

## The history of the work of the Russian Red Cross Society's local branches in Manchuria

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On the basis of archival documents, the formation process and activities of the local branches of the Russian Red Cross Society (RRCS) in Manchuria are examined. The branches were created in the late 19th to early 20th centuries during a period when the Russian Empire, as well as other countries, pursued an expansionist policy toward China. The first organizations emerged in Port Arthur and Dalian after Russia received a lease on the Kwantung Peninsula in 1898. They were engaged in collecting funds, opening hospitals and organizing nursing societies. In connection with the beginning of the Boxer Rebellion in China, which Russia participated in suppressing, and the unpreparedness of the RRCS leadership to quickly expand its activities in this regard, the work of local organizations was very important. After the Russian-Japanese War and the resulting loss of Kwantung, they ceased to exist.

In this regard, the role of the Harbin branch grew. It was established in 1901 in this city which had become the center of the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER) under construction. Founded during the Boxer Rebellion, the Harbin branch of the RRCS was considered to be provisional by the society – it existed for about 20 years. For most of its history, it was headed by Camille Horvath, the wife of CER's head, D.L. Horvath, and daughter of the famous Russian artist and architect A.N. Benois.

The local Red Cross organizations in Manchuria were quite active – both during the periods of military operations in which Russia participated and in peacetime. This can be explained, first of all, due to a sense of ethnic and religious solidarity among the Russian population living in a foreign civilization and cultural sphere. In addition, the financial means of the local Russian officials, military members, railway workers, and a large number of representatives of the business class was much higher than in European Russia.

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The beginning of the activities of the local offices of the Russian Red Cross Society (RRCS) in Manchuria dates back to the end of the 19th century, when the Russian Empire, along with some other countries, began its Far Eastern policy in the conditions of the recession in China. It was predominantly demonstrated by economic expansion. In 1896, Russia and China, which had been defeated in the First Sino-Japanese War, signed a treaty of defensive alliance against Japan, and a pact to build the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER) in Manchuria. The adjoining 15-miles wide territory was given to Russia.

Later that extraterritorial zone got the name “CER lineside”. The subject of the activities of the Special Forces sent by the Head Office of the RRCS to Manchuria in case of emerging military conflicts involving the Russian Army or the need to fight epidemics is quite well researched in the domestic historiography [1, 2]. At the same time, the activities of the local offices of the Red Cross, comprising the Russians living in the Russian subject territory in China remain obscure.

In March 1898, the Convention for the Lease of the Liaotung Peninsula was signed in Beijing. The Convention granted Russia the 25 years lease of Port Arthur and the adjoining Kwantung (Liaotung) Peninsula. On the newly acquired territory was formed the Leased Kwantung

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Territory. Right there, in Port Arthur, the first local office of the RRCS in Manchuria was created; General D. I. Subbotich, the commander of the Peninsula, was the instigator of the process. In the beginning of January, 1899 he wrote a petition to the Head Office of the Red Cross: "The isolated location of Kwantung insists upon establishing of the on-site office of the Red Cross in order to have everything necessary here in case of emergency which can transpire suddenly, for we have nowhere to expect first aid from".<sup>1</sup>

The emergency had already transpired by that time: The Boxer Rebellion, aimed against the foreigners and reflecting the discontent with the occidental policies regarding the Celestial Empire, was rising in the north of China. It is not surprising that the response from the chairman of the RRCS, O.K. Kremer, arrived quickly. The telegram regarding satisfaction of the request was received on the 20th of January, and the Kwantung local committee was established on the same day. D.I. Subbotich's wife, Olympia Ivanova, was appointed the chairman of the committee, and Maria Petrovna Reshetina, a doctor by profession and the wife to the chief of artillery, Major General N.L. Reshetin – her deputy.<sup>2</sup> There were only 11 people in the committee, but it immediately started its active work. According to the 1899 account sent to St Petersburg, public festivities with a lottery were held in April, with the view to collecting resources to help the victims of the crop failure in European Russia. The money raised during the event, together with the donations, amounted to a considerable sum of more than 8300 roubles which was then transferred to the Head Office to help the victims. It is also worth mentioning that in the same year the Kwantung office of the RRCS transferred 1800 roubles to Khabarovsk to support the impoverished migrants of Primorskaya Oblast.<sup>3,4</sup>

Unlike many local offices of the Russian Far East Red Cross, the Kwantung office's activities weren't limited to raising (albeit quite substantial) funds; they immediately took various forms. First of all, apparently it was to do with

the understanding of quite a difficult situation for Russia in Manchuria. Furthermore, there were financial possibilities as the committee comprised mainly the officers seconded to Kwantung. The mental attitudes of the Russians, few from the European part of Russia, where the traditions of charity had already been established, played a part, too.

