

Natalia VOLKANOVA \*

**THE NOBILITY OF BESSARABIA AND THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR:  
FINANCIAL ASPECTS**

*- Abstract -*

On the basis of previously unpublished archival documents, the volumes, forms and ways of financial donations by the representatives of the nobility of the province of Bessarabia for the needs of the army during the period 1904-1905 have been investigated. It has been proved that the aristocrats of Bessarabia during the Russo-Japanese War actively rendered assistance to the army and navy.

*Keywords:* nobility, charity, the province of Bessarabia, the Russo-Japanese War, the Russian Red Cross Society.

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The study of the history of charity during the late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries is one of the important tasks of modern historical science. This topic is especially relevant when analyzing the turning points of history – the periods of military conflicts. It is at a time when the guidelines of society are changing that the question of supporting servicemen and their families becomes acute.

The beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was marked by a number of armed clashes, one of which was the Russo-Japanese War. It became clear immediately that the Russian Empire was not prepared for protracted military actions in the Far East. The war with Japan caused a patriotic rise in the empire. All strata of the society showed a desire to help soldiers in the Far Eastern theater of military operations and to offer donations. The donations of the nobility were particularly generous. The representatives of the nobility of Bessarabia did not stay out of this process.

The analysis of recent studies shows that various aspects of the charitable activities of the nobility in the late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries have found sufficient

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\* Izmail State University of Humanities, Ukraine (nvolkanova@gmail.com).

coverage in the scientific literature. In particular, L. Tsyganenko in her works analyzes the legal basis for the formation of the nobility of Bessarabia, the peculiarities of its ennoblement and internal stratification, charitable, entrepreneurial, trade and financial activities, etc.<sup>1</sup> The leading role of the representatives of the nobility in the creation and functioning of central and local branches of the Russian Red Cross Society is considered in the work of N. Honcharova<sup>2</sup>. Various questions concerning forms and methods of organization of nobiliary charitable aid for the war victims during the period 1904-1905 in different parts of the empire have become the object of study of E. Smirnova<sup>3</sup> and A. Chvikalov<sup>4</sup>. Most aspects of financial assistance to the army by the nobles of Bessarabia during the Russo-Japanese War have not appeared to be the subject of any individual study yet. Therefore, the purpose of the article is to cover the volumes, forms and ways of monetary donations by the representatives of the nobility of Bessarabia for the needs of the army during the period 1904-1905.

As noted above, the Russian army and its logistics were not ready for protracted combat operations in the Far East. For example, two months after the outbreak of the war, medical institutions were unable to provide adequate assistance to the wounded Russian soldiers for lack of beds, specialists, equipment and transport<sup>5</sup>. Considerable funds were needed for the organization of sanitary units, doctors' trips and preparation of hospital equipment, but the state lacked them. Therefore, the government appealed to the population of the empire to support ill and wounded soldiers.

Such appeals came not only from the government establishments, but also from the representatives of the royal family. So, on February 21, 1904, a letter from the Empress Maria Fedorivna, addressed to the chairman of the Bessarabian administration of the Russian Red Cross was delivered, where it was requested to donate money to help ill soldiers.

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<sup>1</sup> Liliya Tsyganenko, *The Nobility of the South of Ukraine (the second half of the 19th century – 1917)*, Izmail, 2010, 384 p.

<sup>2</sup> Natalya Honcharova, *The nobility of the province of Kherson in the activities of the Russian Red Cross in the late 19th – early 20th centuries*, “Scientific Works of the History Faculty of the National University of Zaporizhzhia”, Issue 41, 2014, pp. 71-76.

<sup>3</sup> Catherine Smirnova, *The attitude of the privileged strata of society of the Upper Volga region to the events in the Far East*, 2012, [http://www.superinf.ru/view\\_helpstud.php? Id = 5420](http://www.superinf.ru/view_helpstud.php? Id = 5420).

