# ISSUES OF NATIONAL AND FEDERATIVE RELATIONS

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# **ISSUES OF NATIONAL** AND FEDERATIVE RELATIONS

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## **HISTORY OF RUSSIA:** NATIONAL AND REGIONAL MEASUREMENT

#### DOI 10.35775/PSI.2019.52.2.001 E. K. TABEIKINA

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## PATRIOTIC ACTIVITY OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH **DURING GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR (1941-1945)**

The work offers a historical analysis of the impact of the Russian Orthodox Church in the field of Patriotic movement during the Great Patriotic War. It is shown that in spite of three decades of persecution and exclusion the ROC actively supported the USSR Government in its efforts to defend the country from invasion with the use of all available resources. The ROC organized fundraising, supported the guerrilla movement, organized hospitals at the monasteries and helped to mobilize believers to join the fight for their Fatherland. The activities of the ROC helped to realize the necessity of normalizing relations between the ROC and the government.

**Key words:** Russian Orthodox Church, I. Stalin, clergy, Church interaction, guerrilla movement.

The Great Patriotic War was the most dramatic event in the history of Russia. Formation of patriotism through respect for the Fatherland and knowledge of history was really important. In modern conditions, when the issues of patriotic education of citizens and, first of all, of young people become really acute, formation of a respectful attitude to the history of the country, pride in the Fatherland, the study of examples of high moral and psychological mood of the people during the war is extremely important.

In this regard, the activities of the ROC in the field of strengthening patriotism are of great interest. Instead of exacerbating contradictions between the secular and the church that could have existed as a result of three decades of the state control, there was unity and the Orthodox, who made up half of the country's population joined the struggle [8. P. 51].

Metropolitan Sergius issued his message to «Pastors and faithful» the same day the German army invaded the territory of our country. In it he called on the faithful to protect the Fatherland from «fascist robbers» and urged them to believe in the victory of the Fatherland. Addressing the bishops' council in 1943 Metropolitan Sergius made the following statement about the beginning of the war: "We did not have to hesitate what position our Church should take during the war [9. P. 7]...".

During the first three years of the war, Metropolitan Sergius addressed the faithful more than thirty times, reflecting in his speech the key events of the struggle against fascism [4].

The position of the Orthodox Church in relation to the patriotism of believers in the USSR was of high importance to them, millions of them fought in the regular army and joined the partisan movement, continued to work in the rear. At that difficult time for the country, the clergy went to the fronts, participated in the underground movement, a significant number of soldiers and officers turned to the Orthodox faith. Many witnesses say that the Chief of the General Staff B. M. Shaposhnikov (who was colonel of the tsarist army) had the image of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker with him throughout the war. Religious feelings were repeatedly and publicly expressed by the commander of the Leningrad front, Marshal L. A. Govorov. At the end of the 1940s, on the way to the place of his service – the Odessa military district – G. Zhukov, when in Kiev, presented the Church with his "military" icon of Our Lady of Kazan [5. P. 21]. Repeatedly from the front, the command asked the clergy of the Russian Orthodox Church for materials with sermons for soldiers. In the besieged Leningrad, even in the most difficult winter, services continued in churches, which gave the faithful support and comfort. In addition, during the siege, there was an increase in religious feeling, and at the same time, prayers were added to the Liturgy for the victory of the Red Army and for the fate of the captives. Marshal L. A. Govorov also participated in such services, in particular, those held in the Nikolsky Cathedral, the command of the Leningrad front also attended and Marshal L. A. Govorov [9, P. 53]. The faithful Leningraders also resisted behind enemy lines. So, from October 1941 to April 1942, the 2nd Leningrad Special partisan brigade belonging to the intelligence Department of the headquarters of the North-Western front carried out daring raids behind enemy lines, causing huge damage to its forces.

Understanding the importance of the people's militia in the rear Metropolitan Alexy appealed to the faithful who had joined the partisan movement with a request to contribute to the victory over the enemy by all means. Through the headquarters of the partisan movement, the appeal of Metropolitan Alexy was received and distributed in the rear among the population and partisans. "Your agitlistok played a significant role among the occupied population in helping the partisans, and at the same time in the fight against fascism," wrote a soldier of the 2nd partisan brigade A. G. Golitsyn addressing Metropolitan Alexey [8. P. 53].

