA f. 12,651, op. 1, d. 743, l. 16.

⁹⁸ 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.

the GZO to coordinate with the Red Cross, but this time Red Cross intervention in the zemstvos' activities prompted provincial activists to cry foul.

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. 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 Agency of the Red Cross, which admitted the GZO to operate under its flag and pledged not to interfere with the zemstvos' famine relief efforts.⁹⁹ Maria 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.¹⁰⁰ Further discussions centered on how to coordinate activities between the two institutions so aid work did not overlap and how to enable the zemstvos to enjoy the same shipping discounts on rail freight that the Red Cross enjoyed.¹⁰¹ Over the next year and a half, governing members of the Red Cross and the leaders of the GZO met at least 98 times to coordinate famine relief activities.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Porter, 177-79.

¹⁰⁰ RGIA, f. 1482, op. 1, d. 20, l. 9.

¹⁰¹ 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.

¹⁰² "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 uezd levels. In the counties and villages, activists sought help from teachers, priests, and rural elites to oversee the canteens. The Red Cross set up 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 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.¹⁰³ The Red Cross alarmed zemstvo advocates by dispatching an 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 their activities. If a degree of mistrust or concern between the two was understandable, bureaucratic interference in this campaign should not be overstated.¹⁰⁴

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.¹⁰⁵ 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 out.¹⁰⁶ Last, 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

¹⁰³ RGIA, f. 1482, op. 1, d. 20, l. 13,16.

¹⁰⁴ RGIA, f. 1482, op. 1, d. 20, ll. 49-50.

¹⁰⁵ RGIA, f. 1482, op. 1, d. 1, l. 45, 48.

¹⁰⁶RGIA, f. 1482, op. 1, d. 1, l. 72-3.

operating hospitals at the Battle of Shaho, and, when L'vov pleaded that they needed the funds to continue work in provinces, the Red Cross forwarded the sum.¹⁰⁷

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 Count Witte for one million rubles each. The Ministry of Internal Affairs distributed the overwhelming majority of aid, 35 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 members of the public had for this organization in the wake of the Russo-Japanese War.¹⁰⁸ 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 Agency. 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.

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

¹⁰⁷ RGIA, f. 1482, op. 1, d. 1. l. 90-91.

¹⁰⁸ "Obzor literatury i periodicheskoi pečati," *Vestnik Krasnago 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 Rossiiskago Obshchestva Krasnago 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.

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 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 Agency 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 provinces receiving the most aid.¹⁰⁹ One estimate claimed the Red Cross provided 358,086 meals per day from October 1906 to July 1907.¹¹⁰ 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 1906.¹¹¹

On the ground, the Red Cross work mirrored efforts in 1891-2 to combat hunger among the neediest strata of the population. The Main Agency instructed provincial chapters to appoint village (*sel'skie*) and hamlet (*uchastkovye*) 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 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.¹¹² Aid work targeted women, children, and the elderly, who were ineligible for seed loans from the Ministry of

¹⁰⁹ *Otchet*, 8-9. Later, this report stated that the Red Cross spent 6,931,495 rubles in 1906, see pp. 818-19.

¹¹⁰ *Otchet*, 832.

¹¹¹ Porter, 186.

¹¹² "Obzor literatury i periodicheskoi pechati," *Vestnik Krasnogo Kresta* (January 1907), 73.

Internal Affairs. The Red Cross preferred to feed the population in cafeterias because these institutions provided better control over whom received the 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 working for 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.¹¹³

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 death 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 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

¹¹³ *Otchet*, 254-59.

took the lead in handing out free meals in Samara province in 1906: By the end of the year, the Red Cross operated 1178 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 1906.¹¹⁴

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 seven million rubles, and only 2.5 million of this amount came from state subsidies.¹¹⁵ 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. Petr Stolypin may have viewed the GZO as an appropriate organ of civil society by 1906 and one that the Kadets in the Second Duma, the party the minister of interior sought support from, 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.¹¹⁶ The zemstvo men also succeeded in wooing American donors to their cause, but American Red Cross activists seemed to have cooled to their Russian colleagues in the wake of pogroms in Kishinev and allegations of doubtful accounting practices during the war, since they only received nine thousand dollars from the American Red Cross.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ G. A. Tobiznen, "Doklad Glavnoupolnomohcennogo Krasnogo Kresta po Samarskoi gubernii gofmeistera G. A. Tobiznena," *Vestnik Krasnogo Kresta* (February 1907), 41-50.

¹¹⁵ *Otchet*, 819.

¹¹⁶ Porter, 206-11.

