

## Dauids and Goliaths: Military Propaganda in Orthodox Russia, 1700-1815

WELCOME REMARKS: (10 minutes)

### 1) Sermons As Propaganda: An Introduction

My paper addresses the issue of the use of military and state sermons in eighteenth century Russia as military propaganda. Now, why sermons? First of all, it is because military sermons have been the most widespread form of military propaganda in early modern Europe. And secondly, because in many cases, such as certain parts of Russia, this was the only form of propaganda.

To illustrate this, let us imagine for a moment that we here are not students and faculty, but E. European peasants and townfolk, partly or fully illiterate, mostly uneducated. How are we going to learn about the military events that our homeland engages in other parts of the world? Why should we care about wars fought by our country against another, care about paying harvest taxes for the war effort, or care about sending our sons as conscripts to die in the swamps of Finland or the marshes of East Prussia? The answers to these questions and more for us would be found in the church or more likely the town cathedral, particularly in the sermons that local priests received from St. Petersburg for reading after the liturgy.

SLIDE: Preacher addressing the public. Sermons as Propaganda in Russia during the times of war.

Homiletics remains an understudied subject in global military history; however, recent studies had emphasized the value of sermon as the means of military propaganda in the history of Europe's nation-building. Pasi Ihalainen, for example, concluded that sermons in times of war proved to be effective in constructing national identity, they also dominated both the spoken and the written genre of propaganda in most European countries for most of the eighteenth century.

James Caudle's study found that in England the sermon was the most widespread form of any kind of printed matter throughout the century.

Russia, I argue, was no exception in this regard. For example, sales receipts from the official bookseller of the Petersburg printing press shop Sergei Sidorov for May 1739 show that out of 186 items of printed matter, 168 were sermons. [LUPPOV, POSLEPETROVSKOE, P. 118] So – if in 1914 Petersburg everyone was buying and reading newspapers, in 1740, everyone was buying and reading sermons, although in the relationship to the book market, it should be noted that sermons were very short books, and thus, very cheap .

#### FEOFAN PROKOPOVICH PRINTING RUN

The usual printing run was half a zavod per edition, that is 600 copies, but more popular sermons had multiple runs of several zavody. Not all of them were military sermons, just a portion of the total market, but much like in Western Europe, most of the military propaganda (and news) was delivered in homiletic format.

#### PRINTED SERMONS/MANUSCRIPT SERMONS/ THEIR EDITIONS

So, WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES between sermons in Russia and sermons in Western Europe?

So, this paper will argue that,

1. Like in Western Europe Russia's military sermons did not only seek to incite the Russian troops and officer corps with a patriotic *telos*, but also communicated the aims and the experiences of war to the home front - the lay audiences of Russia's Orthodox devotees who supported the empire's military through taxes, conscripts and prayers.

2. Like in many cases in Western Europe (especially in France), the preachers' knowledge of the military campaigns, strategies, plots and events was rather extensive and was the result of their close relationships with the court.
3. Unlike in Western Europe, the preachers did not employ sectarian rhetoric to depict the image of the enemy. Not a heretic. Choosing the image of Davids and Goliaths.
4. So, the bishops did not view Russia as a bastion of Orthodoxy juxtaposed against its heretical neighbors, but rather as an ecumenical Christian power, as a part of European Christendom, a participant in its system of alliances and even a defender of its ecumenical interests. NB: This ecumenical toleration, however, did not extend to Islam and traitors.

#### THE IMAGE OF THE ENEMY QUESTION

Orthodox sermons differed from Western European ones in one important respect - the religious image of the enemy. In many countries of Western Europe, preachers utilized religiously sectarian rhetoric to boost the country's morale during the key military events of the eighteenth century such as the Wars of Austrian Succession or the Seven Years War. In England and Netherlands, the "stereotype of Popery" dominated military and state homily in wars against Spain and France. Preachers like Benjamin Harris, John Hume and William Sherlock described the war effort as a struggle against Catholicism, Papal tyranny or just the so-called "Papists" in general. Similar rhetoric appeared in North America where the sermons of Jonathan Edwards employed stereotypes of Roman Catholicism to uplift military morale in 1750s while numerous Massachusetts divines praised the 1762 siege of Havana as a victory over "Popery."

#### WESTERN PREACHERS SLIDE

In France, bishops at the court in Versailles used religious rhetoric to justify wars with their northern neighbors. Thus, one of the most renowned French bishops Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet (1627-1704) praised the combat of the Great Condé (Louis II de Bourbon) as a “war against heretics” in the Dutch Wars and later, in the Nine Years’ War. Later in the century, Jean-Baptiste Massillon (1663-1742) praised the king’s actions in fighting “heretics and sectarians” and hoped that the war in the north would bring about “the conversion of the innumerable souls that have been seduced from the religion of their forefathers.”

