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# “THE WAR FACTOR” IN THE HISTORY OF THE LATE PROTESTANTISM IN UKRAINIAN LANDS VIA THE POLICY OF THE RUSSIAN AUTOCRACY

By Roman Sitarchuk

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## Abstract

The article explores the impact of war on the movements of late Protestantism on the territory of Ukraine. The study is based on the three largest Protestant denominations in Ukraine: Baptists, Pentecostals, and Adventists. Due to the refusal of the Protestants to do military service and fight with weapons, the Russian autocracy suppressed and created difficult conditions for believers of the Protestant denominations on the territory of Ukraine. Before the First World War, the refusal of Protestants to engage gave the state an argument for why the Protestants were not reliable members of society. This study uses as a basis a number of documents, acts and state resolutions to complete a systematic and in-depth analysis of the actions of the authorities in relation to the Protestants living in Ukraine.

**Key words:** military service, Protestantism, Russian autocracy, Baptists, Pentecostals, Adventists, Ukraine.

## Formulation of the Problem

The attitude of Protestants (Evangelicals) towards military service and war is relevant for modern researchers due to the fact that this issue was a very important part of their creed. This issue was central to the policy of the Russian autocracy towards a number of faiths (e.g. Seventh-day Adventists, Baptists, Evangelical Christians). The era of World War I marked a period of tough oppression of these groups, with the general autocracy's policy towards the Protestants strictly negative. A thorough examination of these phenomena exposes the impact of the Russian autocracy's position on these faiths. The main tasks of this research are to offer an in-depth review and analysis of the sources on the theme; and to characterize legislation, by-laws, documents and other regulations that determined the complex relations between Protestants' communities and authorities on the problem of military duty.

This article investigates the period from the late 19th century, when the autocracy attempted to solve the problem of the attitude of Protestants towards the military duty, to 1917, when the Russian empire ceased to function as a political construct. In general, the policy of

Tsar's government to the so-called rational sectarianism or just sectarianism (the former official term for Adventists, Baptists, and Evangelical Christians—here and further R. S.) on the issue of the military service hasn't revealed any specificities towards certain Protestants' currents, whilst we distinguish the attitude of the certain faith to the problem, if it was stated.

Some aspects of the attitude of Evangelicals to military service and state policy have received scrupulous analysis, especially in the works by O. Beznosova,<sup>1</sup> Yu. Reshetnikov,<sup>2</sup> which include the Evangelical-Baptist current from the late 19<sup>th</sup> c. to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> c. and the autocracy's policy towards it. Information on the position of Adventists towards "the war issue" can be found in the joint work by V. Liubashchenko and M. Zhukaliuk,<sup>3</sup> but their theoretical conclusions miss facts (data). This gap was efficiently closed in the book by H. Lebsak, the leader of the Adventists current in Ukraine in the recent period.<sup>4</sup> In fact, the author uncovers specific details of the repressions against believers by the autocracy, and names persons who were imprisoned by the court verdict or were exiled out of the European part of Russia. His work also contains the review of a few important government circulars, limiting the activity of Protestants during the World War I. However, the author does not offer a general legislative framework of the period or offer concise analysis; it lacks detailed information on the participation of believers in specific military operations. These tasks are completed in this article.

The core sources of research include archive documents of the Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine in Kyiv, Central State Archive of the Higher Authorities and Government of Ukraine, State Archive of the Crimea Autonomous Republic, Euro-Asian Archive Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Church, and regional state archives.

## The Main Results of the Study

<sup>1</sup> O. Beznosova, ed., *Yevangel'skoje Dvizhenije v Rossijskoj Imperii (1850–1917). Yekaterinoslavskaja Gubernija: Sbornik Dokumentov I Materialov* (Dnepropetrovsk; Steinhagen: Samencorn, 2006). [Evangelical current in Russian empire (1850–1917): Yekaterinoslav province: collection of documents and materials]

<sup>2</sup> Yu. E. Reshetnikov, "Tserkovno-Gosudarstvennyje Otnoshenija Mezhdru Rossijskim Pravitel'stvom I Yevangel'sko-Baptistskim Bratstvom Na Ukraine vo Vtoroj Polovine XIX – Nachale XX Vekov: Prilozhenije," in *Ukrainskije Baptisty I Rossijskaja Imperija. Istorija Yevangel'skogo Dvizhenija v Yevrazii: Materialy I Dokumenty* (Electronic Christian Library. Vol. 1.1. , 1998). [Church-state relations between Russian government and Evangelical-Baptist brotherhood in Ukraine in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> cc.: application. In Ukrainian Baptists and Russian empire. History of the Evangelical current in Eurasia: materials and documents].

