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The struggle for the transition to the "royal faith". From the History of Orthodoxy in the Baltic States

Abstract:
The study relevance lies in the fact that in the public consciousness in our time, the Baltic States are defined as a border region, which is associated with the clash of different religions, languages and cultures. It is also connected with the problems of self-identification of peoples, especially after the collapse of the USSR. The cultural-historical and comparative methods are the main methods of research. The Baltic States are the territory of the former Livonia, which later makes up three Russian provinces – Estonia, Courland, and Livonia. These provinces formed a separate general government of the Russian Empire – the Baltic Region. According to the German name of the Baltic Sea – Ostsee, this region was even called Ostsee in the Russian press (now it is the area of Estonia and Latvia). Orthodoxy was the first Christian confession that came to the present-day Latvia, and Estonia territory in the 11th century from neighbouring Russian regions. Russian Orthodoxy has been subjected to various oppressions in various periods. The study purpose is to analyze the struggle for the transition to the "royal faith" in the Baltic States. To achieve the study purpose, archival materials and materials from the works of leading Russian, Estonian, Latvian,

and Polish historians in the field of the topic were used. The study authors conclude that the indigenous inhabitants of the Baltic States were not only loyal subjects of the Russian emperors but also loyal citizens of the USSR. And the issues of religion play a decisive role in the identification and fate of peoples, being the main issue in the border and developed territories.

Keywords:
Baltic States, Baltic countries, Riga Diocese, Orthodoxy in the Baltic States, Ostseian law, half-Believers, Lutheranism, resettlement movement, Baltic Russians.

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Борьба за переход в «царскую веру». Из истории Православия в Прибалтике

Аннотация:
Актуальность состоит в том, что в общественном сознании в наше время Прибалтику определяют как пограничный регион, что связано со столкновением различных религий, языков и культур. Так же это связано с проблемами самоидентификации народов, особенно после распада СССР. Прибалтика, это – территория бывшей Ливонии, в дальнейшем составляющая три российские губернии – Эстляндскую, Курляндскую и Лифляндскую. Эти губернии составляли отдельное генерал-губернаторство Российской империи – Прибалтийский край. По немецкому названию Балтийского моря – Ostsee, этот край даже в русской прессе назывался Остзейским (ныне – территория Эстонии и Латвии). Православие стало первым христианским исповеданием, которое пришло на территорию нынешних Латвии и Эстонии ещё в XI веке из соседних русских областей. В различные периоды Православие как русская вера подвергалось различным притеснениям. Целью исследования является анализ борьбы за переход в «царскую веру» на территории Прибалтики. Культурно-исторический и сравнительный метод являются основными методами исследования. Для достижения цели исследования были использованы архивные материалы, а также материалы трудов ведущих российских, эстонских, латвийских и польских историков в области темы данного исследования. Авторы исследования делаю

вывод, что коренные жители Прибалтики были не только верноподданными российских императоров и лояльными гражданами СССР. А вопросы вероисповедания выполняют решающую роль в идентификации и судьбах народов, являясь главным вопросом на пограничных и осваиваемых территориях.

Ключевые слова:
Прибалтика, «страны Балтии», Рижская епархия, православие в Прибалтике; остзейское право, полуверцы, лютеранство, переселенческое движение, прибалтийские русские.

Introduction

The relevance of the study of this topic lies in the fact that in the public consciousness in our time, the Baltic States are defined as a border region, which is associated with the clash of different religions, languages and cultures. It is also connected with the problems of self-identification of peoples, especially after the collapse of the USSR. The Baltic States are the territory of the former Livonia, which later makes up three Russian provinces – Estonia, Courland and Livonia. These provinces formed a separate general government of the Russian Empire – the Baltic Region. According to the German name of the Baltic Sea – Ostsee, this region was even called Ostsee in the Russian press (now, it is the territory of Estonia and Latvia). Orthodoxy was the first Christian confession that came to present-day Latvia and Estonia territory from neighbouring Russian regions in the 11th century. Russian Orthodoxy has been subjected to various oppressions in various periods, e.g., from 1918 to 1926, 28 churches were taken away from the Orthodox Church of Latvia, but the peoples of this region aspired to Russian culture and Russian faith.

The study purpose is to analyze the struggle for the transition to the "royal faith" in the Baltic States.

Based on the set purpose, the following tasks were solved:

- Analyze the Baltic region from the perspective of the Orthodox region.
- Characterize the development of religion in the first five centuries of the development of Orthodoxy in the Baltic States.
- Substantiate the movement of Latvians and Estonians for the conversion to Orthodoxy in the second and third thirds of the 19th century, as well as the first 14 years of the 20th century historically.

Historical, comparative, logical and cultural-historical research methods were used to solve the tasks.

To achieve the study purpose, archival materials and materials from the works of leading Russian, Estonian, Latvian and Polish historians in the field of the study

topic, e.g., A. Adamson, N. Balashov, S.L. Kravets, I. Belyaev, G. Friz, A.V. Gaponenko, A.V. Gavrilin, J. Kahk, M.V. Kirchanov, A.D. Malnach, D.P. Ogitsky, E.I. Scherbakova, M.V. Sidorova, K. Sijlivask, H. Strods, S.A. Tsoya, S. Valdmaa, L.M. Vorobyova, S. Zetterberg, and others were used.

1. The Baltic States as the Orthodox land

The modern Baltic States, consisting of three former Soviet republics, are of little interest to the world. Only the inadequacy of Baltic politicians, economic decline and population extinction are the topics of a few analytical studies devoted to the region. In modern Russia, the belief prevails that the "Baltic countries" have forever separated from Russia, and the elite has always been against Russia. Moreover, in the public consciousness, for some reason, the Baltic States are considered part of the Western European world. The arguments that the Baltic States are "part of Europe" are mainly reduced to the architecture of cities, the Latin alphabet in writing and the predominance of Western Christian denominations among believers of indigenous nationalities.