Swedish state sermons, however, constituted a major exception to this European pattern. Swedish Lutheran military propaganda in the eighteenth century for the most part avoided designating foreign adversaries as heretics or enemies of religion. Pasi Ithailainen’s 2005 great work, *Protestant Nations Redefined: Changing Perceptions of National Identity in the Rhetoric of English, Dutch and Swedish Public Churches, 1685–1772*, has accomplished a lot in explaining this phenomenon and the uniqueness of Swedish homiletic culture.

Sectarian rhetoric was markedly absent from Russian imperial military sermons of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Despite an earlier medieval and early modern Russian tradition of using the language of holy war profusely, the newly “enlightened” bishops at the Russian courts of Peter I, Catherine II and Alexander I did not view Russia’s Catholic or Protestant adversaries as heretics or non-Christians. The sermons preached after 1700 (that is, after the reforms of Peter the Great) largely avoided the stereotypes of heterodoxy altogether.

Even in the case of Napoleonic invasion, the church eventually refused to designate the war as a religious conflict; just as thousands of pulpits from Mexico City to Vienna vilified Bonaparte as the Antichrist and just as the tsar pressured the Holy Synod (unsuccessfully) to do the same. Instead of sectarian rhetoric, Russian bishops preferred employing the language of “just” and “unjust” wars and emphasized the concern for the peace and security of neighborly countries as chief causes of Russia’s military engagements in Europe. At the same time, they utilized scriptural analogies to paint the image of the enemy and biblical metaphors to reinforce the audience’s patriotism.

#### DAVID AND GOLIATH

The image of David and Goliath, the weak and humble Russia facing a superior opponent became by far the most popular of such metaphors. Unlike the actual biblical figure, however, Russian metaphor of Goliath lacked the polemical dimension of enemy’s confessional infidelity, focusing only on the adversary’s undefeatable strengths.

#### ***Russian Sermons in the Great Northern War 1700-1721[12 minutes]***

So, let us look at the examples from the Great Northern War. The overwhelming majority of the printed sermons from the Northern War came from the reform-minded bishops close to the court of Peter the Great, including Gavriil Bushinskii and Feofan Prokopovich.

Gavriil Buzhinskii (d.1731). Gavriil initially served as the Over-Hieromonk [i.e., the “supreme monk-priest”] of the Russian Navy and accompanied Peter I and his admirals in naval expeditions.

#### GAVRIIL BUZHINSKII

The largest share of the printed sermons, however, belonged to Archbishop Feofan Prokopovich (1681-1736, illust. 1). Prokopovich, however, played a much bigger role in Russia and here is the overview:

SLIDE: Feofan Prokopovich,

The reason that I have singled out these two preachers in particular, is that they were breaking away from the 17<sup>th</sup> century East Slavic homiletic tradition that consistently presented enemies of Russia or the Rus’ as heretics, such as seen in the sermons of Patriarchs Germogen and Nikon. They were also breaking away from philo-Catholic Ukrainian clergy of the day, like Feofilakt Lopatinskii and Stefan Iavorskii, who routinely presented the war against Sweden as a war against Protestant iconoclasts and iconoclasm in general.

For reformed Bishops like Feofan Prokopovich, the Great Northern War was not a war to save Orthodox icons or a war against heresy. The Christian monarchies who fought against Petrine Russia were not heretics. For the most part, their sermons sought to arouse the patriotic feelings of audiences, but also, offered justifications for the war effort.

So, let’s look at how some of the sermons from the 1717-1718 liturgical year cycle, in which Gavriil Buzhinskii and Feofan Prokopovich focused on the task of explaining the causes of Russia’s conflict with Sweden. The preachers portrayed the war as defensive and offered their interpretation for the origins of Sweden’s aggression.

First cause of this war, according to the preachers was JEALOUSY which was in itself an act of aggression, a feeling that developed over decades in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

In his famous, (and widely circulated) 1717 Poltava battle commemoration sermon, Feofan Prokopovich showed how QUOTE “proud jealousy and jealous pride” hijacked Swedish foreign policy in the seventeenth century, making Sweden QUOTE “the fear of all Europe.” During that century, Sweden became increasingly jealous of its “two or three neighbors” – Prussia, Poland, and Denmark and waged war against them. Sweden’s wars, for Prokopovich were not “just” but were fought purely out of “jealousy and violence [*zavisti i rvenia*].”

KEYWORD: “PROUD JEALOUSY AND JEALOUS PRIDE”

Sweden’s feelings of jealousy towards its European neighbors did not end in the seventeenth century, but spread and grew later. “Just like the bear, who tasted human blood, desires more,” argued Prokopovich, “so does a jealous man, who tasted, but did not eat the other, gets even more jealous in his passion [*iakozhe bo medved’ chi’ei krovi cheliust’mi svoimi zakhvatit, na togo liutee meshchetsia, tako i chelovek zavistnyi ukusivshi a ne pozhershi blizhnego, umnozhaet v sebe rvenie*].” So, the jealousy of Charles XII did not stop in Europe, but extended to his eastern neighbor. In Prokopovich’s sermons, Swedish envy arose in the late seventeenth century while seeing Russia’s rise under Peter and Peter’s father, tsar Aleksei. Sweden became jealous of seeing Ukraine join Russia, and even envious of the fact that Muscovite tsars possessed the “glory and Caesarian robes” whereas Swedish rulers were merely kings, not caesars.