<sup>3</sup> N. Zhukaliuk and V. Liubashchenko, *Istorija Tserkvi Hristian Adventistov Sed'mogo Dnya v Ukraine* (Kyiv: Dzherelo zhyttia, 2003). [The History of the Christians Seventh-day Adventists in Ukraine].

<sup>4</sup> G. I. Lebsak, *Velikoje Adventistskoje Dvizhenije I Adventisty Sed'mogo Dnya v Rossii* (Rostov-na-Donu, 2006). [The Great Adventists Current and Seventh-day Adventists in Russia]

Historically, the participation of Protestants in the military service and war in general tended to be the dominant issue, which they forced to face. The foundations of the Evangelicals' creed proclaimed that a believer had to follow God's commandment "Thou shalt not kill," at the same time their ideology tended to recognize and respect authorities and legislation, therefore including also military duty. So, believers had to deal with a complicated choice. In the time of peace, it was not so urgent, but with the worsening of the political situation in the Russian empire due to its participation in the war, the importance of the response to the quite simple sentence "Thou shalt not kill" increased.

In the 19th c. in the Russian empire, Mennonites were the only evangelical faith exempted from the military service beginning in 1851. The authorities allowed them to settle in colonies and exempted them from military duty for twenty years, after that they became subject to a permanent monetary tax called recruiting money. As a matter of fact, in 1875 the legislation about the military duty was changed even for them. According to the new legislation, those Mennonites who became members of their communities before January 1, 1874, were "exempted from carrying weapons and had to serve in the workshops of a maritime department, in the fire brigades and special mobile trains of the local department." The duration of their service was equal to the general military duty. They were organized in groups to get the possibility of joint holding of prayers.<sup>5</sup>

The beginning of the Evangelicals' so-called anti-military activity go back to the late 19th c., when part of the "Stundists" (some of them were de-facto late Protestants by the essence of creed) refused to swear allegiance to the sovereign and, due to religious beliefs, to perform military duty.<sup>6</sup> So, in 1894 the military minister informed the military prosecutor of Kyiv Military District that "it was a false creed of Baptism, or *Stunda*, freely spreading amongst troops and leading to friendly relations between soldiers and sectarians of those areas, from where the adherents of sectarianism had been conscripted to the army." In addition, officials disclosed that on holidays sectarians held conversations and singing in the barracks. Taking into account the risk that "it threatens the Orthodox Church and the existence of the state order itself," the military minister demanded the commanders of the troops in districts prohibit free dissemination of "Stunda."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> F. 26. Op. 2. Case 841. Derzharkhiv v Avtonomnii respublitsi Krym, 1. [State archive of the Autonomous republic of Crimea].

<sup>6</sup> F. 118. Op. 1. Case 2297. Derzharkhiv v Avtonomnii respublitsi Krym, 2. [State archive of the Autonomous republic of Crimea]

<sup>7</sup> F. 315. Op. 4. Case 24. Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi istorychnyi arkhiv Ukrainy (m. Kyiv), 109–110. [Central state historical archive of Ukraine (Kyiv)]

There were likewise other documented episodes of Protestants refusing to perform military service on religious beliefs. In 1988, D. Tsybulskyi was under investigation by a military court of a Baturyn regiment on this charge, sentenced to four years in prison, after which he was pardoned.<sup>8</sup> At that time D. Tsybulskyi belonged to “Tolstovtsi” by his creed, but later, at the beginning of the 20th c., he became one of the leaders of an Adventists community in Kyiv region.