However, these ideas are not entirely objective. The indigenous inhabitants of the Baltic States were not only loyal subjects of the Russian emperors but also loyal citizens of the USSR. Russian culture and faith have been sought by the peoples of this region in different historical epochs. Although many Baltic politicians periodically proclaim that the Baltic States are part of "Europe" and not Russia, the historical and geopolitical peculiarity of the Baltic region as a specific part of historical Russia will not disappear from the desire of individual politicians. The Baltic States are Russia's window to Europe, but not Europe. Proclaiming yourself a European state and being a European state are two huge differences.

The population of the region is heterogeneous by confessional affiliation. Lithuanian believers overwhelmingly adhere to Catholicism. The majority of Latvian believers profess Lutheranism; and Catholicism is widespread in Latgale, the historical region of Latvia. Estonians are traditionally Lutherans and partly Orthodox. In Lithuania, the role of the Catholic religion has always been significant. Even in the 21st century, Lithuanians are considered one of the most religious peoples in Europe like Poles.

In the 16th century, Protestantism gained a certain popularity in the Lithuanian lands. The very first work in Lithuanian was Luther's *Simple Words of the Catechism* as presented by Martin Mosvidius (Majvidas). This book was published in 1547 in Prussia, in Konigsberg (Toporov, 1999). However, most Lithuanians remained pagans and did not convert to Protestantism at all. As a result of the persistent activity

of the Jesuit Order and the authorities, the Lithuanians returned to Catholicism and are still considered a Catholic nation.

However, Latvians and Estonians, in general, have never been zealous about the Lutheran faith, in the past, it was considered "lordly", imposed by the conquerors. It is not surprising that during the wars and upheavals of the 16th and early 17th centuries, the Baltic States inhabitants almost lost Christianity and again returned to the worship of sacral groves and trees. Jesuits in Lithuania and Latgale, Protestant pastors in Livonia, Courland and Estonia baptized the Balts a second time. However, sacred groves and trees continued to be objects of religious worship. Thus, the last sacral linden was cut down only in 1836 (Belyaev, 1901). Until the end of the 19th century, the custom was widespread among Latvians to put various things in the grave with the deceased that would be useful to him in another world – underwear, a pipe with tobacco, for women – threads, fabrics, etc., as well as money. The rite of posthumous "treats" of the deceased was also practised.

During the period of Latvia's "first independence", despite the proclamation of Lutheranism as the state religion, a movement of "Dievturs" (pagans) arose among the Latvian intelligentsia.

The attitude of Estonians and Latvians to the "lord's faith" is evidenced by such facts. Estonia is considered one of the most atheized countries in the world. According to the 2012 census, 54% of Estonian residents did not belong to any religious trends. In 2019, 59.7% of Estonian residents identified themselves as atheists and agnostics (Population of Estonia, 2021). Similarly, 43.8% of Latvians in Latvia called themselves non-religious (Population of Latvia, 2021).

However, the Christianization of the Baltic peoples could not do away with many traces of paganism. It is no coincidence that the purely pagan holiday of the summer solstice – Ligo, is the principal national holiday of Latvians. On this day, the songs, which had a characteristic refrain about an appeal to the sun to rise above the fields, were sung.

Folk songs of the Baltic peoples are also overflowing with pagan motifs and symbols. Currently, supporters of the revival of paganism are very active in all the Baltic republics. However, they do not profess ancient paganism, about which we have little information but subjective reconstructions of paganism.

Among the Russian believers of the Baltic States, the majority are Orthodox. There are also Old Believers. However, Orthodoxy is not only the "Russian faith" in the Baltic States. Some Estonians and Latvians are also followers of Orthodoxy. In addition, Orthodoxy was professed by the so-called "half-Believers", i.e., the Finnish-speaking Setu people living in a lane with Russians on the border of the

Pskov region (in the Pechora region) and Estonia. Significantly, 93 thousand Russians lived in the "first" or "bourgeois" Estonia in 1933. And in general, there were 213 thousand Orthodox people united in 160 parishes (Zetterberg, 2013). In addition, there were also Old Believers among the Russians, who were not counted as Orthodox by statistics.

During the "first independence", Orthodoxy as the Russian faith was subjected to various oppressions. So, in Estonia, although President K. Piats himself was Orthodox, in 1936, the Gregorian calendar was forcibly introduced into the schedule of church holidays. The authorities opened Lutheran parishes among Russian districts in the west of Lake Peipsi (Hiyo, 2012).

Over the following decades of the 20th century, during the "second independence", Estonians became even more disillusioned with Lutheranism. Is it any wonder that Orthodoxy turned out to be the most widespread religion in Estonia, to which 16% of the country's residents aged 15 years and older consider themselves (The most widespread religion in Estonia. Orthodoxy, 2013). Lutheranism took second place – with 10% of the total population.

Since December 1, 2002, the Cathedral of the Saints of the Estonian Land has been celebrated in Estonia. There is an icon *Cathedral of the Saints of the Land of Estonia*, which is located in Tallinn's Alexander Nevsky Cathedral. Liturgical texts were compiled. They included the canon, which mentions the names of 17 saints (On December 1, the Russian Orthodox Church commemorates the holy martyrs of the Estonian land, 2006), which can be divided into three groups, according to the time of their feat: the first group is the oldest ascetics of Orthodoxy, the second group is the continuers of pious feats of the Russian Empire, the third group is the New Martyrs and confessors.