Second reason why Russia fought this war, according to Prokopovich and his colleague Gavriil Buzhinskii was to rescue Russia’s European neighbors from jealous Charles. Thus, Gavriil Buzhinskii, advanced theological arguments why Russian

servicemen needed to fight for other European nations in his dockside sermon, preached at the base of Russian Galley Fleet near Hangouud in the Gulf of Bothnia (June 27, 1714).

His first argument was that those nations were “brothers” and, just like Abraham fought a war for his brother, Lot, so should Russia fight for its brotherly nations and countries that were invaded by Sweden. Charles XII was “the terror of the Europeans,” and Russia was their only savior.

KEYWORD: SAVING RUSSIA’S “BROTHERS”

His third argument was much more uncommon: Russia was fighting a war to protect not only the European cities from destruction, but also the ecumenical European Christendom, the Lutheran, Catholic and Orthodox churches from plunder and pillage. Swedes, he argued, invaded “Poland, Lithuania, Silesia and, then Saxony, destroying and plundering cities and holy churches everywhere.” Although his sermon did not state that Russia was fighting a religious war against heresy, it highlighted, oddly enough, that Russians had more respect for Lutheran and Catholic “holy churches” than did the Swedish “cruel Goths,” who were themselves Lutheran.

KEY WORDS: “Cruel Goths” attacking Lutheran “holy churches”

Perhaps the most favored metaphor used in the sermons was that of the David-Goliath confrontation, to highlight the weakness and underdevelopment of Russia against the strengths and pride of Sweden.

The most emphasized Russian weakness was a militarily one. In his 1717 sermon, Prokopovich lamented that Russia had “no naval rules [*regula*], no engineering arts, no architects of any kind, no navy and no power on the seas.”

KEYWORD: SWEDEN TOUGH LIKE IRON, LIKE THE GLORIOUS SWEDISH IRON

Sweden, on the other hand, enjoyed copious advantages over Russia militarily. Not only was it “a fearsome nation, abounding in all military advantages”. It was also a more martially predisposed nation than Russia, surpassing “those glorious Spartans,” in both “nature and art.” Nature and geography made Sweden “the most northerly nation [*prirodoiu samyi severnyi narod*],” and the northern latitudes (with their cold climate) make their denizens “tough like iron, like the glorious Swedish iron [*kak zhelezo zakalennyi i slavnomu zhelezu svoemu podobnyi*].”

Therefore, the Swedes possessed an inborn talent (and toughness) that made battling and winning wars rather easy. “For them,” stated Prokopovich, “fighting is like going fishing where the fish are already stocked [*voevat' im kak by na gotovyi lov khodit' kazalosi*].”

The other important Russian weakness highlighted in the sermons was the fragility of alliances. In his Poltava commemoration homily, Prokopovich reminded the audience how in 1709 most of Russia’s continental allies (Saxony, Austria, and Polish king Augustus) were knocked out of the war, making Russia face Sweden and its might all alone in 1709. “At the same time, Russia’s only ally with a navy – the Kingdom of Denmark – was also weak. Quoting Samuel Puffendorf, Prokopovich highlighted how the diplomats at the time viewed Russia’s most ancient alliance with Denmark as “futile and hopeless” since its geography made it very vulnerable.

Another major weakness that the preachers emphasized – this time in their 1720 sermons – was British withdrawal from the anti-Swedish alliance at the Treaty of Stockholm in 1719, where Sweden ceded the city of Bremen to the ruling House of Hannover, the dynasty that rules Britain to this day. For example, in his 1720 Battle of Grencham sermon, Buzhinskii, blasted QUOTE “the Swedish Saul” for plotting against “the innocent Russian David” in enticing the British. He used the classical

Aesop's fable of the Horse and the Lion, which was very apt because the White Horse was the official heraldic symbol of Hanover and the Lion – of Sweden. Unlike in the real fable, however, Buzhinskii noted – humorously – that the Lion was actually toothless, teeth being knocked out by King David, and it was the Horse who benefitted the most from the transaction in gaining North Sea ports.

So, the Russian preachers contrasted Russia's weak alliances against those enjoyed by Sweden. Prokopovich's text, for example, lists that both the former allies from Poland and from Ukraine (such as the rebellious Cossacks) now aided Charles XII. The Swedes also enjoyed the help of the Ottomans who aided Sweden briefly between 1709 and 1711. Then, Charles could count on the financial help of France.