During the first year of existence, the committee established an Urgent and Emergency training course which was attended by 16 people.<sup>5</sup> At the same time the petition for the establishment of the Sisters of Mercy community and an outpatient clinic on the Peninsula was sent to Saint Petersburg, and the appropriate preparatory work started.

In the meantime, the Boxer Rebellion in China had caused hostilities. Russia was amongst the 8 countries suppressing the rebellion. In June 1900, the RRCS administration organised assistance in helping the military-sanitary service of the Army, as well as the Russian population of the Far East. The theatre of war was divided into three districts, in each of which "a representative was appointed, who supervised helping on the spot" [3, p. 24]. The north-eastern part of Manchuria was included in Priamursky district. However, as events had shown, the Red Cross wasn't quite prepared to participate in that campaign. Its troops began to arrive in the Far East only in August, when the turning point in the conflict had already been reached and the threat to the Russian population had almost passed. The main reason for that delay was the problem of transporting the equipment and personnel such a long distance from European Russia. The journey by the then as yet unfinished Trans-Siberian Railway from Saint Petersburg to Vladivostok used to take almost a month. The wide network of local offices of the Red Cross which would have had hospitals run by the Sisters of Mercy communities was absent in the Russian Far East. The communities in Khabarovsk and Blagoveshchensk were few and poorly equipped. That's why the RRCS administration was interested in the earliest possible establishment of the organisations of the Red Cross in those parts of Manchuria where Russians lived.

<sup>1</sup> Russian State Military Historical Archives (RGVIA). F. 12651. Op. 3. D. 197. L. 1.

<sup>2</sup> RGVIA. F. 12651. Op. 3. D. 197. L. 5.

<sup>3</sup> RGVIA. F. 12651. Op. 1. D. 374. L. 3.

<sup>4</sup> The term "oblast" (Russian: "область") is analogous to "province" or "state".

<sup>5</sup> RGVIA. F. 12651. Op. 1. D. 374. L. 4.

Having received the petition from the Kwantung committee, the Head Office quickly made a decision and allotted 3000 roubles. The committee, comprising 94 people by the 1st of January 1900, in turn, raised almost 6000 roubles “for accommodating, furnishing and compensating the travel expenses of the requested Sisters”.<sup>6</sup> At D.I. Subbotich’s direction the Military Engineering Office gave the Society two houses free of charge, and later a piece of land outside the city walls was allocated to the Society, on which a one-storey communal building with outbuildings was erected in a short time<sup>7</sup>.

The Sisters of Mercy community, named after Maria Fedorovna Mariinsky, was opened in Port Arthur in September, 1900. In her greeting telegram The Empress wished the community “Full success in the forthcoming works”.<sup>8</sup> Shortly thereafter was started the construction of a clinic by the community for 50-60 beds [4, p. 1].

Along with the Kwantung office of the RRCS, in August 1900, by the order of the head supervisor of the region, E.I. Alekseev, another Red Cross organisation – The Railway Red Cross Committee – was created in Port Arthur. It had quite a particular purpose – “accommodating of 250 sick and injured of the War Department within the provided by the Railroad premises”.<sup>9</sup> The committee was comprised mainly of the railway workers. It was headed by F.O. Hirschman, the chief of the Southern department of the CER, and the chief of the 3rd sector, A.F. Kiparisov, an engineer by profession, was appointed his deputy.