¹¹⁷ See for example, "Letter From Montgomery Schuyler to Elihu Root, Secretary of War, December 10, 1907," Russia Famine – 1907, National Archives of the United States, College Park, MD, ARNC Collection, Box 59; *Vestnik Krasnogo Kresta* (April 1908), 13.

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.¹¹⁸ 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 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 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.¹¹⁹ With no political agenda to prove, many Red Cross activists probably felt relief that three years of hardship were coming to an end. The Red Cross's lengthy post-famine report did not shy away from the fact that the GZO took the lead in efforts in civilian relief efforts following the Russo-Japanese War.¹²⁰ The next major famine to hit Russia occurred in 1910, and, by this time, Stolypin's star had set and 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.¹²¹ A

¹¹⁸ V. V. Volkov, "Doklad Glavnoupolnomocennogo Krasnago Kresta v Donskoi oblasti general-leitenanta v otstavke V. V. Volkova," *Vestnik Krasnago Kresta* (February 1907), 51-63. "Deiatel'nost' vrachebno-pitatel'nogo otriada, komandirovannogo v Akmolinskuiu oblast' Glavnym Upravleniem Krasnago Kresta v 1907," *Vestnik Krasnago Kresta* (October 1908), 17-27.

¹¹⁹ "Stolovye Krasnago Kresta v g. Saratove. (Sostavil po dokumentam zavedyvaiushchii stolovymi voennymi vrach V. V. Zaglukhinskii), *Vestnik Krasnago Kresta* (November 1907), 60-68.

¹²⁰ *Otchet*, 1-2.

¹²¹ Polner, *Zhiznennyi put'*, 103.

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.

To many zemstvo advocates, the famine relief campaigns of 1905-7 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 won this political organ a role in governance beyond the borders of the province or uezd. 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. This attitude may help explain M. Burdukov’s reaction to the GZO advocates’ arrival in Ufa province in the winter of 1906, when they refused to coordinate efforts with existing institutions and sought only to work according to a preordained program tailored to the region and their fixed budget.¹²² But the reluctance by the Red Cross to undertake anything more than a private (*chastnaia*) role also helps explain why members of the press cried foul whenever Russia’s national aid society failed to solve or even address its many problems.

The decade before World War I saw the Russian Red Cross’s journal publish many accounts that identified its shortcomings in the Russo-Japanese War, but the Main Agency undertook no restructuring to make this organization publically accountable. 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

¹²² M. Burdukov, “Ocherk,” *Vestnik Krasnago Kresta* (November 1907), 53.

doctor, published an article titled “On the Needs of Private Aid in War” that outlined the failures of 1904.¹²³ 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 still alive.¹²⁴ 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 responses to their critics.¹²⁵ The last peaceful years of tsarist Russia saw the Red Cross continue to plod along, 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.¹²⁶ 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 Russian Red Cross advocates such as Pirogov sought to provide an avenue for the Russian public 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

¹²³ M. S. Tolmachev, “O nuzhdakh chastnoi pomoshchi na voine,” pts. 1-3, *Vestnik Krasnago Kresta* (May 1908), 1-9; (June 1908), 1-11; (September 1908), 1-11.

¹²⁴ P. D. Dolgorukov, “Krasnyi Krest v mirnoe vremia,” *Vestnik Krasnago Kresta* (October 1908), 28-34.

¹²⁵ P. M. fon Kaufman, ed. *Otchet o deiatel’nosti Rossiiskago Obshchestva Krasnago Kresta vo vremia russko-iaponskoi voiny*, vol. I (St. Petersburg: Glavone upravlenie udelov, 1911); *Otzyvy Glavnoupolnomochennykh Rossiiskago Obshchestva Krasnago 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 oichete o deiatel’nosti Glavnoi Evakuatsionnoi Kommissii: za 1904-1907* (St. Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1911).

¹²⁶ See RGVIA f. 12,651, op. 1, d. 1079, ll. 1-2; RGVIA, f. 12,651, op. 3, d. 303, ll. 1-10.

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 world's most prominent national Red Cross societies at the turn of the twentieth century, the Russian Red Cross appears less a product of the tsarist regime's bureaucratic inflexibility to 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 the public 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 feminine and activist characteristics cast aside by Washington bureaucrats after the Galveston Earthquake of 1904.¹²⁷ 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 its aid society.

¹²⁷ Checkland, 8-11; Julia F. Irwin, *Making the World Safe: The American Red Cross and a Nation's Humanitarian Awakening* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 29-33; Marian Moser Jones, *The American Red Cross from Clara Barton to the New Deal* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 114-15.