So, if you were a soldier listening to this sermon in the church, or if you were in the Navy listening to it at the dockside, you might have gotten very despondent – “How can we win this war if everyone – the Ottomans, the Swedes are against us and all our allies are routed? This is where the preachers reassured their audience that the weak always win if their war is just and they are fighting to save others' lives from a raging aggressor.

In light of these numerous weaknesses, Russia's victorious rout of Sweden in its naval and ground campaigns appeared truly miraculous, a stock example of David defeating Goliath at impossible odds. One such example was the 1709 Battle of Poltava – “the mother of all battles,” according to Prokopovich – where Russians achieved “a victory, similar to David's victory over the proud Philistine,” against many odds.

BATTLE OF POLTAVA PRINTED SERMON: “The mother of all battles.”  
“David's victory over the proud Philistine.”

BATTLE OF HANGO UDD

Another battle of impossible odds was fought at Hangö udd in 1714. Preaching directly to the naval officers (and Peter) on the Bothnian island of Lameland in 1714, Buzhinskii repeated how a fleet of small Russian galleys defeated large Swedish battleships. He made a comparison of a “lion or an elephant being defeated by a small animal.” Not only that, but the battle netted the capture of chief Swedish commanding officer (*Schoutbynacht* [Rear Admiral]) Nils Ehrenskiölds, who was depicted in a positive light because he who negotiated the surrender of other officers.

#### BATTLE OF NOTEBORG SLIDE

One of the most impossible-odds battles (before Poltava) was fought in Finland, where Russians besieged the Karelian fortress of Noteborg (“Nut-fortress”) in 1702, capturing it and renaming it into Shlüsselburg (“Key-fortress”). The Russians were so weak that Buzhinskii compared them to sheep, being pounded by lions and so backward that they could not build bridges and lacked “staircases” to force the Noteborg’s moat and resorted to sinking their boats in order to get across.

#### KEYWORD: JEALOUSY FRATERNAL

The military sermons were used not only to justify the war against Sweden, but also to justify the peace – The Peace of Nystadt signed in 1721. In his Peace Treaty celebration sermon of 1721, Feofan Prokopovich continued his rhetoric of Swedish jealousy but used it in a positive light. “Pride never arouses jealousy towards those far away, but to those near,” argued Prokopovich, concluding that “I believe, that there is then little agreement between brothers [*malo soglasiia mezhdu bratieiu*]” Sweden envied Russia because Sweden was in fact a brotherly nation.

Furthermore, for Prokopovich, these “gentlemen Swedes [*gospoda Shvedy*]” and valiant Swedes [*khrabye Svei*]” were not simple bad brothers, but also a worthy nation from which to learn. His 1721 widely-distributed sermon delivered after the

conclusion of the Peace of Nystadt made that message very clear. QUOTE “Swedish nation was ahead of us in military art, as well as in other studies,” noting especially their advancement in “political philosophy in schools, in the senate, in studies and in practice.” As the benefit of the war with Sweden, Russia needed to learn and imbibe Western influence and reform, from Sweden to become more European: “from previous crudeness and weakness, it turned into deserving power, with honor and glory.”

### ***The War of Polish Succession***

The use of biblical and classical imagery continued to dominate Russian military propaganda in state sermons even after Peter’s death. During the reign of Empress Anna (1730-1740), Feofan’s pulpit continued to serve as the purveyor and interpreter of Russia’s military doctrine during the wars of Polish Succession, 1733-1736.

The war came as a result of Polish succession crisis of 1733 when the majority in the Polish Estates expressed a desire to elect an anti-Russian candidate, Stanislaw Leszczinski, a former ally of Charles XII. To oust Leszczinski, and to install their own candidate, Augustus III of Saxony, Russian troops crossed the Commonwealth border in July of 1733 (prior to the convocation of the Election Sejm) in alliance with Austria and Saxony which put them to war against France, Leszczynski’s ally. The high point of the war was the siege of Gdansk/Danzig:

#### **SIEGE OF DANZIG**

Just like in Great Northern War, Prokopovich’s military sermons presented Russian military intervention as an example of a “just war.”

One reason for this war being just was SELF-DEFENSE. Feofan’s sermon delivered on April 28, 1734, presented King Stanislaw Leszczynski’s threat to Russia as very real: the sole purpose of his reign was revenge against Russia and he “did not care

about anything else, other than the overthrow of Russia' autocratic throne." To carry out this goal he enlisted a "traitorous alliance with a common enemy," that is France, willing to unleash a pan-European conflict that upset not only the balance of power but the balance of the weather as well. The rebellious Poles were "turning security into danger, light into darkness, sunny weather into the depressing bad weather."

Furthermore, Poland was scheming to invade Russia, a country tragically weakened by the death of Peter the Great. Here, Poland emerged as a strong Goliath equipped with "the copious arms and the treasury of France [*dvignuli ne malo i ot oruzhiia i ot sokrovishcha frantsuzskogo*]" against the weaker Russia ruled by Empress Anna the "new David" and "new Joshua," who led weak Russians like "Israelites returning from Babylonian captivity," restoring "Jerusalem," that is St. Petersburg, again.