The organisation focused on collecting money. Around 10000 roubles were collected at the very first meeting which was held on the 14th of August 1900 with the participation of 22 people. That money was enough for the maintenance of the sick, “excluding the expenses of the medical personnel, medical handbooks and provision of hospital linens”.<sup>10</sup> The collection of money continued, and soon the required sum was raised. Apart from the railway staff (note – highly

paid), foreign companies registered in town, the Sino-Russian Righteousness Victory Bank<sup>11</sup> representative office employees and others were amongst the donators. It also bears mentioning Ji Fengtai – a very famous in the Russian Far East Chinese merchant who took up Russian nationality. It is also worth mentioning that there were several merchants – citizens of the Celestial Empire – amongst the benefactors.<sup>12</sup>

By the beginning of September 1900 most of the patients looked after by the committee had recovered and were discharged. With reference to that, the committee made a decision to help the Red Cross with the rest of the money by purchasing warm clothes, which evoked the gratitude of the member of the Russian Imperial House, Princess Alexandra of Oldenburg, who sent the organisation a telegram expressing her “heartfelt gratitude”.<sup>13</sup>

By the end of 1900 the number of people employed at the organisation had risen significantly – to 596 people. Fundraising continued. The funds, as it was decided, were intended for “the issuance of benefits to the injured and the families of the non-commissioned officers killed in battles with the Chinese”.<sup>14</sup>

In November 1900, in connection with the actual ending of the hostilities the chairmen of the RRCS were informed about the lack of necessity of the activities of the Port Arthur Railway Committee after the 1st of January 1901. It was closed on the 30th of December 1900. All the property and equipment were passed to the Kwantung office of the Red Cross.

In August 1900, in Kwantung province a local office of the Red Cross was established in the city of Dalian, built by the Russians in 1898. V.V. Sakharov was appointed its chairman. A week after it was created, the committee, with permission from the Head Office, organised the Allegri Lottery. It earned more than 3000 roubles, and 7000 were collected through donations. Such a considerable sum of money allowed the chairman V.V. Sakharov to write to the governing body of the CER, notifying them that “the maintenance

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<sup>6</sup> RGVIA. F. 12651. Op. 1. D. 374. L. 5.

<sup>7</sup> RGVIA. F. 12651. Op. 4. D. 99. L. 3.

<sup>8</sup> RGVIA. F. 12651. Op. 1. D. 374. L. 15.

<sup>9</sup> RGVIA. F. 12651. Op. 3. D. 218. L. 1.

<sup>10</sup> RGVIA. F. 12651. Op. 3. D. 218. L. 6.

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<sup>11</sup> The name of Russo-Chinese Bank from the 28th of August 1896 to July 1910.

<sup>12</sup> RGVIA. F. 12651. Op. 3. D. 218. L. 8.

<sup>13</sup> RGVIA. F. 12651. Op. 3. D. 218. L. 25

<sup>14</sup> RGVIA. F. 12651. Op. 3. D. 218. L. 31.

of the sick and injured may be paid for entirely by the Committee".<sup>15</sup>

Unfortunately, little is known about the activities of this particular office of the RRCS. The archival documents attest that by the 10th of September 1900 it was comprised of 45 active members. It is also known that there was a hospital of the Dalian Red Cross Committee there.<sup>16</sup>

A little bit later than in the Kwantung a local office of the RRCS was founded in Harbin which is the central station of the developing CER. Apparently, it was explained by the hostilities in Manchuria. In June 1900 the rebelling Chinese assaulted the railway builders and began destroying the finished sections; there were victims amongst the Russians. However, shortly thereafter the situation on the CER lineside was taken under control by the Russian Armed Forces.

At the end of August 1900, after the arrival of the troops formed by the Head Office of the RRCS, a hospital and a warehouse for armamentarium, linens and warm clothes were built in Harbin [3, p. 26].

N.I. Orzhevskaya, the former representative of the RRCS in Primorskaya Oblast, and A.L. Yugovich, the spouse of the chief railway development engineer, instigated the creation of the Red Cross organisation in the city. The first meeting, attended by 28 people, was held in January 1901. They elected the membership of the local department and appointed A.L. Yugovich the chairman.

It's interesting that soon after that a letter came from Saint Petersburg from the Red Cross Society (RCS) administration, informing that "the newly formed office is accepted as part of the RCS institutions, but only until the withdrawal of the Russian troops from Manchuria".<sup>17</sup> However, its activities continued. Ironically, the Harbin office of the RRCS was going to become the only one in Manchuria that would exist for several decades.