The research suggests that at the turn of the centuries., the refusal to perform the military service tended not to be a widespread phenomenon, so the authorities didn’t pay special attention to the problem. Besides, the leaders of Evangelists haven’t provided the believers with clear instructions on the issue of the military service until the beginning of the World War I, e. g. in 1906 Baptists printed the brochure “On civic order,” proclaiming that “the authorities in the New Testament do not bear the sword in vain, but have the right to use it against those, who do evil, to protect the offended,” thus “when required by the authorities, Baptists consider it necessary to perform military duty.”<sup>9</sup>

In 1912, the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA—hereafter) interpreted the position of Baptists in such a way that “The commandment ‘Thou shalt not kill’ is implemented by Baptists as prohibiting the shedding of blood in a private life and does not extend to the state order, allowing the armed defense of the Motherland. The commandment is not interpreted by Baptists in an absolute sense, confirmed by the fact that many of them keep firearms.”<sup>10</sup>

During the pre-war years, the believers attempted to resolve their position on exemption from military service due to religious conscience and objective circumstances. For example, Baptists of one of the villages in the former Kyiv province demanded a solemn promise to solemnly and steadfastly fulfil the commandment “Thou shalt not kill” from newly accepted members of the community, whilst in the neighboring communities during the same ceremony this aspect was not emphasized.<sup>11</sup> Other “sectarians” of the Kyiv province held the opinion that it was unaccepted to exert their own free will, but it could be done by the order of the authority, even in peacetime, because the representative of such an authority bore the responsibility. Moreover, resisting the commanders while in military service was considered a sin as it equals

<sup>8</sup> F. 274. Op. 1. Case 3590. Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi istorychnyi arkhiv Ukrainy (m. Kyiv), 49. [Central state historical archive of Ukraine (Kyiv)]

<sup>9</sup> F. 442. Op. 861. Case 312. Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi istorychnyi arkhiv Ukrainy (m. Kyiv), 9. [Central state historical archive of Ukraine (Kyiv)].

<sup>10</sup> F. 442. Op. 861. Case 312. Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi istorychnyi arkhiv Ukrainy (m. Kyiv), 28. [Central state historical archive of Ukraine (Kyiv)].

<sup>11</sup> F. 442. Op. 861. Case 312. Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi istorychnyi arkhiv Ukrainy (m. Kyiv), 8. [Central state historical archive of Ukraine (Kyiv)].

resisting God, but while using a weapon one should not harm the adversary and should rather shoot up or down without targeting the human.<sup>12</sup> Also, one may come across other, more pragmatic and frank judgements of believers, i.e. in June 1914, Z. Taradula, an Adventist from the Uman province, said to a peasant S. Tsykhmester that “he who goes to a war is a fool” after reading the announcement about the mobilization on the occasion of the war with Germany.<sup>13</sup>

In 1913 the Governor of Poltava region admitted that in the city and its suburbs “nearly 100 Baptists and Adventists did not agree to take arms, justifying the situation by refusing to shoot at their brothers; likewise, they did not recognize the higher authorities and even deny autocracy, considering everyone as brother before God.” The leader of the Adventists I. Voskoboinikov stated that “Poltava Adventists would not go to war and would not allow their children to do so.”<sup>14</sup>

Summarizing the content of Protestant believers’ reflections, we can divide it into three groups. Firstly, some of them condemned military service with weapons in their hands, but agreed to perform it if the authorities would demand. Secondly, others talked about the possibility of performing the military service but with numerous caveats and mostly not in front-line units. Thirdly, some denied performing military service in any of its manifestations.