#### LESZCZYNSKI

Another cause of this just war was Poland's ungratefulness to Russia. Following the devastation of the Northern War, Prokopovich argued, Poland "has received peace through our arms, and left us in tranquility as well." In exchange for Russia's liberation from Charles XII, Polish nobles "swore in their pledge never to side with our opponent" when electing a new king. Yet now, Prokopovich lamented, the Warsaw Diet had forgotten their promises and "returned to their former excrement and their former puke [*v prezhnii kal, na prezhnie blevotiny vozvratilis*]."

#### **SEVEN YEARS WAR (8 minutes)**

The use of biblical and classical imagery continued to dominate Russian military PROPAGANDA in sermons even after Peter's death.

During the reign of Empress Elisabeth Petrovna (1741-1761), the pulpit of the synodal bishops continued to serve as the purveyor and interpreter of Russia's military doctrine to the masses, especially during the Seven Years War 1756-1762.

ELIZABETH I OF RUSSIA daughter of Peter I:

- Patronized preachers and preaching at the court and in Russia.
- In 1742, for example, she has attended some 51 sermons.
- SYnodal Printing Press published 24,000 copies of various sermons preached that year.

(As RGADA documents show, these sermons were often copied in the dioceses in the manuscript form or found their ways into the handwritten adapted homilies of the parish priests in the countryside. KISLOVA Izdanie pridvornnykh propovedei)

SLIDE: GEDEON KRINOVSKII

Elizabeth's favorite preacher was the talented Gedeon Krinovskii, who was known in the church circles as "Gedeon nazhil million" due to his wealth and his large room wardrobe with silk stockings, diamond covered shoes, beautiful wigs and more. The bulk of his preaching was 1755-1760, when the Synodal Press published a volume of his annual sermons each year, with each volume being over 200 pages long and each volume coming out in 1200 copies.

The bulk of his preaching career took place the Seven Years' War, when just like Prokopovich and others before him, his sermons focused on the question of "just" war.

The just nature of Russian war in his sermons stem from the actions of this one man – Frederick the Great.

SLIDE: FREDERICK THE GREAT OF PRUSSIA

According to Krinovskii, Frederick showed an immoral “lust for power [*vlastoliubie*]” in invading the Electorate of Saxony in August 1756, inspiring England too to invade French territories. Instead of being good to its Christian neighbors, Krinovskii, argued these Christian powers (Prussia and England) wanted simply to “enlarge their borders,” at the expense of such “neighbors” like Saxony and Austria (for Prussia) and French Canada (for England). This “cursed cause” of territorial expansion and sheer pride blinded “many Christians” he stated and added that this curse drove the French and the British to fight over the colonies. “ They were like children fighting over a ball, the ball being the globe.” He stated.

Therefore, in his sermons, it was Russia’s duty to “to return peace to Europe,” and to destroy the “disruptor of common peace” as he called Frederick. Russia’s purpose for entering war was to end it. Not to seek any territories or colonies

For Krinovskii – Russia was an irenic power and was not interested in the war, but was rather forced into it. He used two types of proof in his sermons to show the peace-loving nature of Russia.

One was the fact that Russia entered into the war late, in 1757, not 1756. For Gedeon, this action demonstrated that the “peace-loving Empress” was thoroughly committed to her “revulsion to war.” She chose instead, QUOTE “to keep Her armies at the border” in 1756. The New David’s entry into the military conflict in the end was only QUOTE “forced” upon her by New Goliath.

Another key event was a peaceful takeover of East Prussia in Jan 1758. Koenigsberg city officials welcomed Fermor, organizing a “festive reception” for the Russian army “with bands playing and bells ringing.” “What is normally achieved through arms only was achieved with no arms altogether,” he argued. God allowed victory “with no shedding of human blood,” due to Russia’s “desire for peace.”

Yet, Krinovskii’s military sermons discussed not only for the victories of Russian campaigns, but also its strategic blunders. For example, the archbishop criticized the generals in Russian and Austrian armies whose lack of coordination

and foresight ended in the bloody stalemate at Zorndorf in August of 1758. Then, he lashed out at the internal competition between pompous Russian generals (such as between Rumiantsev, Fermor, and Saltykov) leading to further mistakes in Silesia and an unsuccessful siege of Kolberg in 1758.

Furthermore, Krinovskii had to take into account the presence of a Prussophile party of the court (led by no other than the heir apparent, Elisabeth's nephew Peter III). He also may have criticized Stepan F. Apraxin, President of the War College (Ministry). Apraxin's *bunder* had been a withdrawal of Russian troops from East Prussia in 1757, *after* winning the battle of Gross-Jaegersdorf in 1757 and *after* occupying most of the region. Apraxin expected Elisabeth's imminent death and immediate transfer of power to Peter III and his wife Catherine.