In March 1901, due to the ending of hostilities in China and the forthcoming returning of the RRCS personnel to Russia, N.I. Orzhevskaya passed the active warehouse in Harbin to the local office. Henceforth, that warehouse was used

to satisfy "the urgent needs of military hospitals", as well as the "military expeditions, mounted to pursue the honghuzi".<sup>18</sup>

During the first year of its existence the office focused on increasing the number of members of the association, as well as accumulating funds. By the end of 1901 it comprised 174 people paying membership fees and donating. Furthermore, the Harbin office, as well as other Red Cross organisations, organised festivities with a view to collecting money. In their report to the Head Office of the RRCS on one such event, held on the 20th of May 1901, the authors noted that, the Chinese, along with the Russian population of the city, also took part in the celebration. The profit amounted to 6000 roubles. It was said that that result "had graphically demonstrated that, in addition to the Russian population... the Chinese authorities and residents were quite supportive of the establishment of the RCS in Harbin".<sup>19</sup>

In November 1902, the post of manager of the developing CER was taken by D.L. Khorvat, who held the position up until April 1918. He was a man who, in addition to possessing vast professional knowledge, was also quite democratic in communication. According to Vs. Ivanov, a writer, the CER used to be called "happy Croatia" [5, p. 335].<sup>20</sup> Shortly thereafter the spouse of D.L. Khorvat became the chairman of the Harbin local office of the RRCS and occupied the post for many years. Camilla Albertovna Khorvat, the youngest daughter of A.N. Benois, a famous Russian architect and painter, was a well-educated and talented woman, extremely kind and compassionate [6, p. 9] and always conscientious in her duties.

In the beginning of 1904 the Russo-Japanese war started, and Russia wasn't prepared for it. As it turned out, the RRCS wasn't prepared either. As the society administration later admitted, "the possibility of a war seemed something distant, and its emergence on the Far East – impossible. Therefore, when the war with Japan flared up, it turned out that the Red Cross wasn't prepared for it, and its resources were far too insufficient for the upcoming colossal job" [7, p. 4]. It seemed

<sup>15</sup> RGVIA. F. 12651. Op. 1. D. 378. L. 8.

<sup>16</sup> RGVIA. F. 12651. Op. 1. D. 378. L. 13.

<sup>17</sup> RGVIA. F. 12651. Op. 1. D. 468. L. 1.

<sup>18</sup> RGVIA. F. 12651. Op. 1. D. 468. L. 1.

<sup>19</sup> RGVIA. F. 12651. Op. 1. D. 468. L. 2.

<sup>20</sup> Wordplay on his surname, "Khorvat" is Russian for "Croatian".



that the lesson of the military campaign of 1900–1901 hadn't been learnt.

By the beginning of the war almost all of the RRCS organisations were located in European Russia. On the whole of the Russian Far East there were only two Sisters of Mercy communities with their little hospitals – one in Khabarovsk and the other in Blagoveshchensk. The attempts of the Vladivostok local committee at establishing a Sisters of Mercy community in the city didn't get the RRCS Head Office's support in 1902.<sup>21</sup> In Manchuria, there was the Mariinsky community consisting of 18 Sisters of Mercy, 3 acolytes and a hospital run by the local Kwantung office, which also had one 15-bed field infirmary and the 300-bed-hospital equipment at its command [7, p. 4]. In the city of Dalian there was a small clinic, and the equipment for a 50-bed infirmary was stored in Harbin [7, p. 5].

As it was noted by I.P. Balashov, the chief manager of the Red Cross Kwantung office, “the experience of this war yet again confirmed the truth that a good Sister works wonders, and therefore should be prepared in peacetime. Sending such Sisters from Russia each time costs too much, besides, they have a lot to do at home...” [4, p. 7].

A few days prior to the beginning of the war the Harbin RRCS office organised preparatory courses for lower sanitary personnel; the first graduation ceremony for 64 graduates was held on the 9th of February 1904. Henceforth, “the activities of the office lay in manufacturing linens and providing foodstuffs to the food points established by the Red Cross on the troops' way. C.A. Khorvat opened a special workshop, providing linens and warm clothes to many Sisters on the front line”. The amount of money donated was truly enormous – more than 35000 roubles.

Furthermore, the local office attempted to expand the area of its activity. For that purpose local committees of the RRCS, which predominately had to organise and manage the food points, were created on six stations between Harbin and “Manchuria” station. However, the attempt proved to be unsuccessful, despite the committees' being equipped with “the necessary equipment and funds” [7, p. 778].