The persistence and strengthening of the patriotic activity of the Church community led the enemies to a state of rage. How else can we explain the increased bombing carried out on the Easter night of 1942? On this day, the Prince Vladimir Cathedral was almost destroyed. In the ruined city, donations have steadily increased. In the winter of 1942, they exceeded 3 million rubles, of which more

than 2 million rubles went to the construction of a tank column. More than 25% by the end of 1944, the amount of donations collected by the clergy and faithful parishioners exceeded 13 million rubles [8. P. 54].

Collection of donations and their transfer to the state and the Red Army became the basis of Patriotic activities of the clergy and parishioners during the war.

On October 14, 1941, Metropolitan Sergius called upon the believers "to help our valiant defenders with work and donations," but in fact collection of material aid started earlier, in the summer of 1941, almost all parishes began collecting donations in the form of money and valuables for defense. The clergy of Gorky, Kharkiv and Saratov were particularly active. It should be noted that the parishioners of Gorky in 1942 collected and transferred to the defense Fund more than two million rubles and prepared a lot of warm clothing and shoes. The parishioners also supported the issue of cash and prize lottery, which resulted in 35,000 rubles being transferred to the defense Fund for the Red Army. In the Saratov region during 1943, the parishioners of the Russian Orthodox Church collected 2.3 million rubles, and by September 15, 1944, an additional 1.35 million rubles were collected, about half of the cost was one million rubles, about half of the amount needed to equip the Alexander Nevsky squadron with six aircrafts [1. P. 71].

During the two years of the war, despite the lack of a certain legal status, the ROC showed real strength in the fight against the fascist invaders.

On December 30, 1942, Metropolitan Sergius appealed to the faithful to raise funds for the formation of the Dmitry Donskoy tank column. This initiative was supported by the entire Russian Orthodox Church. Fundraising was also carried out behind the enemy lines, and it is necessary to note the feat of priest Fyodor Puzanov from the village of Brodovich-Zapolye, Pskov region. He managed to collect donations of about 500 thousand rubles among the faithful and transfer them to the needs of the Red Army [2. P. 6]. At the appeal of the Patriarchal Locum Tenens, Metropolitan Sergius, the clergy and parish of the Cemetery Church in Kazan collected donations in the amount of 390 thousand rubles, which were spent on the equipment of a tank column [3].

Cash transfers from the parishioners required opening of a separate state bank account, the Government assisted in such opening which required an exchange of telegrams between Stalin and Metropolitan Sergius.

As a result, Stalin started the process of establishing relations with the Church. One of the reasons (as mentioned above) was an active patriotic position of the ROC. In the conditions of changing ideological work the masses were again considered as the support of state patriotism.

The Moscow Patriarchate was also assigned the role of controlling the spontaneously reviving church life in the areas liberated from fascism in the late 1942 and early 1943. For this purpose, up to half of all bishops were sent from the Patriarchate to local parishes.

As we know, the Tehran conference was planned to be held in the autumn of 1943, it gave hope for the opening of the Second front. To influence the allies,

it was decided to use the Anglican Church, the leadership of which repeatedly asked the permission for its delegation to visit Moscow. Such a meeting would deflect a significant number of charges against the USSR for the persecution of religious activities.

A new period of religious policy pursued by the USSR Government started after the reception held by Stalin on September 4, 1943, to which the Patriarchal Locum Tenens, Metropolitan Sergius, Metropolitan Alexy of Leningrad, and the Exarch of Ukraine, Metropolitan Nicholas of Kiev and Galicia, were invited. During the meeting, Stalin said that the Government would not prevent the formation of the Holy Synod. As a result, on September 9, 1943, Sergius was elected Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia by the Council of bishops of the Orthodox Church.

A week after his enthronement, Sergius received a delegation from the Church of England, represented by Archbishop Garbett of York. At the same time, the first religious publication in the USSR, the Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate, began to be published. It was decided to resume Church education, in particular, even before the end of the war, the Council of People's Commissars decided to allow the opening of the Epiphany Institute and pastoral courses.