The government responded to the so-called anti-military statements and actions of Protestants accordingly. So, in October 1914, the order of MIA was issued, qualifying that “under up-to-date conditions after the opening of hostilities against Germany, it is necessary to strictly monitor the direction of pastors’ activity who often show a certain sympathy towards our enemies, according to rumors, and openly express their Pan-German and Germanophile views.”<sup>15</sup> Evangelicals showing sympathy for the opposite party actually took place, i.e. at the very beginning of the war, M. Kropyvnytskyi, the Odessa preacher of evangelical Christians, claimed that if Germans would win, Evangelicals would have a dominant position in the state.<sup>16</sup> Another Evangelical Kh. Stesiuk, the resident of the village Kholostove of the Volyn province, insisted that “all Germans were brothers, it was necessary to give them all the property, leaving

<sup>12</sup> F. 419. Op. 1. Case 6864. Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi istorychnyi arkhiv Ukrainy (m. Kyiv), 4. [Central state historical archive of Ukraine (Kyiv)]

<sup>13</sup> F. 419. Op. 1. Case 6864. Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi istorychnyi arkhiv Ukrainy (m. Kyiv), 4. [Central state historical archive of Ukraine (Kyiv)]

<sup>14</sup> F. 329. Op. 1. Case 1296. Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi istorychnyi arkhiv Ukrainy (m. Kyiv), 24, 31. [Central state historical archive of Ukraine (Kyiv)]

<sup>15</sup> F. 274. Op. 1. Case 3134. Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi istorychnyi arkhiv Ukrainy (m. Kyiv), 105. [Central state historical archive of Ukraine (Kyiv)]

<sup>16</sup> F. 385. Op. 2. Case 58. Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi istorychnyi arkhiv Ukrainy (m. Kyiv), 43. [Central state historical archive of Ukraine (Kyiv)]

only the Bible and travel with it.”<sup>17</sup> An Adventist R. Yelchenko, the resident of the village Nyzhylovychi of the Radomyshl district of the Kyiv province, declared that “there is no need for us to be afraid of Germans, I pray that they come here soon, because they have better orders than in Russia, and it will be easier for us to live with them,” after Russian troops retreated from Halychyna.<sup>18</sup> Baptists from Konotop of Chernihiv region “prayed for the victory of German weapons.”<sup>19</sup> Many Baptists from the village of Tomakivka of Katerynoslav province, which were drafted into the ranks of the active army, deserted from it and voluntarily surrendered to the enemy<sup>20</sup>.

Though one should not absolutize such anti-autocratic currents among Protestants during the World War I, they really had reasons to “offend” the government: unsuccessful economic reforms led to impoverished existence, the cancellation of imperial concessions from the time of the first revolution, tough suppression of community activities, prison and exiles, etc. As a result, the authorities were forced to conclude that “the eviction of Germans from locations of their former residence as well as the war with Germany had a noticeable impact on the psychology of sectarianism, since they regarded the so-called “eviction to be the persecution of the Christian faith,” and called the war “fratricidal.”<sup>21</sup>

In fact, Germany attracted the Evangelicals with much higher standards of living which a segment of the inhabitants of the Russian empire inhabitants because they worked in Germany. In 1913, a law was issued in Germany that increased the country’s army by 160,000 soldiers; it consequently led to the removal of German factory and agricultural workers from their permanent occupations and put the question of their replacement by workers from other countries on the agenda. In this regard, the most suitable option was thought to be workers from the western and southern (Scilicet, Ukrainian) provinces of Russian empire. Already at that time, according to the estimates of the MIA, there were more than 300,000 of them. As usual, peasants went to agricultural jobs every year, where the labor, although it was

<sup>17</sup> F. 1335. Op. 1. Case 1968. Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi istorychnyi arkhiv Ukrainy (m. Kyiv), 14. [Central state historical archive of Ukraine (Kyiv)]

<sup>18</sup> F. 274. Op. 4. Case 602. Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi istorychnyi arkhiv Ukrainy (m. Kyiv), 2. [Central state historical archive of Ukraine (Kyiv)]

<sup>19</sup> F. 127. Op. 1. Case 15184. Derzharkhiv Chernihivskoi oblasti, 105. [State archive of Chernihiv region]

<sup>20</sup> O. Beznosova, ed., *Yevangeliskoje Dvizhenije v Rossijskoj Imperii (1850–1917). Yekaterinoslavskaja Gubernija: Sbornik Dokumentov I Materialov* (Dnepropetrovsk; Steinhagen: Samencorn, 2006), 209. [Evangelical current in Russian empire (1850–1917): Yekaterinoslav province: collection of documents and materials]