During the hostilities, the Head Office of the RRCS redirected significant forces to Manchuria. On the whole, at the experts' appraisal, “during the war years, the paramedics of the armed forces and the Red Cross paramedics together mostly overcame the task at hand, unlike other state institutions” [8, p. 61]. A certain contribution to the making of the decision was made by the local offices of the RRCS existing in Manchuria.

As it is well known, the war, despite all the efforts, ended in Russia's crushing defeat. Under the terms of the Treaty of Portsmouth, Russia renounced its rights to the Kwantung Peninsula lease. After surrendering Port Arthur, I.P. Balashov and the Japanese authorities signed an agreement which stated that the hospital run by the Sisters of Mercy community located in the city with all its property and land was the inalienable property of the Russian Red Cross. I.P. Balashov notified the RRCS Head Office that “it was inventoried and leased to the Japanese Military Office with the right of use in accordance with the patients' needs. Japan was obliged to give everything according to the inventory back”. However, it soon became apparent that Port Arthur was lost to Russia, and the former chief representative of the Red Cross proposed to “liaise with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to try and sell the aforementioned assets to the Japanese”. He assessed it at 400,000 roubles.<sup>22</sup> To his petition to the Head Office he attached the text of the agreement signed by him and Commander-in-Chief in Port Arthur, Lieutenant Colonel S. Saito. This document is a rare example in contemporary history of quite a correct agreement between the recent enemies. It stipulated that “people who belonged to the civilian population of Port Arthur, namely the Japanese not employed by the Japanese Army and Navy, people of European and American nationalities and Chinese could be accepted to the Red Cross hospital as patients”. However, the requirement regarding the civilian population wasn't categorical, as was shown by the following: “In case of need the local military department also has the right to help the patients belonging to their Army and Navy”.<sup>23</sup> The fifth paragraph stipulated that in case the Japanese side is unwilling to use

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<sup>21</sup> RGVA. F. 12651. Op. 3. D. 210. L. 27.

<sup>22</sup> RGVA. F. 12651. Op. 4. D. 99. L. 4.

<sup>23</sup> RGVA. F. 12651. Op. 4. D. 99. L. 6.

the hospital for the aforementioned purposes, “it is obliged to provide the guards and be responsible for their maintenance”.<sup>24</sup>

In May 1906 the RRCS Head Office approached the Minister for Foreign Affairs A.P. Izvolsky about finding out, through Russian consulates, about the condition of the hospital and other Red Cross property, and also if Japan was willing to buy it.<sup>25</sup> At the end of August of the same year Yu.P. Bakhmetiev, a Russian envoy sent to Tokyo, reported back that the Japanese government considers the former agreements null and void after the signing of the Treaty of Portsmouth. It had assumed that the Red Cross hospital in Port Arthur with all its assets was passed to it in accordance with the Article 5 of the agreement, and therefore it “sees no need to pay for something that is already its property”.<sup>26</sup>

However, the RRCS Head Office disagreed categorically, it informed A.P. Izvolsky: “If for some reason the Red Cross didn’t achieve favourable results by communicating with the Japanese government directly, it would’ve seemed the RRCS has the right to demand that the Russian government, which didn’t protect the interests of the Red Cross by amending the terms when signing the agreement, compensate its expenses regarding the situation”.<sup>27</sup> It was an unequivocal pointing out of the fault of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). Upon receiving the letter, A.P. Izvolsky entrusted the ministry legal advisers with analysing the matter. In mid-September 1906, in his response the minister for Foreign Affairs says that “the authorised people have deemed the Red Cross’s objections to the Japanese exactions completely reasonable and justified by the postulates of the Hague Convention of 1899, as well as the general meaning of the Article 5 of the Portsmouth Treaty”.<sup>28</sup>

Shortly thereafter the RRCS Head Office decided to second Yu.A. Yavdinsky, a jurisconsult, to Japan. Upon his arrival to Tokyo he reported that “the Japanese Red Cross has decided to lay hold of the property of the RRCS”.<sup>29</sup>