Orthodoxy occupies a strong position in Latvia. About a quarter of Latvian residents consider themselves Orthodox (Orthodoxy in Latvia, 2006). A similar situation is described by A.D. Malinach, "According to the Latvian Orthodox Church (LPC), there are 350 thousand Orthodox Christians in the country, but the exact figures are not known, since there is no registration of believers in Latvia. According to some researchers, in particular, Professor of the University of Latvia A.V. Gavrilin, the real number of Orthodox parishioners is twice or even three times lower and ranges from 120-150 thousand people. It correlates more closely with the number of Orthodox parishes as of 2016, when, according to the data of the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, there were 125." (Malnach, 2017) Russians in the interwar period "lived very closely, much more closely than today, connected with the Orthodox Church, which was partly a continuation of the old order, but also to

a large extent a way to preserve their identity and identity in isolation from their historical homeland, which many (non-)Russian people felt like a tragedy." (Malnach, 2017)

During the "first independence", Orthodoxy in Latvia was persecuted. Thus, from 1918 to 1926, 28 churches were taken away from the Orthodox Church, eight of which were transferred to other religious denominations. In 1923, the Latvian government officially transferred the residence of the Orthodox bishop – the Riga St Alexeyev Monastery – to the Roman Catholic Church. In addition, the building of the Riga Theological Seminary was transferred to the University of Latvia, the building of the Theological School to the Military School (Gavrilin, 2000). In general, the Orthodox Church in Latvia has had only limited, incomplete rights since 1920. "The state has nationalized or transferred to other owners' part of the church property (in particular, the premises of the Alekseevsky Monastery, the bishop's residence, the building of the theological seminary and theological school in the centre of Riga, the Liepaja Naval Cathedral of St Nicholas... The church managed to find its place in the new state only as a result of complex political and legal processes" (Tsoya, 2017). In 1934, shortly after the establishment of the dictatorship of Ulmanis, John Pommer, Archbishop of Riga and All Latvia, an ethnic Latvian by origin, was assassinated (Keler, 1999). However, it was not possible to suppress Orthodoxy then. Thus, in 1935 there were 174,389 Orthodox believers in Latvia.

To assess the peculiarities of the religious state of the modern Baltic States, it is necessary to recall the history of Orthodoxy in the region. Consider the religious history of the Baltic States of Estonia and Latvia. In the narrowest sense of the word, the Baltic States are the territory of the former Livonia, which later make up three Russian provinces – Estonia, Courland and Livonia. These provinces formed a separate general government of the Russian Empire – the Baltic Region. According to the German name of the Baltic Sea – Ostsee, this region was even called Ostsee in the Russian press (it is the territory of Estonia and Latvia now). The review of books, collections of documents and other literature on the history of Orthodoxy in Latvia is compiled in the context of S. Tsoya's research, where he examines how different ideas about the history of Orthodoxy collided on the pages of books and articles (Tsoya, 2017).

2. The First Five Centuries of Orthodoxy in the Baltic States

Orthodoxy has been known in the Baltic lands since the Baptism of Rus. In any case, in the middle of the 12th century in the Novgorod and Pskov dioceses, there were rules that Orthodox priests should be guided by when announcing newly

baptized Chudins (the people of Chud') (Cheshikhin, 1894). The fact that there were Orthodox priests among the Latvians, can be judged by the signature on the altar Gospel, written around 1270, kept in the Rumyantsev Museum. The caption reads: "The same books are written by Gyurgi, the son of Popov, who speaks Latvian, from the settlement." (Preobrazhensky, 2012) By the way, in this signature, there was one of the first mentions of the ethnonym "Latvian". The local tribal nobility showed interest in Christianity. So, at the end of the 12th century, the Latvian foreman Talibald and his sons were Orthodox (Dimante, 2017). Probably, there were other examples about which information has not been preserved due to the small number and poor preservation of sources. When the German crusaders began to conquer these lands, it turned out to their fury that they had been familiar with Christianity for a long time. In many villages, there are several Orthodox churches. However, since the Crusaders, the Orthodox were "schismatics" (schismatics), who did not obey the pope, the local Orthodox, together with the pagans, began to lead to Catholicism with fire and sword, killing the "stubborn".

The Orthodoxy spread among the Baltic peoples is evidenced not only by ancient chronicles but also by the linguistics data. So, in the Old Russian, there were such loanwords related to church life in the Latvian language as baznīca (bozhnitsa, church, chapel, which was placed where there are no temples), krusts (cross), svēts (holy, sacred), svētki (Yuletide), svece (candle), zvans (ringing, bell), grēks (sin), gavēt (to say, fast), karogs (banner), nedēļa (week), etc. Russian words, like words entered through the Russian language, which have been preserved to this day as part of the Latvian vocabulary with some correction of meaning, can be dated to the 6th and 7th centuries. ... Most likely, the first borrowings appeared thanks to enterprising Russian merchants, who mastered trade routes in the Baltic States... Most of the borrowings of that distant era (and there are many dozens of them) have been still used in the modern Latvian language, with the preservation or modification of meanings" (Dimante, 2017). Back in the early 20th century, A.A. Shakhmatov substantiated the idea that in the past, there was a Slavic-Baltic proto-language (Shakhmatov, 1919).

It is also no coincidence that such a word of the Estonian language as "raamat" (book) is also derived from the Russian word "gramota" (letter, writing paper) or the word "rist" from the Russian "krest" (cross). The word "papp" is formed from the Russian word "pop" (priest, pop). This means that the ancestors of Estonians got acquainted with the faith of Christ not through Catholic Latin, but Old Russian Christian texts.