<sup>21</sup> F. 313. Op. 2. Case 3135. Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi istorychnyi arkhiv Ukrainy (m. Kyiv), 67. [Central state historical archive of Ukraine (Kyiv)].

valued much lower in comparison to local workers, still gave them a much higher salary than they could get in the Motherland.<sup>22</sup>

Yet, the core driver of the anti-militaristic actions of Evangelicals during the wartime was not anti-patriotism, as the autocracy tried to present, but unwavering adherence to the fundamentals of their creed. The majority of Protestants refused to perform the military service due to their religious beliefs. For example, in 1915 the Adventist P. Fisher, the burgher of a town of Nohaisk of Berdiansk district, and E. Shtein, the resident of the village of Alt-Montal of Pryshyb village district of Melitopol county, did so. The same was claimed by the Adventist I. Selivestrov from the village of Nova Vasylivka of Tavria province.<sup>23</sup> An Adventist T. Davydenko, a militiaman of the 680<sup>th</sup> Poltava Infantry regiment, told his commanders the decision “to strictly follow the creed of this church and not to betray it under any circumstances and demands, set by the military service.”<sup>24</sup>

On the other side, the autocracy defined the religious activity of Protestants as anti-governmental and did not delay with corresponding responses. In September 1914 government corridors were filled with rumors of fear of the “open propaganda of anti-militaristic ideas at prayer meetings attended by all who are interested in the attitude of the Gospel to war.” Thus, it was demanded to prohibit “the lower ranks not only from the Orthodox church, but from Catholics as well, to attend all kinds of sectarian meetings on the pain of the severe liability.” Also, it was necessary to “immediately close down all those sectarian meetings where anti-governmental or generally harmful for that time preaching was established.”<sup>25</sup> In March 1915, the circular under No. 167126 “On the harmfulness of sectarianism from the official point of view” of the MIA Police department was released, containing sharply negative political assessment of the Evangelical current during World War I, serving as a guide to the state bodies’ repressive actions. A few excerpts revealed such information: “the Adventists creed, which is based on the point of a complete denial of any authority, has inherent aspirations of anarchism,” “the false creed of Adventists and Stundo-Baptists, arisen in the Western Europe

<sup>22</sup> F. 83. Op. 1. Case 129. Derzharkhiv Poltavskoi oblasti, 162–163. [State archive of the Poltava region].

<sup>23</sup> F. 27. Op. 1. Case 13177. Derzharkhiv v Avtonomnii respublitsi Krym, 3, 8, 48. [State archive in the Autonomous republic of Crimea]

<sup>24</sup> Case 2. Arkhiv Yevro-Aziiskoho viddilennia Heneralnoi Konferentsii Tserkvi Adventystiv Somoho Dnia, 73. [Euro-Asian archive department of the general Conference of seventh-day Adventists Church].

<sup>25</sup> F. 285. Op. 1. Case 618. Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi istorychnyi arkhiv Ukrainy (m. Kyiv), 67. [Central state historical archive of Ukraine (Kyiv)]



and later spread by German preachers in Russia, are influenced by Germany so strongly that named sects ...are by essence a hotbed of Germanism in Russia.”<sup>26</sup>

A “secret order” to the commanders of gendarmerie departments was disseminated, which supposed to prevent “sectarians from spreading their ideas in the troops.” Protestants, in particular, were accused of the fact that they “used free access to all the military ranks, who were being treated in hospitals, under the guise of distributing books of the Holy Gospel, supply them with diverse sectarian works, whilst not losing the opportunity to make a conversation on the religious topic with the wounded, calling them to convert to sectarianism.” So, it was an order to take measures to prevent sectarian propaganda from spreading among the lower ranks of military units, located in the various regions.<sup>27</sup>

The statements of Sabler who was the state secretary of the Tsar’s court were more specific: he believed that “spreading of such a harmful creed as is the Baptist in the area of military operations amongst the army should be considered no less than a criminal act directed against our state power, and as such by all means be cut off.” And further: “...those caught in its preaching should be subjected to the severest punishment, but outside the military unit. Arrests should be carried out without publicity due to the fact that those arrested on the charge win the sympathy of persons around them, so giving them publicity leads to unwanted incidents.”<sup>28</sup> These last words of the courtier are indicative, testifying to the instability of the situation in the Russian imperial troops.