And so began the difficult and prolonged litigation. Finally, in 1908, the Japanese side decided to purchase our hospital in Port Arthur for 200,000 Japanese yen (approximately 200,000 roubles). The Head Office attempted to insist upon the sum of 230,000–250,000 yen, but, according to the opinion of Yu.A. Yavdinsky, exhausted by the long and tiresome business trip, it was excessive. Yu.P. Bakhmetiev, the envoy, empathised with him, of which he informed the MFA in a secret telegram: “I quite agree with the arguments of Yavdinsky, who investigated the matter on site, that any further insistence upon adding to the more than generous in the current events sum proposed by the Japanese could completely ruin such a laboriously organised deed. The Japanese don’t have to buy our property, and if the Red Cross Administration doesn’t accept their offering it is quite possible that they will decline the proposition altogether and the property will still be in their hands with no way of using it in the conditions of exorbitant repair costs and with no hope of ever selling it in a private auction for quarter the price.”<sup>30</sup> These arguments convinced the RRCS administration, and the appropriate decision was made in May 1908.<sup>31</sup>

It bears mentioning that the consent of the Japanese side was most likely caused by the change of the political course with regards to Russia. The two empires were transitioning from confrontation to cooperation [9].

After the Russo-Japanese war, the area of activity of the Russian Red Cross in Manchuria scaled down significantly – namely, it was confined to the CER lineside, where the only active local organisation was the Harbin one. It was included in the Priamursky regional RRCS office, and was still headed by C.A. Khorvat.

After the ending of hostilities part of the property owned by the Red Cross troops that came to Manchuria from Russia was passed to the local department. Thus, the surgical instruments from the Second infirmary of the St. George’s community were passed to the newly established Harbin infirmary, and the necessary equipment was given to the developing Sisters of Mercy community.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>24</sup> RGVIA. F. 12651. Op. 4. D. 99. L. 4.

<sup>25</sup> RGVIA. F. 12651. Op. 4. D. 99. L. 4.

<sup>26</sup> RGVIA. F. 12651. Op. 4. D. 99. L. 52.

<sup>27</sup> RGVIA. F. 12651. Op. 4. D. 99. L. 56.

<sup>28</sup> RGVIA. F. 12651. Op. 4. D. 99. L. 65.

<sup>29</sup> RGVIA. F. 12651. Op. 4. D. 99. L. 89.

<sup>30</sup> RGVIA. F. 12651. Op. 4. D. 99. L. 299.

<sup>31</sup> RGVIA. F. 12651. Op. 4. D. 99. L. 300.

<sup>32</sup> RGVIA. F. 12651. Op. 1. D. 750. L. 147, 163.

In April 1906 the Red Cross established the Warehouse Board in order to accumulate specifically packaged goods and medical equipment in case of war. That idea, based upon the experience of the Crimean and other wars, was first expressed by N.I. Pirogov. Apparently, the painful lessons of the recent defeat of Russia forced the administration of the organisation to remember it. Warehouses were being built in a number of far eastern Russian cities. In October 1907 the RRCS Head Office admitted the necessity of building a warehouse in Harbin.<sup>33</sup>

Overall, however, the attention of the Head Office for this region, apparently, was lessening due to the changing of the main vector of Russian foreign policy. But there were still Russian people living in Manchuria; moreover, the great economic possibilities of Harbin were causing the constant growth of its population. A Russian diaspora with all its inherent institutions – religious, cultural, social, etc. – was being formed. The activities of the local RRCS branch at that time were a reflection of the desire to reproduce Russian traditions in a foreign land and was characterised by quite a high degree of self-organisation. A good example of this is the history of the establishment of a Red Cross hospital in Harbin. It was passed to the local office by a group of doctors who opened a hospital for practitioners in the city, but were unable to maintain it. In 1907, the hospital and its outpatient clinic were taken under the Harbin RRCS committee's control, purified and began their work. They mostly catered to the citizens of Harbin who weren't employed at the CER. The railway employees had a departmental medical institution at their command, besides, their salaries were quite high. The poor and beggars constituted a great proportion of the Red Cross hospital's patients. Characteristically, three of the institution's practitioners – Shulyatnikov, Voskresensky and Akkerman – worked gratis.<sup>34</sup> As it was noted in the report sent to St Petersburg, "only with costless labour of the doctors working with the inpatients and non-paying outpatients can there be a possibility to create a hospital supported by the Red Cross's funds".<sup>35</sup>