<sup>4</sup> Alexey Chvikalov, *The role of the nobility in the organization of charity in the period of the Russo-Japanese War (based on the studies of the province of Voronezh)*, “Scientific Journal”, Issue 6, 2008, pp. 89-94.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem, p. 90.

As early as March 6, 1904, in response to this letter, a charitable literary and musical party was held by the nobility of the town of Akkerman. The funds collected at it were conveyed for the needs of the Red Cross and the Navy. The second concert was organized on May 13, 1905 by such Akkerman noblemen as P. Diagelev, V. Brcheosniovsky, M. Yaroshevych. The finances from the concert were sent to the Far Eastern theater of military actions to equip the nobiliary hospitals<sup>6</sup>.

Since the beginning of the Russo-Japanese war, part of the nobility of the empire had united to assist the army. The materials of the report of the special financial commission show that in 1904 the aristocrats collected 268,054 roubles and 19 kopeks in cash, and the total received contributions were in the amount of 362, 554 roubles and 19 kopeks<sup>7</sup>. The nobility associations of the country were conditionally divided into 5 categories: the first – they contributed all the money (both appropriated and collected), the second – they only gave part of the declared funds and set the terms for further contributions; the third – they provided part of the funds, but did not limit the time; the fourth – they did not contribute anything, but determined the time; the fifth – they did not allocate anything and did not specify a time frame. The nobility of Bessarabia belonged to the fifth category and only announced the donation of 50,000 roubles<sup>8</sup>.

On the initiative of the provincial leader of the nobility, the prayer service “On giving victory to the army” was held in the building of the Bessarabian municipal council on February 12, 1904. On the same day, the convening of an extraordinary nobility assembly was announced on March 28, 1904 to discuss the question of the size of donations by local aristocrats in favor of sick and wounded soldiers in the Far East<sup>9</sup>. The meeting took place on the indicated day, in the presence of 49 delegates from the noblemen. The provincial leader of the nobility M. Krupensky offered to accept contributions only from hereditary noblemen, but non-hereditary aristocrats opposed, because they also wanted to take part in providing assistance.

It was decided to collect donations in the amount of 120,000 roubles. Out of this sum of money 10, 000 roubles were planned to give for the needs of the Red Cross (at the disposal of the fund of the Empress Maria Fedorivna), 50, 000 roubles – for the development of the military fleet, another 50,000 roubles – for the

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<sup>6</sup> “The Izmil Archives” Municipal Institution (hereinafter referred to as IAMI), Fund 770, Inv. 1, File 17, pp. 58-59, 135.

<sup>7</sup> “The National Archives of the Republic of Moldova” (hereinafter referred to as NARM), Fund 88, Inv. 2, File 87, p. 27.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 28.

<sup>9</sup> NARM, Fund 88, Inv. 2, File 106, p. 1.

incorporate nobiliary committee of assistance to sick and wounded soldiers, and 10, 000 roubles – for the purchase of various ammunition for the nobiliary hospitals in the Far East. M. Krupensky and H. Kristi were delegated as the representatives of the Bessarabian nobility in the Chief Administrative Committee. Each district announced the creation of local committees to collect donations<sup>10</sup>.

The planned amounts were collected almost immediately. So, as early as May 3, 1904, the Bessarabian leader of the nobility informed the emperor that the local aristocrats had donated 120,000 roubles for wartime needs. At the same time, it was requested to deduct 50,000 roubles from this sum to strengthen the navy. Mykola II thanked the nobility of Bessarabia with a telegram for such a generous donation.

In late May 1904, 10, 000 roubles provided by the Bessarabian aristocrats were transferred to the fund of the Empress Maria Fedorivna for the needs of troops in the Far East.

It should be noted that the charity activity of the nobility during this period was not quite an “ungrateful” affair. For such gestures of goodwill aristocrats received awards, privileges and certain benefits. For example, in April 1904 the Bessarabian provincial leader of the nobility suspended the taxation for war needs of aristocrats, who were the most active in charity<sup>11</sup>.