The Lithuanian word “knyga” (book) has a clear origin. Among Lithuanians, Palm Sunday is still called “Verbu sekmadienis”, or simply “Verba”, although the Lithuanian name of the willow tree itself has nothing to do with this word. Linguists refer the following words to the group of modern Lithuanian words having Orthodox-Russian origin: Velika (The Great Day – Easter), Kalados (kolyada – Christmas), Krikatas (Epiphany), rojas (paradise), krikatynos (christening), kumas (godfather), Trajce (Trinity), pravadai (seeing-off, radonitsa), viera (faith), zokonas (law), griechas (sin), grieshnykas (sinner), neshcestyvas (wicked), kodyti (to incense), minychas (monk), prysega, prysiega (oath), prisiegoti (swear an oath). Bajytis (to swear by the name of God), swodba (wedding), biesas (devil), gromata (letter), dijakas (writer), nedila (a week both in the sense of “Sunday” and “edmitsa”, i.e., seven days). Up to the 18th century, the days of the week had such names among the Lithuanians: paldienikas, utarnikas, sereda, cietviergas, petnicia, subota.” (Ogitsky, 1983)

During archaeological excavations, objects of Christian worship, crosses (from Byzantium or Russian production), pendants with the image of saints are often found. The local Latgalian princes in Yersik and Talava are known to have adopted Orthodoxy. In 1994, during archaeological excavations in the oldest Lithuanian settlement of Kyarnava, Orthodox burial sites dating back to the beginning and middle of the 13th century were discovered.

When the Crusaders conquered the Baltic lands after brutal wars (except Lithuania), all local residents, Orthodox and the pagans were forcibly baptized into Catholicism. A.B. Grachev, the researcher of these events, noted: “The success of the Crusaders was largely facilitated by hostile relations between the indigenous peoples of the region, the discontent of Estonians and Latgalians with the policy of Novgorod, just like contradictions between the Russian lands and principalities themselves. These circumstances did not allow the timely formation and opposition to the Crusaders of a military alliance of the Baltic peoples with the Principality of Polotsk and the Novgorod state.” (Grachev, 2006) During the Reformation, the descendants of the “dog knights”, having converted to Lutheranism, at the same time crossed their serfs. However, as noted above, this was largely a formal action. Estonians and Latvians became Protestants formally, as they had previously been formal Catholics, largely retaining pagan customs and beliefs. As the traveller Johann David Wunderer, who passed through the lands of modern Latvia to Russia in 1590, noted, Latvians and Estonians worshipped sacred trees, the sun, the moon, and the shadows of the dead. The Courland quartermaster Pavel Eygorn wrote about this in 1613 (Belyaev, 1901).

It was necessary to punish those people who did not attend church service to introduce the Christianity peasants. Sometimes I had to lock the parishioners in the church until the service was over – otherwise, the peasants would have gone home. In 1644, Pastor I. Gutslaf wrote about his Estonian flock: "They know nothing about God, nor about the word of God, nor the faith of God, nor about prayers. Examples, which prove their darkness and superstition, worship of idols and witchcraft power, are innumerable. Most of them are pagans in the full sense of the word; They know nothing about Christ except that they have been baptized." (Moora et al., 1961) Sermons in German were as incomprehensible to the peasants as Latin was during the rule of the Order.

There was a permanent Russian population in the Baltic States for all three centuries of the Livonian Order's existence and two centuries of Swedish domination. It stood out not so much by its size but by its specific position and religion. For example, Riga has always had a Russian population. Back in 1201, just in the year of the Riga foundation, the murder of a certain Russian merchant and his helmsman on the Western Dvina is mentioned. In Riga, the "Russian courtyard" (or "Russian quarter") appeared already in 1212, even under Albert. Russian lived there, as well as merchants from Russian cities. Ten years later, in 1222, in one of the letters sent to Rome, Albert anxiously informed Pope Honorius the Third that Orthodox Russians were coming to Livonia to live and had a negative impact on local residents who converted to Latinism (Catholicism) (Keussler, 1900). In 1229, a trade agreement was concluded between Riga and Smolensk. He was called "Mstislav's Pravda", i.e., "agreement", after the Smolensk Prince Mstislav Davydovich. This document was compiled by "smart husband Panteley" and "the best pop Jeremiah". In addition to Riga, representatives of other cities of the Baltic coast, including Lubeck, Dortmund and Bremen, participated in the signing of the Mstislav's Pravda. At first, Russians in Riga were given equal rights with German settlers. They could settle in Riga, becoming its burghers (Mettig, 1900). Both sides received the right to trade and establish the trading posts: Russian – in German cities, and Germans – in Russian cities. Russian farmstead in Riga (Dat Russche dorp) now has received an official status. In general, in the 13th century, 300 Russian merchants were owning real estate in Riga, whose names are mentioned in chronicles (Gaponenko, 2010). Russian merchants received several advantages over the locals. For example, when a Riga judge sentenced a citizen to death, he could live for some time if he borrowed money from a Smolensk or Polotsk merchant before his arrest. The magistrate was obliged to first ensure the debt payment to the Russian from the funds of this burgher and only then to carry out the sentence. If a criminal killed a Russian

merchant in Riga and the villain was not found, the city was obliged to pay the family of the deceased several kilograms of silver. A citizen of Riga suspected of a crime could be thrown into prison before the trial. But a Russian merchant in Livonia was bailed out up to court. In Livonia, no one had the right to challenge a Russian merchant to a duel (Gurin, 2013).