However, despite the lack of money, the local organisation was still finding ways to expand its activities. In the same year of 1907 the Harbin office began preparations for the establishment of the Sisters of Mercy community in the city and immediately organised the "practical caretaking" courses which were attended by 8 people.<sup>36</sup> This is how the office explained its initiative to the RRCS Head Office: "Presently, an offer of such labour is absent in Harbin due to a scarcity of people who have dedicated themselves to caretaking, and the willing few cost too much for an average commoner to afford".<sup>37</sup>

The other innovation was the establishment of an ambulance service in the city. Its main purpose was to "provide the first aid treatment in the event of an accident on request of the police and individuals, and transporting patients from home to places of treatment for a fee". The money was gathered through donations, and the local Free Fire Society helped as well.<sup>38</sup> But the problem of insufficiency of funds still remained. In the meantime, there was also a pressing need to provide the hospital with proper premises and attract regular medical personnel. Thereby the Harbin office petitioned the administration to allocate 38,000 roubles. It was supported by the membership of the State and Military councils, and the honorary member of the RRCS, General Engineer P.F. Rerberg who visited the city in July 1908. He arrived to the Far East on official business, and at the Red Cross administration's request visited its local offices. In Harbin, P.F. Rerberg inspected the Red Cross hospital headed by C.A. Khorvat. In his report to the Head Office Rerberg said: "The hospital is quartered in a bad rented building, the patients lie closely and generally uncomfortably. Despite all that, however, the hospital has made the most pleasant impression upon me". He specifically noticed the cordial attitude of the staff towards helping the poor patients. The hospital fee wasn't high and there were 5 free beds, but at the day of his visit there were 9 inpatients on full provision. Nearly 90% of the outpatient visits were free. Rerberg was also impressed by the fact that not only the practitioners were tending to the

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<sup>33</sup> RGVA. F. 12651. Op. 1. D. 853. L. 34.

<sup>34</sup> RGVA. F. 12651. Op. 1. D. 801. L. 5.

<sup>35</sup> RGVA. F. 12651. Op. 1. D. 801. L. 5

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<sup>36</sup> RGVA. F. 12651. Op. 1. D. 801. L. 86.

<sup>37</sup> RGVA. F. 12651. Op. 1. D. 869. L. 7.

<sup>38</sup> RGVA. F. 12651. Op. 1. D. 869. L. 5.

patients free of charge, but they were teaching caretaking to 8 people as well. He also asked the RRCS administration to help the hospital financially and send Sisters of Mercy [10].

In 1909 the Head Office of the RRCS allotted 10000<sup>39</sup>(instead of the requested 38000) roubles to the Harbin hospital. In 1910 the CER passed a big piece of land (the former Prince Khilkov's stading) to the local Red Cross office free of charge. It allowed them to begin the construction of their own building.

In the meantime, the hospital continued its work, despite its modest capacities. Thus, judging by the 1910 report, it was visited by 5272 paying and 5164 non-paying patients.<sup>40</sup> The funds were still insufficient, and the necessary help was provided by benefactors. So, the same 1910 report shows that "the firewood for heating was donated by the local industrialist Skidelsky, and the community only paid for delivery".<sup>41</sup> It's worth mentioning that the industrialist, L.S. Skidelsky, was a member of the Jewish Spiritual Society of Harbin. His help for the Red Cross, as well as the help of the representatives of other ethnic groups and confessions of the multinational city quite fairly reflects the spirit of tolerance that was intrinsic to that "Island of Russia", at least in those years.

In 1912 the construction of a 38-bed hospital was finished. At the same time a hostel for the Sisters of Mercy was built in the same area [11].

The activities of the local RRCS office continued. They were carried out in the traditional methods of the society: fundraising, medical and educational work, managing medical institutions and the Sisters of Mercy community etc. With the beginning of the First World War the Harbin Red Cross hospital was re-equipped for 80 beds, despite the theatre of war's being far away from Manchuria.<sup>42</sup> A great emphasis was placed upon fundraising. During the first year of war the number of donations increased almost fourfold.<sup>43</sup>

The Russians weren't the only ones participating in the events organised by the

Red Cross. For example, in May 1916, in the garden of the Harbin Railway Assembly a ball was held in support of the local RRCS office, during which around 5500 roubles were collected. It is remarkable that, along with the Orthodox population of the city, there were also famous Jewish and Armenian businessmen, the Chinese and 16 Japanese companies amongst the donators. The valuables won in the lottery (a gold watch, a sewing machine, etc.) were donated to the Red Cross.<sup>44</sup>

The February Revolution of 1917 made certain changes to the life of Harbin: its public life was rapidly politicised. Just like in Russia, various political and public unions, including the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, headed by M.N. Ryutin, were being formed and legalised there. An unprecedented, acute political struggle was unfolding.