After successive defeats of the Russian army on the fronts, the campaign against “internal enemies” continued within the country, among which Evangelicals were among the first. The next circular of the MIA Police department to governors was dated June 1916, where “followers of rationalist sects of German origin (Baptists, Evangelical Christians, and Adventists)” were again accused of “showing increased activity and making propaganda of anti-militaristic ideas as fundamentals of their creed.”<sup>29</sup> As one of means of combating the

<sup>26</sup> O. Beznosova, ed., *Yevangeliskoje Dvizhenije v Rossijskoj Imperii (1850–1917). Yekaterinoslavskaja Gubernija: Sbornik Dokumentov I Materialov* (Dnepropetrovsk; Steinhagen: Samencorn, 2006), 157. [Evangelical current in Russian empire (1850–1917): Yekaterinoslav province: collection of documents and materials]

<sup>27</sup> F. 706. Op. 1. Case 459. Derzharkhiv v Avtonomnii respublitsi Krym, 10. [State archive of the Autonomous republic of Crimea].

<sup>28</sup> F. 325. Op. 1. Case 111. Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi istorychnyi arkhiv Ukrainy (m. Kyiv), 22. [Central state historical archive of Ukraine (Kyiv)].

<sup>29</sup> F. 1335. Op. 1. Case 1968. Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi istorychnyi arkhiv Ukrainy (m. Kyiv), 3. [Central state historical archive of Ukraine (Kyiv)]

“evil,” it was suggested not to appoint sectarians as book carriers, since the latter were considered to be the most numerous legal missionaries at the time.<sup>30</sup>

Actually, the MIA ordered the gendarmes to fix the ultimate supervision over the activity of Baptists, Evangelical Christians, and Adventists, to compile lists of persons who performed military service and to supervise their correspondence.<sup>31</sup> The gendarmes used their powers: e.g. in July 1916 Adventists Kh. Ihnatenko, a resident of the village of Dar-Nadiezhdia and the militiaman of the 2<sup>nd</sup> rank, as well as K. Kyslytsia, a resident of the Mykolaivka village of the Zachepylivka village district and the militiaman of the 2<sup>nd</sup> rank, and M. Khvat, a resident of the Bahata Chernetchyna village of the Velyka-Buchnovka village district and the militiaman of the 2<sup>nd</sup> rank, were imprisoned in Kostiantynohrad prison of Poltava region for refusing to take up arms.<sup>32</sup> In fact, they lived within the same county in neighboring village districts, so it was likely that their arrest was a result of the co-operative actions of the gendarmes.

However, the increasing repressions against Evangelicals did not stop the refusal to perform the military service with weapons in hands. In particular, at the end of 1916 the Governor of Tavria reported to the MIA that “sectarians, drafted into the army, were seldom in the ranks, for the majority of them, who had refused to use weapons, were sent by military commanders to non-military positions—cashew workers, bakers, and others.”<sup>33</sup> The Poltava Governor made a similar statement.<sup>34</sup> Such facts have also been confirmed in Volyn province.<sup>35</sup>

The “anti-militaristic behavior” of Evangelicals was mentioned by the Chief of Staff of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief in a report in February 1917. An excerpt of the document states:

The negative attitude of sectarians to the war is being primarily manifested by the refusal to take up weapons. There are thousands of cases of the refusal to take up weapons, however not everyone dares to openly resist war, even though the criminal acts are not accompanied by the consequences for sectarians that should be expected in wartime. After the usual disciplinary sanctions in their unit, the sectarians are most

<sup>30</sup> F. 279. Op. 1. Case 61. Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi istorichnyi arkhiv Ukrainy (m. Kyiv), 75. [Central state historical archive of Ukraine (Kyiv)].

