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The Emperor Was Unjustly Called Down in Chernovtsy*

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Императора обляяли в Черновцах

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At the end of March 1821, the Russian Army Major-General Count Alexander Ypsilantis together with a group of eterists crossed the Prut and called the Danubian Principalities population for an armed insurrection against the Turkish domination. The uprising broke out in Greece. Mass repressions against Christians began in the Ottoman Empire. In early April, janissaries plundered Greek colonies in the region of the Bosphorus. Patriarch Gregory V of Constantinople and three archbishops were hanged on Easter Sunday, April 10. Emperor Alexander I who disapproved of any rebellions, keeping in mind the repercussions of the French revolution, at the same time was ready to support Orthodox Christians. The question of opening hostilities against Turkey was under consideration. Great Britain and Austria, in fear of Russia's increasing influence, tried to prevent a new Russo-Turkish war. Austria played an active part in this process pursuing its own interests in the East. In August 1823, in his secret dispatch, Austrian Chancellor Clement von Metternich informed Count Lebzelter, the Austrian Envoy to Russia, that in case of war between Russia and Turkey Austria would lend no support to Russia and would act according to its own interests. Meanwhile Austria was ready to act as a peace-broker in the settlement of the Russo-Turkish conflict. The

*The original of this article has not been translated into English correctly, so the correct translation is as follows: **Emperor Alexander I: The Incident in Chernovtsy.**

Austrian Royal Court initiated the summit of the Austrian and Russian emperors. It took place in autumn 1823 in Chernovtsy (Bukovina).

Alexander I was fond of strolling around Chernovtsy alone without any escort. On the third day after his arrival, Alexander walked to the village of Gorecha which was a half-hour walk away, to visit the local church (nowadays the Gorecha Nativity of the Most Holy Mother of God Monastery). As legend has it, the church was built by Archimandrite Artamon with the financial help of Russian Empress Catherine II when the Russian troops were quartered in Bukovina from 1770 to 1774. Catherine donated 30 chervonets pieces (300 gold roubles) for the construction of the church.

Right near the church, the emperor was attacked by the pack of dogs that escaped from Sexton's house. The tsar was standing at bay and hitting back with a stick he pulled out of the wicker fence until Sexton's wife came to his rescue and chased the dogs away. After that the tsar made for the church where he saw a priest who was praying aloud. The slyboots who, most probably, had never seen the tsar but guessed that it was some nobleman from Russia, was praying very ardently for the tsar's health and his and his escort's safe returning home.

– Why, – asked the tsar in amazement, – why aren't you praying for your king?

– We pray for him dayly, – said the clergyman, – but we should now pray to God for Alexander specially because he is a stranger just on a visit here and he needs God's Grace for the Congress”.

Alexander thanked the priest and asked him to lay the Gospel on his (Alexander's) head and bless him. Then Alexander kissed the priest's hand, gave him 50 ducats and walked back to Chernovtsy.

For a very long time the stick had been kept in the church as an honorary relic. According to some sources it was silver-bound and had a commemorative inscription on it.

Alexander stayed in Chernovtsy for seven days till September 30 (October 12). The uppermost subject discussed at the emperors' summit was the Greek rebellion. During the talks, the problem of re-establishing diplomatic relations between Russia and the Ottoman Porte was settled. The Turks withdrew their troops from the Danubian Principalities Valachia and Moldavia; the subsistence of troops was a heavy financial burden for the polulation of the principalities. Besides, they lifted restrictions on ships' journey through the Bosphorus. Russia expressed readiness to commence talks with Turkey on peaceful settlement of the Greek issue. Thus, Austria prevented Russia's armed interference.

Once Russian historian S.M. Soloviev divided Alexander's reign into two periods, calling the former the Age of Coalitions and the latter the Age of Congresses. A week in Chernovtsy brought the Age of Congresses to a close. A new war with Turkey broke out in 1828 during the reign of Nicholas I of Russia, tsar Alexander's brother. *Casus belli* for its outbreak was the closing of the Bosphorus Strait by the Turks, thus breaking the Akkerman Convention concluded between Russia and Turkey on September 25 (October 7), 1826, in Akkerman (now Belgorod-Dnestrovsky). However, in fact, the military conflict was triggered by the disagreement between the great powers in regard to the Greek War of Independence and the situation of the Orthodox Christian population in the Balkans.

Keywords

Emperor of Russia, Aleksander I, Franz I, Austria, Russia, Turkey, Chernovtsy, Bukovina, Meeting, Congress, Greek rebellion.