In addition to collective charitable contributions to the needs of the army, there were individual donations from some representatives of the nobility. The largest sums of money were donated by the barons Viktor and Dmytro Stuart (595 roubles and 27 kopecks), the noblewomen A. Lermontova (553 roubles and 63 kopeks), A. Krupenska (205 roubles and 76 kopeks), N. Krupenska (100 roubles, for which 38 warm blankets were bought), K. Frumusaki-Murzu (12 roubles), the noblemen B. Yanushevych (94 roubles and 41 kopeks), V. Navrotsky (50 roubles), prince D. Sviatopolk (26 roubles and 32 kopeks)<sup>12</sup>.

In the archival files of the National Archives of the Republic of Moldova there is a letter from the Red Cross administration to the editorial office of the newspaper “Bessarabets” with the request to print the names of the most generous philanthropists, such as Kh. Anush (600 roubles), M. Luchynska (25 roubles), A. Baznytska (5 roubles)<sup>13</sup>.

Among the Bessarabian noblemen there were those ones who gave their bank interest for the war needs and the like. For example, V. Muntian transferred the

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<sup>10</sup> Ibidem, pp. 17-18.

<sup>11</sup> IAMI, Fund 770, Inv. 1, File 17, pp. 112-116.

<sup>12</sup> IAMI, Fund 770, Inv.1, File 21, p. 119; NARM, Fund 88, Inv. 2, File 104, p. 96; NARM, Fund 88, Inv. 2, File 107, p. 56.

<sup>13</sup> NARM, Fund 88, Inv. 2, File 104, p. 21.

dividends belonging to him from the member capital in the Kyshyniv Mutual Credit Society (8 roubles)<sup>14</sup>.

During the war the representatives of the nobility also donated via signature lists to strengthen the nobiliary Red Cross detachments. So, in the spring of 1904, 153 roubles and 33 kopeks were contributed in such a way<sup>15</sup>.

In the archives, there has been found some information on the financial receipts of the Bessarabian noblemen of various districts. The funds were collected in an amount of 6 roubles and 50 kopeks out of every thousand roubles of the property value. The money was transferred by the district leaders of the nobility.

Thus, the donations of the noblemen of Bessarabia occurred in several stages. The first stage came in the spring of 1904. At that time the noblemen of Bieltsy district collected 28,539 roubles, Khotyn aristocrats donated 25, 220 roubles, Kyshyniv aristocrats – 23, 552 roubles and 20 kopeks, Soroky aristocrats – 13,709 roubles, Bendery aristocrats – 12, 207 roubles, Orgieiev aristocrats – 12, 012 roubles, Akkerman aristocrats – 3, 497 roubles<sup>16</sup>.

The next stages were not distinguished by such significant donations. The second period lasted during the summer of 1904. At that time the nobility of Bieltsy district made the greatest number of contributions (11, 267 roubles and 87 kopeks).

The contributions of Kyshyniv, Bendery, Khotyn and Orgieiev districts fluctuated within 4000-7000 roubles. The nobility of Soroky and Akkerman districts gave the least aid: 2, 772 roubles and 31 kopeks and 1, 700 roubles respectively<sup>17</sup>.

Thereafter, money was not provided by all the districts. So, the third stage was in the autumn of 1904. The aristocrats of Kyshyniv district donated 7, 773 roubles and 98 kopeks, Khotyn aristocrats – 6, 972 roubles and 70 kopeks, Orgieiev aristocrats – 2,389 roubles and 30 kopeks, Bendery aristocrats – 1, 570 roubles and 76 kopeks, Akkerman aristocrats – 826 roubles and 33 kopeks, Bieltsy aristocrats – 126 roubles and 32 kopeks<sup>18</sup>. Soroky noblemen donated nothing at all.

Later on, the number of those ones wishing to allocate funds for charitable assistance decreased. In the winter of 1905, only the representatives of the nobility of Khotyn (1,128 roubles and 5 kopeks), Akkerman (558 roubles and 49 kopeks), and Soroky (129 roubles and 31 kopeks) districts provided money<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibidem, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem, pp. 11-13.