"Under 1297, the Russian St Nicholas Church in Riga, which arose much earlier, is mentioned. In the Riga city archives dating back to the 14th century, 88 Russian merchants were personally noted. Seven of them were Riga citizens and homeowners. Here are their names: Efrem, Semyon, Timofey, Peter, Dmitry, Akim the Furrier and Demas the Bath Attendant (possibly Denis). It is known that a certain Timoshka traded in the city of Lubeck (the metropolis of Riga) around 1327. Since 1330, five Russian merchants had permanent trading places on Town Hall Square. Probably, rich creditors Stepan with his son Xenophon and a certain Kuzma belong to the citizens, as like large merchants Ivan and his namesake." (Berezhkov, 1877) Russians owned houses all over Riga – both within the city and in the suburbs. In addition to buildings, they also had gardens outside the city wall and meadows on the other side of the Western Dvina. In documents under 1444, the presence of a Russian cemetery and an almshouse in Riga was mentioned. The presence of the poorhouse means that Russians lived in Riga not only during trade trips but also constantly as locals. Russian village in Riga calls "das Russische Dorf", i.e., a Russian village, in the local hereditary book (Erbenbuch). It was located in the northern part of the city near the Sand Gate. At the end of the Order Era in 1522, Russian small traders were allowed to unite in a special workshop in Riga.

In the city of Tallinn, formerly Revel, named Kolyvan earlier, there is still an ancient Vene street, i.e., Russian, in the Old City. Russians began to live on this street in the 15th century. Before that time, the Russian quarter in Revel was located to the north of the Small Sea Gate. Orthodox St Nicholas Church was built there (the very first extant mention of it in written sources dates back to 1371 but indirect evidence suggests that it existed there before). The Revel burghers singled out local Orthodox competitors in trade and crafts and sought to weaken their influence by various legislative tricks. Various discriminatory laws and offensive rules were introduced for Russians and Orthodox in general. Thus, the city authorities of Revel forbade stove heating in St Nicholas Church and direct access from it to Vienna Street (the doors of the church faced the courtyard).

In the old Yuryev, there were, apparently, especially many Russians. Russian quarter existed there – the "Russian End". A seal of the Russian End was found ("Seal of Yurievskiya") in Pskov during archaeological excavations. Russians in

Yuryev enjoyed extraterritoriality, were subject only to their Russian court, were judged according to the "Russian Agreement", were exempt from many taxes and duties.

However, in the Order state, there were periodic persecutions of the Orthodox. In 1455 and 1461, the Germans attacked Russian churches in Yuryev. Russian End on Christmas Day, 1472, 73 residents of the Russian End, among whom was the priest of the local Russian church, Isidore, after refusing to convert to Catholicism, were drowned in the Omovzha River. In the spring, during the flood, the incorruptible bodies of the holy martyrs and among them, the body of the Holy Martyr Isidore in full vestments were found bypassing Russian merchants on the shore. The Orthodox Church celebrates January 8 as the Memorial Day of Isidore Yurievsky and 72 victims in Yuriev. In 1501, during the next war of the Order with Russia, the Yuriev authorities arrested 150 local Russian merchants at the same time.

A native of Yuryev was Pskov Saint Serapion (1390-1480), a monk of the Spaso-Eleazar Monastery, who left Yuryev because of the persecution of Catholics. John Shestnik, the founder of the Pskov-Pechersk Monastery, also came out of Yuryev.

Russian merchants and artisans, who lived in the cities, went all over Livonia with goods very numerous Russian small retailers – "retailers".

In Narva bordering Russia, Russians were probably also very numerous. In any case, the local Germans were distinguished by their excellent knowledge of the Russian language. The Livonian Order recruited translators from the residents of Narva. Russian was spoken not only by burghers but also by the burgomaster (city foreman) Friedrich Korf in the early 16th century.

Finally, there was also a Russian rural population in the northeast of modern Estonia, west of the Narova River. Russian place names (Porskovo, Syrenets) were already mentioned in written sources of the 14th and 15th centuries, and villages with Russian names existed even before the appearance of the Crusaders. The inhabitants maintained Orthodoxy. In the 16th century, there was a church in Syrenets. Russian fishers also settled on the western shore of Lake Peipsi. It is known that in 1367 the servants of the Derpt bishop (the city of Yuriev) destroyed the Russian fishers' light buildings standing on the lakeshore in the bishop's possessions.

Under 1382, the Livonian chronicles mention the Russian village of Russen Dorp, which had 26 hectares of land near Venden (Cheshikhin, 1884-1885). The village belonged to the knight Johann Tiesenhausen. In addition, there are mentions of other Russian villages (Vendever, Vendekulya, Kvevel), but their names are greatly distorted by Livonian chroniclers. Therefore, it is hard to establish their exact names.

A significant part of Livonia was occupied by Russian troops during the Livonian War of 1558-83. Most of the captured Livonians in Russia converted to Orthodoxy. However, those citizens, who remained faithful to Lutheranism could, by virtue of the religious tolerance prevailing in Russia, openly profess their faith. A certain pastor Johann Wetterman voluntarily went to Russia, where he fulfilled his pastoral duty. The pastor travelled to Russian cities where Livonians were stationed. By the way, Wetterman was respected by the tsar himself, who showed the pastor his famous library.

A specific administration was introduced in the part of Livonia occupied by Russian troops. Yuriev voivode has now become "the governor and voivode of the Livonian land". Russian voivodes were also in Pernov (on the lands recaptured from the Swedes in the campaigns of 1571-75), Kokengaz (former Kukonos). In addition, many Livonian lands were ruled by the Pskov voivode. Most of the "new German cities" were under the control of the City Order. It was specially created for the final incorporation of Livonia into the administrative structure of the Moscow State (Buganov, 1962).