The last report about the activities of the Harbin office of the RRCS founded in 1901 sent to the Head Office dates back to the 20th of April 1917. The report states that, despite all the vicissitudes, the activities of the Red Cross at that time continued. There was still the Sisters of Mercy community, which employed 16 Sisters and 10 acolytes, and a hospital run by the community. Courses of wartime Sisters of Mercy, the readers of which expressed a desire to teach free of charge, were being organised, and it was decided to cover all the other costs at their own expense, which the Head Office of the RRCS was informed about.<sup>45</sup> However, it was noted that due to the sufficiency of money and "appreciating the current situation", it was decided to "abstain from celebrating at least until the autumn of this year".<sup>46</sup>

In the autumn of 1917, as it is well known, occurred the events that drastically changed the fate of "Russian" Harbin.

In April 1918 by the Council of People's Commissars' decree the Head Office of the Red Cross was abolished, and its property declared the property of the state. However, in Harbin, which had become one of the centres of Russian immigration, it wasn't easy to carry out the decree, despite the existence of the property concerned.

<sup>39</sup> Archive of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation (AVP RF). F. 308. Op. 35. P. 39. D. 47. L. 88.

<sup>40</sup> RGVIA. F. 12651. Op. 4. D. 434. L. 20.

<sup>41</sup> RGVIA. F. 12651. Op. 4. D. 434. L. 16.

<sup>42</sup> AVP RF. F. 308. Op. 35. P. 39. D. 47. L. 89.

<sup>43</sup> RGVIA. F. 12651. Op. 4. D. 434. L. 64.

<sup>44</sup> RGVIA. F. 12651. Op. 4. D. 434. L. 73, 74.

<sup>45</sup> RGVIA. F. 12651. Op. 4. D. 434. L. 69.

<sup>46</sup> RGVIA. F. 12651. Op. 4. D. 434. L. 68.



The Temporary Head Office (THO) of the RRCS, was created in 1918 under the reign of Kolchak, operating on the basis of the 1893 Charter. In March 1919, it was recognised as the International Committee of the Red Cross. However, the history of the THO wasn't long, and neither was the history of Kolchak's regime, after the collapse of which the organisation's administration moved to Paris.

Little is known about the RRCS's fate in Harbin in that troublesome period. It is known that the THO perceived the city as a territory included in its field of activity – to that testifies a member of the THO, B.F. Sokolov's supposed visiting Harbin at the end of 1918 [12, p. 240], although Sokolov himself never mentions the fact in his autobiographical book "By the Banks of the Neva". It is also known that in the beginning of 1920 M.L. Kindyakov, a member of the THO, attempted to find the resources of the Red Cross remaining in Japan and send them to help "the Russian refugees in Harbin" [12, p. 245].

From July 1920 the "Special Council of the RRCS" existed there, associated with the Red Cross Immigration Department in Paris, and the Workers' Red Cross was created along with it at the CER [13]. It laid the foundation for another, Soviet history of the Red Cross activities in Harbin.

In conclusion, the history of the RRCS in Manchuria is inseparably connected with the state's foreign policy in the region. However, unlike the local organisations created in Russia, that activity in the north-east of China largely depended upon the initiative and energy of the Russian population, primarily the officialdom, living there. Traditionally, the role of women was quite significant. The Head Office rarely interfered with that activity and only provided perfunctory support, with the exception of periods when significant RRCS forces would arrive to the Far East to participate in helping the Russian Army and, to some extent, the civilians. At times like that some of the armamentarium remained at the local offices' command. It was thus during the Boxer Rebellion in China and the Russo-Japanese War. It was precisely those campaigns that revealed the insufficient attention of the Red Cross administration not only to the work in Manchuria, but also in the whole of the Russian Far East. However, the situation didn't change significantly. Local activists of the Red Cross did quite a lot, and they had far greater financial possibilities than in European Russia. The financial possibilities of the Russian population, the well-developed traditions of charity brought by them and the feeling of ethnic and confessional solidarity in the land of a different civilisation and a different culture.

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