So, Krinovskii talked about these QUOTE "disloyal commanders" whose "madness" he said, "I now intend to reprimand" in his October 1759 homily. Krinovskii lambasted those generals who led Russian troops to stalemate and disaster by acting "in their own will" instead of obeying God and the Empress. He compared them to an Israelite king Achab who put trust in the numerical superiority of his troops and still lost the war to the king of Syria – Russia too had a major numerical superiority over Frederick's troops. Unlike humble David and Peter the Great, the sermon read, they took too much pride in their own pomp and tended to "sing triumph before the battle was over."

To counter the examples of bad generals (who resembled those pompous Israelite kings), Krinovskii's court sermon brought up models of good commanders whose military strategy imitated "David's fight with a fearsome giant."

The content Krinovskii's wartime sermons (which the Holy Synod printed in the same year they were preached) differed little from those of Prokopovich. Like preachers before him, Gedeon communicated current events, war aims and justifications to the empire's lay audiences. The message was clear: Russian

conscripts were dying in Prussia and Silesia for peace and justice, not for doctrinal purity of Orthodox faith. Like Prokopovich, Krinovskii emphasized the humility of Russia's David pitted against the onslaught of the proud Goliath. This very same biblical theme continued to inspire the pulpit rhetoric in the war against Russia's next Goliath - Napoleon.

SLIDE: PART II – NAPOLEONIC ARMAGEDDON (7 minutes)

### ***NAPOLEONIC ARMAGEDDON***

The theme of Russia's just wars fought for the protection of Europe, predictably, dominated the state sermons during the era of Russia's wars with Napoleonic France (1798-1812). Yet, the scale of European theatre in which Russia had to engage and the meaning assigned to it by Western European religious communities differed from previous conflicts. In most of Western Europe, the swift rise of Napoleon was interpreted in apocalyptic terms, earning the title of "Antichrist" from clergy all around the world. From New England and South Carolina, to Hamburg and Mexico City, the pulpits virtually unanimously proclaimed Napoleon to be the Antichrist, "the Son of Satan," or the "Grand Infidel," and so forth.

Russian Orthodox response to Bonaparte was rather reserved. While some of Russia's literary intellectuals, [[like Gavriil Derzhavin and Vasili Zhukovskii]] shared the pan-continental view on Napoleon being the Antichrist, the sermons delivered by the major bishops between 1798 and 1806 show no such reference. Filaret Drozdov (the future Metropolitan of Moscow), for example, spoke in very general terms about "suffering of those fighting for Fatherland," but offered no explanation of aims of those wars fought in the Alps in late 1790s.

The bishops' silence on this issue, however, broke in 1806 when the failure of the Third Coalition to defeat Napoleon at Austerlitz prompted Alexander I to issue a call to mobilization of militia in September of 1806.

#### 1806 STATEMENT

So, it is during the period of alarm and paranoia, that the Tsar insisted that the Holy Synod issue a public statement to whip up the mobilization of militia among Russia's peasants. This statement accused Napoleon of VERY GRAVE SINS. First, he was an atheist since "he abandoned the Christian faith" during "the God-hated Revolution" and now worshipped "idols, human creatures and prostitutes." Secondly he was a Muslim, who converted to Islam in Egypt and preached "Mohammed's Koran." Thirdly, he was a Jew who HAS legalized the QUOTE "hated Jewish council Synedrion" and is "aspiring to unite all Jews as a false messiah in order to overthrow a Church of Christ." UNQUOTE For the sake of time, I am not going to read the details of the statement – they are long and mind boggling, but they are interesting nevertheless. No mention of Catholicism – no mention of heresy of Western Church. Just the heresy of Islam or atheism. But the statement came as close as anything to portraying Napoleon as an AntiChrist. But not quite.

Right after proclaiming Napoleon to be a Muslim-Jewish-Atheist False Messiah in 1806, Alexander I signed the peace with this former Monster at the border city of Tilsit. Now what do you do as bishops, as members of the Holy Synod, who just accused Napoleon of the grave sins and now have to whitewash the whole thing? How do you do the damage control? Petr A. Viazemskii even recalled a joke proliferating in public that Alexander insisted on meeting French "Antichrist" on the river so that he could baptize Napoleon first. So, this was one of the ways to explain how a former antichrist became the tsar's best friend. But the joke didn't stick – one the many reasons why Alexander I met Napoleon on the raft in the middle of the river was because Alexander was afraid of being kidnapped. Remember, Napoleon had kidnapped the King of Spain.

SLIDE: TILSIT

In fact, the key bishops of the era, Metropolitan Platon Levshin and Archbishop Avgustin Vinogradskii may have been so embarrassed by this episode that none of their following statements and sermons between 1806 and 1815 refused to refer to Napoleon as a False Messiah, or a Muslim preacher or King of the Jews. The rhetoric of 1806 proclamation is not found in the patriotic homiletics delivered after the Peace of Tilsit and even after 1812.