<sup>31</sup> F. 1262. Op. 1. Case 313. Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi istorichnyi arkhiv Ukrainy (m. Kyiv), 3, 18. [Central state historical archive of Ukraine (Kyiv)].

<sup>32</sup> F. 321. Op. 1. Case 228. Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi istorichnyi arkhiv Ukrainy (m. Kyiv), 23. [Central state historical archive of Ukraine (Kyiv)].

<sup>33</sup> F. 27. Op. 1. Case 13177. Derzharkhiv v Avtonomnii respubliitsi Krym, 73. [State archive in the Autonomous republic of Crimea]

<sup>34</sup> F. 325. Op. 1. Case 142. Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi istorichnyi arkhiv Ukrainy (m. Kyiv), 6. [Central state historical archive of Ukraine (Kyiv)].

<sup>35</sup> F. 274. Op. 1. Case 3590. Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi istorichnyi arkhiv Ukrainy (m. Kyiv), 47zv. [Central state historical archive of Ukraine (Kyiv)]

frequently sent to the rear for convoy and sanitary service, only a small part of them is kept in battalions and prisons.<sup>36</sup>

On the other side, one should not exaggerate the anti-war sentiment amongst Evangelicals. Documents testify to the fact that many of them served in the active army; the presence of Adventists in the front units was confirmed, in particular, by their leader H. Lebsak. In July 1914 he wrote these words: “Dear Brothers in Christ!... Several brothers from our communities went to war. We pray for them, for our army, the tsar and the government, that God will bless them to emerge victorious over the enemies.”<sup>37</sup> He also noted that the Adventists donated the underwear for the wounded and were engaged in sewing it for free for the Red Cross. He emphasized that nearly 25–30 Adventists from Kyiv and the region were actually in the war theatre. Some of them got into sanitary detachments, some into the telegraph units, while the rest took part in battles. In Lebsak’s letters, dated by January of the next year, the presence of Adventists in the army was also mentioned, for whom he prayed that they would return “truly victorious and each one of them could live peacefully with his family....”<sup>38</sup>

The Baptists confirmed the fact that according to their creed the military service was being performed at the call of the authorities, but they “pray for peace and hope for the Kingdom of God, when truth, peace and love will be the inviolable law.” They also claimed that it was necessary to love “our enemies, not to resist evil.”<sup>39</sup>

Thus, the government had no objective reasons to implement anti-Protestant measures. However, in the following year, 1917, the pressure on evangelists had intensified, for another MIA circular did not allow them to hold open prayer meetings. Those who were not members of Protestant organizations were forbidden to attend their gatherings. During the meeting, no literature was permitted to be used except the Bible and the Gospels, including psalms, books for Saturday schools, and printed readings for prayer days. Divine services were to start without spiritual singing and be conducted exclusively in Russian. The fine of 3,000 rubles or three

<sup>36</sup> F. 285. Op. 1. Case 618. Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi istorichnyi arkhiv Ukrainy (m. Kyiv), 67. [Central state historical archive of Ukraine (Kyiv)]

<sup>37</sup> F. 274. Op. 1. Case 3590. Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi istorichnyi arkhiv Ukrainy (m. Kyiv), 75zv. [Central state historical archive of Ukraine (Kyiv)]

<sup>38</sup> F. 274. Op. 1. Case 3590. Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi istorichnyi arkhiv Ukrainy (m. Kyiv), 75zv. [Central state historical archive of Ukraine (Kyiv)]

<sup>39</sup> Yu. E. Reshetnikov, “Tserkovno-Gosudarstvennyje Otnoshenija Mezhdru Rossijskim Pravitel’stvom I Yevangel’sko-Baptistskim Bratstvom Na Ukraine vo Vtoroj Polovine XIX – Nachale XX Vekov: Prilozhenije,” in *Ukrainskije Baptisty I Rossijskaja Imperija. Istorija Yevangel’skogo Dvizhenija v Yevrazii: Materialy I Dokumenty* (Electronic Christian Library. Vol. 1.1. , 1998). [Church-state relations between Russian government and Evangelical-Baptist brotherhood in Ukraine in the second half of the 19th – early 20th cc.: application. In Ukrainian Baptists and Russian empire. History of the Evangelical current in Eurasia: materials and documents].

months of imprisonment was threatened for violation of the latter requirement.<sup>40</sup> Meetings of “sectarians” were to take place under police supervision. Sermons and instruction could only be provided by a spiritual mentor, approved for this position by the local authorities. Among the Adventists in the Ukrainian lands, only the Kyiv one still remained as an officially functioning prayer house.