The active activity of Orthodox missionaries began among Estonian and Latvian peasants. In Yuryev, an episcopal chair was created (or rather, recreated), headed by the abbot of the Pskov-Pechersk Monastery, Cornelius. The former castle of the Derpt bishop became the residence of Cornelius in Yuryev, and the former Dominican Church of Mary Magdalene became the main church (sovereign one). Orthodox churches were founded in the cities taken (in particular, Orthodox churches were built in Fellina, Pernov (Pärnu), Syrenets (Vasknarve). For the needs of the Orthodox Church, religious buildings of other faiths were engaged, new parishes were created, the Pskov-Pechersk Monastery was endowed with the granted lands. The tsar granted the Pskov-Pechersk Monastery "empty lands", which were inhabited by alien people – "runaway Estonians". In addition to the fugitives and their descendants, a small Finnish ethnic group Setu, very close to Estonians in language, but professing Orthodoxy, lives in the immediate vicinity of the Pskov-Pechersk Monastery to this day. Probably, the Pskov-Pechersk monks had a fairly good command of the Finnish languages, which allowed them to conduct active missionary activities. Orthodoxy has indeed gained a certain spread among Estonians. The reports of the Jesuits presented information even a quarter of a century later.

In the Latvian lands, the amount of Orthodox population also sharply increased, which, however, was constantly present here before. For example, the representative of Pope Anthony Possevino in 1582, passing through Livonia, decided

to hold a Catholic service in the town of Illukst. And I found out that all the residents here are Orthodox by religion.

The Russians were clearly in no hurry to spread Orthodoxy. Russian soldiers, however, did not have enough Orthodox priests to meet the spiritual needs of even Russian soldiers, as evidenced by the numerous complaints of Russian voivodes. So, in January 1578, the governor of Kryborg, Prince Matvey Putyatin, wrote to the tsar: "My dear sir, have mercy, spare us your serfs, send a priest from Pskov, your sovereign's people are dying without a spiritual father, and we are your sovereign's serfs, we live like lost sheep" (Grala, 2014). So, the missionary fervour of the few priests in Livonia even had to be restrained. According to a modern researcher, "the tsarist administration could not successfully solve any key problems in Livonia that were generated by the annexation of territories with other national, social, political and religious structures" (Grala, 2014).

However, the Livonian War ended with Russia's defeat. Together with the army, Russian residents of Livonian cities, much like many natives of the region of various origins and religions, left Livonia. The Orthodox clergy also left with the settlers and troops, taking away icons and church utensils. Yuriev bishop left Derpt, and his see was abolished (Possevino, 1983).

After the collapse of the Livonian Order, its possessions were divided between Sweden and Poland, which immediately began a war to inherit Livonia with each other. Protestant Sweden won these wars. As a result, Estonia and Latvia remained Protestant. However, the small corner of modern Latvia – Latgale, which remained under Polish rule, has still been Catholic. Even now, Orthodoxy has not disappeared in the region, although the Swedish authorities have launched a policy of Orthodox persecution.

Russians were deprived of many rights in 1621 when Riga was taken by the Swedes from the Poles. A separate Russian quarter was liquidated, and residents were evicted outside the city fortifications. Somewhat later, in 1642, the Moscow Forstadt was formed there – a specific Russian suburb of Riga. St Nicholas Church, the oldest Orthodox church in Riga, was looted by the Jesuits during the Polish rule, who took the bells and icons from there. After the Swedish power establishment, some of those relics were taken by the Swedish king Gustav II Adolf. After the capture of Riga, he took four wooden images of the Most Holy Theotokos to Uppsala. They have been kept in the museum part of the Uppsala University Library until now (Filey, 2021). Orthodox worship in Riga was forbidden, but the Russians organized collective Orthodox prayer services on rafts in the middle of the Western Dvina River, on

which tents were built, iconostases were installed, and something like temporary temples arose.

The Russian population of Revel and Riga was much smaller than before the Livonian War. However, the Russian citizens remained a permanent part of the locals. In Revel, St Nicholas Church was turned into a stable during the Livonian War. However, a century later, the church was restored as an Orthodox church at the expense of merchant Peter Nikolaev. In 1686-88, an iconostasis, brought from Russia, created by master Sergei Rozhkov, was installed in St Nicholas Church.

The city of Derpt (Yuryev) was experiencing a certain crisis due to the loss of the former position of trade routes. And here also lived the Russian population in its former part beyond the river. Russian merchants, unable to compete with Russian merchants, the Derpt magistrate forbade Russian merchants to keep shops in Derpt in 1637. They were allowed to sell their goods only during two fairs, while the rest of the time only wholesale trade was allowed exclusively through intermediaries – domestic German merchants. However, restrictions on Russian trade caused discontent not only among local residents but also the Swedish authorities. Russian traders were banned by the Swedish commandant of the city. He even sent soldiers to protect the Russians.

During the Russian-Swedish War of 1656-61, Russian troops took Derpt. Russian troops' stay in the Baltic lands, like the appearance of Russian Old Believers, caused a wave of conversions of Latvians to Orthodoxy. It caused concern of the Livonia knighthood, which announced at the Landtag on January 28, 1659, that Lutheran pastors needed to step up their work, because "a simple-minded peasant, who is superstitious and godless by nature, easily converts to the Russian faith" (Gurin, 2019).

Persecution of the Baltic Russian population, especially the Russian inhabitants of Narva, who were especially dangerous for their large numbers, increased dramatically after the 1656-61 war. In 1664, a decree was issued on the complete eviction of the Russian residents of Ivangorod to the pier, to the "empty place near the water", which was unsuitable to habit. The calculation was to "push out" the majority of Russians to Russia and Lutheranize the rest. However, the corruption of the Narva magistrate and the Swedish military command largely softened the decree.

It becomes obvious that the anti-Russian activity's methods of the Swedish authorities in the Baltic States almost one-on-one reproduced the modern authorities of the Baltic republics.