During the entire period of the war, the Patriarchate conducted active patriotic anti-fascist propaganda. A year before the end of the war, a tank column named after Dmitry Donskoy and a squadron named after Alexander Nevsky were built on donations from the clergy and churchgoers and sent to the front. In 1944, all parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church collected the total amount of about 200 million rubles [11. P. 52]. Kazan and Ayu clergy and laity have also contributed to the defense of the country. During the period from 1942 to 1944, they've collected 1.821.7 thousand rubles and about 4 pounds of gold [3].

The amount of cash collected each year was constantly growing. However, of particular importance was the collection of donations to the Fund which assisted children and families of soldiers, which was launched in October 1944. On October 10, 1944, in a letter to Stalin, Metropolitan Alexy, who headed the Russian Orthodox Church after the death of Sergius, wrote: «The care of the faithful for the children and families of our defenders will make their great feat easier, and will unite us with even closer spiritual ties with those who do not spare their blood for the sake of freedom and prosperity of our Fatherland [10. P. 2].

It is impossible to list all that the clergy did to raise the patriotic spirit during the war. We should also note the anti-fascist appeals sent by the Orthodox clergy to the captured peoples of other countries, as well as the Message "Condemnation of traitors to the faith and Fatherland" issued by the Bishops' Council on September 8, 1943. The temples of the frontline zone gave shelter to the elderly and children and organized there medical and dressing stations. During the retreat in the early years of the war many parishes began to take care of the wounded left behind the enemy lines. The clergy together with their parishioners took part in the construction of trenches and air defense activities, and at the same time performed their direct duty comforting the faithful who lost their relatives and family members, as well as their homes. In the rear the priests urged the faithful to go to work on collective farms left in the villages in a situation of almost complete demobilization.

During the war, the clergy often combined service with work in medical institutions in particular, hospitals were established in a significant number of monasteries, which were fully served by monastics.

Such hospitals appeared in the territories liberated from the invaders immediately after liberation, for example, in November 1943, Pokrovsky Convent organized a hospital on its own in Kiev, in which the abbesses and sisters served as nurses and orderlies. The Convent has repeatedly received commendations for the high-quality care of the wounded, and its Abbess Archelai was awarded a government award – the Order for active work in the field of patriotism. The abbess of the Odessa Mikhailovsky Convent Anatolia (Bugach) was awarded the medal "For valiant labor during the Great Patriotic War" for her efforts in supplying the Army with everything necessary – clothing and shoes, medicines, and food.

However, some of the actions of the clergy met with resistance, for example, Bishop Luke (Voino-Yasenetsky), who occupied the post of chief surgeon of the evacuation hospital, began each operation with a prayer and was criticized for this by G. Karpov, who even sent a corresponding petition to Metropolitan Sergius on May 4, 1944 with a request to take measures and "influence" the bishop. However, it was Bishop Luke who received the Stalin Prize for his fundamental work "Essays on purulent surgery," most of the prize bishop has donated to help orphaned children [12. P. 330].

The government recognized the contribution of the Church and repeatedly awarded the clergy and monastics for their deeds. G. Karpov in his report to the Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU(b) A. A. Kuznetsov on the status of the ROC, dated 27 August 1946, cited numerous occasions when the clergy and monastics were awarded orders and medals of the Great Patriotic War, in particular, it was stated that the priest Packs (Tatar ASSR) was awarded the Order of the Red Star, the archdeacon Zverev and deacon Chitkul (Crimean region) – each received several medals. Over 40 representatives of the clergy received awards, including such as the medals "For the Defense of Leningrad," "For the Defense of Moscow," more than 50 representatives of the clergy were awarded for work in the rear with such medal as "For valiant labor during the Great Patriotic War," several of the received medals "Partisan of the Great Patriotic War" [6. P. 57-58].

We can conclude that the Second World War did not increase the differences between the state and the Church. At the same time, it was the clergy who became the mainstay of the patriotic movement, strengthened mobilization by personal example and spent a lot of energy and money to repel the enemy. This position of the ROC contributed not only to the growth of religiosity during the war among the civilian population and military personnel, but also created moral conditions for the victory. All this, in the end, contributed to a change in the Soviet government religious policy.

And today, despite the formal separation of the Church from the state, it plays a major role in all spheres of society and the state, being an important factor in the functioning of our country, which cannot be ignored. Therefore, a well-balanced state policy in the religious sphere is necessary, since this reality directly concerns each of us. The Church, in turn, must meet the conditions of today's difficult life and give spiritual guidance to millions of people in our country, especially young people.

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