The “precautionary” measures of the government tended not to be new; they acquired their legal status even before World War I; however, during that war the circulars and instructions had additional argumentation and relevance, for they were reinforced by another wave of struggle against the unsuccessful actions of “culprits” of the Russian army at the front. Thus, the majority of the communities held their gatherings illegally, in small groups, and in such a way Protestants managed to preserve the effectiveness of their organizations.

After the overthrow of the Russian autocracy, certain democratic changes took place in the country, so in March 1917 the Provisional Government ordered the release of some convicts from prisons, including some who been arrested for religious beliefs. In Poltava regional prison, for example, freedom was given to Baptist O. Fedoriv, who was convicted in July 1914. Adventists A. Honchar and I. Hoverdovskyi, who served their sentence “for the refusal of the military service due to religious beliefs,” were released from Kostiantynohrad prison.<sup>41</sup>

Meanwhile, democratic transformations continued to take place in the state. In March 1917 all national and religious restrictions were finally abolished, and in April 1917, the Law on Unions and Assemblies was published, in which every citizen of the Russian empire was recognized as having the right to convene gatherings (assemble) and found unions or societies without any permission. The Law also provided the right to have relations with foreign organizations. The government decree was published in July 1917, allowing children after the age of 14 to convert from one religion to another.<sup>42</sup> These acts significantly contributed to the current Protestant organizations’ preservation, moreover, they allowed the communities to become legal again. As a matter of fact, it was the beginning of 1917 that marked the next greatest increase of Protestants since the increase after 1906 in the Ukrainian lands. Later this process was positively influenced by other political factors, especially the tolerant attitude of the Ukrainian national governments towards Evangelicals.

<sup>40</sup> G. I. Lebsak, *Velikoje Adventistskoje Dvizhenije I Adventisty Sed'mogo Dnya v Rossii* (Rostov-na-Donu, 2006), 303. [The Great Adventists Current and Seventh-day Adventists in Russia].

<sup>41</sup> F. 138. Op. 1. Case 586. DAPO (Derzhavnyi Arkhiv Poltavskoi Oblasti), 9, 21, 86. [State archive of Poltava region]

<sup>42</sup> G. I. Lebsak, *Velikoje Adventistskoje Dvizhenije I Adventisty Sed'mogo Dnya v Rossii* (Rostov-na-Donu, 2006), 307. [The Great Adventists Current and Seventh-day Adventists in Russia]

## **Conclusion**

In sum, it is necessary to point out that in the Russian empire, military service was proclaimed as one of the essential functions, revealing the level of the devotion and the attitude of a person towards the authorities. Therefore, Protestants were considered to be uncharitable citizens of the state because of their pacifist beliefs. If in a peacetime authorities pretended, they “did not notice” the peculiarity of their creed and world image, then in wartime “the level of hostility” of Evangelicals grew at an accelerated rate. In these cases, the autocracy’s negative attitude towards the Protestants was deeply influenced by various factors, especially the situation at the front. In fact, during 1916-1917, when the agony of the tsardom became more evident, the government policy was modified to be more brutal and transparent. Enemies were sought everywhere at that time, and the Protestants were viewed dangerous next to the revolutionaries. When the authorities uncovered the supposed German origin of the Protestants, they did not care, at the same time, about the fact that Evangelical Christians, were a local, Russian “religious product.”

The issue of military service recognition and its solution were essential for the Protestant organizations formation because it was a test of loyalty to the creed for every believer. Their leaders in fact did not clearly disclose their position on the military problem, but it is known that it was not officially anti-governmental. Each believer had to interpret and resolve their own vision regarding military duty, being guided by the depth of the religious beliefs as well as objective life circumstances.

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