Peter the Great, having annexed Estonia and Livonia and established control over Courland, which was turned into a province only in 1795, retained all rights and

privileges for the domestic German nobility. The so-called "Ostsee order", which existed until the Russification policy of Alexander the Third, developed. There was the Concept of "Ostzeets", which denoted the Baltic German, the complete owner of the region. However, Peter and the subsequent Russian monarchs could be calm for the Baltic lands.

Another indicator of the Ostsee order was the dominant position of the Lutheran church – Landeskirche (literally – the regional state church). The Russian Orthodox Church, which had the status of the "first" in the whole empire, was regarded in the Baltic States as one of the foreign confessions.

Orthodoxy nevertheless spread slowly in the Baltic States. Among the Orthodox, there were not only ethnic Russians. Thus, in Revel, in 1736, a Russian military engineer, "Peter the Great's Blackamoor" Abram Hannibal married an Estonian noblewoman Christina-Regina von Scheberg. By the way, the great-grandson of Hannibal and Regina von Scheberg was Alexander Sergeevich Pushkin. The illegitimate daughter of Prince Andrey Vyazemsky and Ekaterina Sievers Ekaterina Kolyvanova, who later became the historian N.K. Karamzin's wife, was born there in Revel.

After the capture of Riga (in which, we recall, all Orthodox churches were closed under the Swedes), Peter the Great founded the church of Alexei-the man of God and the Alekseevsky Monastery. In 1800, the Riga Ecclesiastical Board was responsible for 18 churches and 16,290 Orthodox parishioners (less than 1% of the population). The conversion of domestic residents to Orthodoxy was rare and was mainly caused by confessionally mixed marriages with the Orthodox. In 1744, Orthodoxy was adopted in Riga: 20 Lutherans, 4 Catholics and 2 Mohammedans. Joining Orthodoxy took place from year to year. Among those who joined were some local landowners-nobles. Unfortunately, the information about the accession is insufficient, this information is random, and not collected in the system; there are no indications in the documents of the nationality of the annexed, etc. (Sakharov, 1992-1993).

There were a few more Old Believers. However, they did not seek to contact the official authorities, so their number remains unknown.

3. Movement of Latvians and Estonians for conversion to Orthodoxy

After the end of the turbulent events of the wars with Napoleonic France, Emperor Alexander embarked on his long-standing idea – the abolition of serfdom, considering the Baltic provinces as a testing ground for reforms. Serfdom was abolished in Courland on August 25, 1817, and in Livonia on March 26, 1819.

However, the peasants received only the will. It is the fundamental difference from the abolition of serfdom in Russia proper on February 19, 1861. "In the new law on peasants, while preserving the ownership of land for landlords, no attempt was made to establish any conditions favourable to the peasantry, neither when acquiring land ownership, nor when concluding land lease agreements" (Rassokhina, 2011). All the land remained with the landlords so that the freed peasants turned into landless farmhands. It was because "there was another significant flaw in the articles of the law. These legislative acts did not stipulate the issue of the minimum period for which a lease agreement should be concluded. As a result, such leases could be concluded for only one year" (Rassokhina, 2011). In Estonia, it was only in 1863 that peasants received identity documents and the right to freedom of movement. Even to move to a neighbouring parish, it was necessary to obtain a special passport from the local police and permission from the owner of the neighbour manor where the peasant was going to move. This measure was supposed to prevent the departure of farmhands from the lordly possessions. The corvee, which was carried out by "free" peasants, was abolished only in 1868, i.e., half a century after the "liberation". The Ostsee landlords themselves quipped that they gave their peasants only "bird freedom" (Vogelfreiheit). Numerous symbolic actions have also been preserved, demonstrating the servile submission of Estonians and Latvians to their German masters. So, until the beginning of the 20th century, the custom of kissing the baron's hand persisted. Corporal punishment for farmhands persisted until 1905.

Two decades after the abolition of serfdom, rumours began to spread among the peasants that somewhere in St Petersburg the Russian tsar, who gave free rein to serfs in the Baltic region, could also give the land. To do this, it is only necessary to accept the "royal faith", i.e., Orthodoxy. Latvians and Estonians were indirectly familiar with Orthodoxy, observing the religious life of the Russian inhabitants of the region, as like soldiers and officials. The peasants were also influenced by the fact that many of the Latvians and Estonians, having served in the Russian army or moved to St Petersburg, usually accepted Orthodoxy.

On the ethnic border between Russians and Estonians in Pskov, there were so-called "half-believers". Russian educator O. Mazing wrote about them in 1821: "They are, however, of the Lutheran faith, but they wear Russian clothes, speak Estonian poorly and speak Russian better; they wear crosses around their necks, cross themselves like Russians, and if they find themselves in the Russian church, they put candles in front of the images there. Because they seem to be between two faiths, they are called half-believers, half-religious people. In general, these people

are very good and humble" (Isakov, 2006). Thus, a certain part of Estonians was still familiar with Orthodoxy.

It also mattered that the peasants considered Lutheran pastors (and not without reason) to be just assistants to the barons who called on the peasants to work and endure.

Since the peasants were liberated without land, it is not surprising that many of them were ready to leave their homeland and settle anywhere in greater Russia to get land there. The peasants were also affected by the news about the reforms of the P.D. Kiselyov, Minister of State Property, which made life easier for state-owned peasants, and among other things also organized large-scale resettlement of peasants to the free lands of Novorossiya and the Volga region. As a result, quite unexpectedly for the official authorities of the empire, a mass movement began among the indigenous inhabitants of the region, listed as Lutherans, for the transition to Orthodoxy.