<sup>16</sup> NARM, Fund 88, Inv. 2, File 106, p. 15, 163, 179, 182, 187, 191, 197.

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem, p. 265, 268, 272, 274, 287, 275, 316.

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem, pp. 320-328.

<sup>19</sup> NARM, Fund 88, Inv. 2, File 107, pp. 11, 27-28.

The last donations were made in the spring of 1905 by the nobility of Kyshyniv (39 roubles) and Bieltsi (28 roubles) districts (*See Table 1*)<sup>20</sup>. In total, during the period 1904-1905, the noblemen from the province of Bessarabia contributed money for an overall amount of 181,996 roubles and 62 kopeks.

It should be noted that not all Bessarabian noblemen showed their consciousness in the matter of donation. For example, there was some information that the nobleman D. Yeremiia was to pay his contribution of 274 roubles, but he avoided donating in a variety of ways<sup>21</sup>.

Some of the collected funds were not sent directly to the Red Cross. So, in April 1905 the House of Labor in Kyshyniv received 103 roubles and 50 kopeks from the Bessarabian nobility for sewing, washing and transporting things for the nobiliary Red Cross detachments<sup>22</sup>.

At the end of the summer of 1905 the nobiliary sanitary unit of the Red Cross, for the needs of which the funds were received from the Bessarabian aristocrats, was liquidated. The money remaining on its account was decided to deposit at interest. This capital was planned to use for helping families of soldiers who had died during the Russo-Japanese War. For this purpose, on September 7, 1905, the Bessarabian leader of the nobility proposed to send 20,000 roubles left from the donations of the Bessarabian aristocrats to the cashier's office of the Moscow deputy assembly<sup>23</sup>.

Due to the end of the war and because of the reduction of donations, on January 3, 1906 the provincial administration decided to stop collecting contributions via signature lists, and the funds that had already been received were decided to leave for the future, for the needs of wartime<sup>24</sup>.

Thus, the nobility of the province of Bessarabia during the Russo-Japanese War actively rendered financial assistance to the army and navy. Their charity was both public and private. The money was donated individually, by means of signature lists, by organizing concerts, transferring dividends and charging interest on the war from the property value. This was one of many types of the charity activity of the Bessarabian aristocrats during the Russo-Japanese War, which requires further detailed study.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibidem, p. 62, 68.

<sup>21</sup> NARM, Fund 88, Inv. 2, File 106, p. 206.

<sup>22</sup> NARM, Fund 88, Inv. 2, File 107, p. 38.

<sup>23</sup> Ibidem, p. 78, 152.

<sup>24</sup> IAMI, Fund 770, Inv.1, File 21, p. 121.

**Table 1**  
**Monetary contributions of the nobility of the province of Bessarabia**  
**(1904-1905)**

District		Spring 1904	Summer 1904	Autumn 1904	Winter 1905	Spring 1905 p.
1.	Akkerman	3 497 rub.	1 700 rub.	826 rub. 33 kop.	558 rub. 49 kop.	–
2.	Bieltsi	28 539 rub.	11 267 rub. 87 kop.	126 rub. 32 kop.	–	28 rub.
3.	Bendery	12 207 rub.	6 286 rub. 1 kop.	1 570 rub. 76 kop.	–	–
4.	Kyshyniv	23 552 rub. 20 kop.	7 843 rub. 34 kop.	7 773 rub. 98 kop.	–	39 rub.
5.	Orgieiev	12 012 rub.	4 419 rub. 95 kop.	2 389 rub. 30 kop.	–	–
6.	Soroky	13 709 rub.	2 772 rub. 31 kop.	–	129 rub. 31 kop.	–
7.	Khotyn	25 220 rub.	7 428 rub. 25 kop.	6 972 rub. 70 kop.	1 128 rub. 5 kop.	–
<b>Total</b>		<b>118 736 rub. 20 kop.</b>	<b>41 717 rub. 73 kop.</b>	<b>19 659 rub. 39 kop.</b>	<b>1 816 rub. 30 kop.</b>	<b>67 rub.</b>