SLIDE: AVGUSTIN VINOGRADSKII IMAGE

At first, this was evident in a so called false alarm sermon of 1807 preached by Archbishop Avgustin. According to the text of this homily, Napoleon, a former self-proclaimed Messiah, now came to his senses and “finally recognized [*poznal*] the mighty and high hand of God.” “Feeling the vanity of his designs,” continued the archbishop, “he bowed his neck in front of Alexander, the greatest among the rulers of earth.”

Yet, even after the start of war of 1812, the bishops refused to label Napoleon in specifically religious terms. Instead of presenting the war of 1812-1815 as a crusade against the false Messiah, the ecclesiastical propaganda stuck with more traditional themes of humble and weak Russia confronting an “arrogant and rude Goliath.” Thus, the sermons of Archbishop Avgustin condemned the pride of “arrogant Pharaoh, who walked through the countries filled with blood of his victims” and “plundered the universe in tyranny.”

At the same time, these sermons depicted Russia’s victory as miraculous, while Russia’s fight in Europe in 1812-1815 as a brotherly war of liberating fellow Europeans from the terrorizing tyrannical French emperor. “Meek David conquers proud Goliath,” wrote Avgustin in 1813 while in his Battle of the Nations sermon he highlighted that “enslaved nations” (Prussia, Austria, Saxon and Wuerttemberg

units) successfully vanquished the “invincible giant,” thus showing that “the weak defeated the strong.”

All of these printed sermons of the 1813-1814 church year cycle, presented Alexander I as “the Savior of Europe” who “returned peace, freedom and happiness to the kings of Europe,” restoring the “God-ordained” monarchies throughout the continent. When Archbishop Avgustin made it to Paris in 1814, he preached to the Russian troops stationed there. Avgustin argued that Russians returned “freedom and justice” to the Parisians and liberated France from, foreign Corsican oppression, restoring a true Frenchman, the Paris-born Bourbon on the throne. (Now today most of us view Corsicans as being purely French, it was not the case in 1814.) Russians now also vowed to “protect all the altars” and prevent the sin of “shedding the royal blood” – an obvious reference to the bishop’s disapproval of French revolution. An Orthodox country, noted the archbishop, was now the guarantee of the “sanctity” of pan-European Christendom and its legitimate royalty. Russia had become a continental ecumenical, but distinctively Christian, superpower.

### ***For Faith and the Faithful***

***The Ottoman Wars: for Faith and the Faithful deciding instead “to keep Her armies at the border. (5 minutes)***

**The Christian ecumenicalism of Russian state sermons, however, had their limits. First of all, they did not include traitors. To Feofan Prokopovich, Ukrainian Hetman Ivan Mazepa was not only a heretic, but also an apostate, someone who betrayed Orthodox faith and communed with the devil. He had similar, heterodox-charged language in describing the Cossacks of the Don and Zaporozhian Hosts who rebelled during the reign of Peter I.**

**In all sermons, the Christian ecumenicalism did not extend to other religions, especially to Islam. Military homilies delivered on the occasions of numerous Russo-Ottoman wars of the eighteenth century constituted a sole example of wars of the religion or wars for religious causes per excellence. Curiously, these sermons contained virtually no references to David and Goliath, contained little use of ancient classical imagery, and hardly ever bothered to validate this war as “just,” beyond religious reasons.**

Some of the earliest eighteenth century examples of anti-Islamic rhetoric in military propaganda came from the sermons of Gavriil Buzhinskii, who had used the slogan “For Faith and the Faithful” to describe Russian military effort in the Balkans. Just as the banner slogan suggested, for Buzhinskii, [the purpose of Russia’s fight was twofold – first, to propagate Christian faith to Turkey, [so that “the cross of Christ be preached there.”] Secondly, Russia had to fulfill its special “divine purpose” to the faithful, to “deliver those hostage in the Hagarite captivity.”

#### BUZHINSKII

This theme of religious war of liberation continued to play a dominant role in the military propaganda of the Russo-Turkish wars of eighteenth century, especially during Russia’s most successful military campaign against Turkey between 1768 and 1774 which culminated in the peace of Küçük Kaynarça.

Perhaps the most popular preacher at the court of Catherine and in Russia at the time was Platon Levshin of Moscow. Platon was thoroughly influenced by Western theology, but he was also a great preacher. As Catherine herself had noted:

SLIDE: PLATON LEVSHIN: “Father Platon does to us whatever he wishes us to be,” said Catherine the Great, “If he wants us to cry – we cry, if he wants us to rejoice – we rejoice!”

His sermons supported the idea of the war against the Ottomans as a religious conflict. He openly called Turks “infidel Hagarites,” and “deviant Muslims” and called on Russian soldiers, officers and General Staff to liberate the Christian lands of the Balkans “up to the walls of Byzantium.” He never used such a language when referring to the French in the Napoleonic campaigns. The French were not infidels.

#### BATTLE OF CHESME

One of his most influential homilies in this regard was delivered at the conclusion of the Battle of Chesme where Russian Navy led by Aleksei Orlov – the brother of Catherine’s lover Grigorii Orlov - virtually obliterated the Ottoman Navy in a very successful night time attack in the Aegean.

Orlov’s appearance in the Greek islands was in itself a surprise – Russia had no naval bases in the Mediterranean, however, the Baltic Fleet traveled through the English Channel and the Gibraltar to surprise the Turks near the Dardanelles.

The bishop decided to deliver his sermon at the gravesite of Peter the Great with Catherine and all nobles in attendance. During this occasion, Platon tried to summon Peter the Great back to life by knocking on the coffin with his staff, saying “wake up Peter, see the glory of the Russian Fleet which you have built!” But it also scared the wits out of some nobles, who were so taken by the spectacle that they were afraid that Peter indeed might rise up and punish them for their corrupt fiscal misdeeds. Finally, to make the spectacle even more impressive, the sermon ended with Catherine kneeling down and crying in front of the coffin.

Platon’s sermon did not only elaborate on the religious nature of Russia’s war, but also communicated to the nobility and the audience at large, the real strategic aims of the war. Russian Navy’s surprise appearance sparked the Greek Maniot rebellion of 1770s, with a great hope for Greek independence. The bishop praised the Greeks but was very careful to note that

liberation would entail a formation of a Greek state. “A natural order of things makes him [Russian nation, *narod*] a lawful ruler [*obladatel*] of those [Mediterranean] regions,” he argued. Unlike any other nationalities in Europe, Russia was best suited to govern the area, since “a Russian is better able to rule the humankind in general.” The Greeks, however, were not best suited to rule themselves or humankind in general. What is interesting about this argument is that it reflected an opinion of Voltaire in his correspondence with Catherine, for whom Russia (and not Greece) was the only worthy tenant of Constantinople. Later on, 9 years later, this sermon would feed Catherine’s fantasy that her junior grandson, whom she aptly named Constantine, would ascend the throne of the Second Rome – an Enlightened capital of a state that would become the vassal of the Enlightened Apotheosis of Catherine the Great and the Russian Empire. But what is even more interesting, is that this is the first time that we see Russia’s formulations of desired objectives towards Constantinople. These very same objectives – by the way – would drive Nicholas II into World War II in 1914, so the origins of the Spring 1915 Entente Conference by which Constantinople would be transferred to Russian control and not Greek control go back to 1770, to Catherine, Voltaire and the sermons of Platon Levshin!

#### CATHERINE APOTHEOSIS

This sermon proved to be an international blockbuster – shortly translated into Greek, English and French languages, and earning an accolade from Voltaire who stated that this sermon to be “one of the most beautiful monuments of rhetoric. Voltaire hoped – in vain – that proliferation of this sermon would indeed arouse other European nations to join Russia, the rising ecumenical and Christian power, in its last anti-Muslim crusade in European history.

So, as this research demonstrates, Russian Orthodox sermons delivered during major military conflicts served as a form of propaganda that sought to explain Russia’s military aims to the public, boost the morale and – very importantly – explain the supposedly noble justifications of the war effort, a defensive fight of David against Goliath.

So, some concluding remarks:

READ FROM CONCLUDING REMARKS SLIDE

New Horizons: Beyond 1815

The chronological parameters of the study do not end in 1815 with Napoleon. I am currently considering whether the study can be expanded beyond 1815 into the later imperial era and World War I. Having read a number of sermons from the Crimean War, I have more questions than answers. The sermons of Archbishop Innokentii (Borisov), for example, are full of religiously-charged rhetoric against the Ottomans during the Crimean War, but I am still looking to find any references to heresy of the Sardinians, the British and the French, fighting the Russians at Sevastopol. They were portrayed as being fooled by the Ottomans, as enemies of the Russian state but not the enemies of the faith.

In World War I period, I have looked at the sermons of the 1915-1916 liturgical cycle preached and published in Penza and Tobolsk, and especially those preached by the Bishop of Penza Vladimir (Putiatia) and Bishop Varnava (Nakropin) of Tobolsk. I am surprised at how much emphasis do these sermons place on the confrontation with the Germans and the Austrians, and how little attention there is in relation to the Ottomans. I do not know why, but it sometimes appears, as if the Caucasian Front in 1916 does not get much attention at all. What I do not fully understand in those sermons is growing skepticism about and criticism of Russia's war effort, or even defeatist undertones that this war was a punishment to the Russian people, the war for our sins.

But as I continue to navigate these homiletic treasures, I hope that the input, comments, advice and critique of my colleagues will guide me to the answers that I seek. And with that, I yield the floor to questions and comments.