The first attempts to file petitions for resettlement to deep Russia took place in the estates of Courland near Friedrichstadt (now Jaunelgava) in early 1835. The impetus for the subsequent events was the departure of 2,530 Jews displaced from the Courland province to Kherson. Passing through the Courland province and Latgale, they told local peasants about the incredibly fertile lands in the southern provinces of Russia (Strods, 2000).

As it often happens, the reason for the emergence of this movement was rather random circumstances. In 1836, Irinarch (Yakov Popov) became the Orthodox Archbishop of Riga. An educated man, who was spoken many languages and distinguished by a truly Christian disposition, Irinarch quickly became the voice of those who were deprived of the right to vote. Just during his administration period of the diocese, there was a severe famine in the Livonia province. In 1841, a rumour spread among the starving peasants that the government was ready to relocate the peasants to the southern provinces. On June 2, Governor-General Matvey Palen already published a message read out in Lutheran churches later. The peasants were informed that no resettlement was being carried out and that only criminals in shackles were being resettled in deep Russia and Siberia. Rumour-mongers were threatened with severe liability. However, the Irinarch and the Orthodox priests, who supported him (far from all), continued to agitate among the peasants. Crowds of peasants moved to Riga. The Ostsee knighthood was terrified by this massive, nonviolent movement. Police posts were set up on the roads leading to Riga. Peasants were tracked down and arrested, punished with sticks and rods. The detainees in Riga were chained up and sent home under escort, where they were

flogged before the whole parish. However, soon the real punitive expeditions against the peasants who wanted to accept the "royal faith" began.

Almost simultaneously, the resettlement movement began among Estonians. About 600 peasants of the Viru district came to Pskov, to the former Riga Orthodox Bishop Irinarch, to rewrite the Orthodox faith and get the right to resettle in Russia. The peasants asked for "... liberation from landlords and the provision of land in free possession" (Strods, 2000).

What was happening terrified the Ostsee knighthood. The peaceful movement of the peasants to change their faith and leave their land, which was owned by the barons, was much more dangerous than open rebellion. In a few months, 12 thousand people converted to Orthodoxy. The Ostzeians considered Irinarch to be the culprit of everything, who in their eyes was the instigator of the threatened riot. Denunciations rained down on the Irinarch. By the decree of Emperor Nicholas I at the end of July 1841, he was forbidden to accept petitions from Latvian peasants. But the flow of petitioners did not stop. So, on August 4, several Latvians with petitions for their families to join Orthodoxy, seeking an audience with the bishop, were arrested. The Riga clerk, who showed the peasants who came to Riga the house where Irinarch lived, was subjected to corporal punishment (Belyaev, 1901). In a report to the Synod dated August 22, 1841, Bishop Irinarch reported: "Having learned for certain that those who express a desire to join Orthodoxy are persecuted without mercy, especially in their places of residence, I immediately stopped accepting applications for accession." By a decree of September 15, 1841, the Synod ordered Bishop Irinarch to "stop accepting petitions from Livonia peasants to join the Orthodox Church until the riots that arose between them stopped." Finally, Irinarch, practically as a prisoner, was taken out of Riga at the end of 1841 to the Pskov-Pechersk Monastery. Crowds of Latvian and Estonian peasants came to the monastery walls, wanting to see their patron Irinarch. In the end, Irinarch was sent away from the Baltic States to Voronezh and then to Vologda.

Frightened by the peaceful revolt, the Ostsee nobles at the end of 1841 created a special commission to discuss the peasant question. The Livonia Landtag recognized the inalienable right of the peasant class to lease 2/3 of the total space occupied by peasant plots in Livonia. Landlords were allowed to attach no more than one-third to their fields.

However, the movement for the adoption of Orthodoxy in the region has not subsided. The rector of the Theological Academy Filaret (Dmitry Gumilevsky) was appointed to replace Irinarch. Just in case, the emperor gave Filaret instructions, limiting his freedom of action. However, Filaret turned out to be quite up to his

mission. He created new Orthodox parishes and built churches. Filaret also established theological schools to train pastors who know the language of the local population. According to his will, divine service was introduced in the language of converts, and parish schools were opened. Filaret himself quickly and perfectly mastered the Latvian and Estonian languages. Significantly, he participated in the editing of translations of liturgical books. On April 22, 1845, a liturgy in Latvian was celebrated for the first time in history. It was in the wooden Church of the Intercession in Riga.

The All-knowing Third Department stated in the Most Comprehensive Moral and Political Report for 1845: "In March, some residents of the city of Riga expressed a desire to join Orthodoxy, and at the same time, representatives of the Livonian nobility, fearing the resumption of previous unrest, petitioned for measures against it. The nobles' fears were found to be in vain, and by the highest command, it was announced that Latvians could be allowed to join Orthodoxy only so that they asked not through attorneys, but personally, and worship for them to be conducted in Latvian in one of our churches… Naturally, these events were combined with the murmur of the nobles and unrest on the part of the peasants. The latter quit their jobs, showed insolence and hatred; and in October, the excitement increased to the point that the Derpt county leader of the nobility petitioned for sending troops to preserve calm." (Nalepin, 2006)

The general conclusion of the report was as follows: "... the upper and middle classes in the Ostsee provinces, separating themselves from the general rights and duties of the ruling people in Russia, keep themselves in an original position. Therefore, especially now, with the spread of Orthodoxy in the Ostsee provinces, it would be necessary to gradually and carefully weaken the strength of those local privileges that limit the rights of Russians and put the Orthodox there in the position in which the ruling people should be within the empire." (Nalepin, 2006)

In 1846, at the request of Filaret, Nicholas I agreed to establish a theological school in Riga. The opening of this educational institution in which the teaching languages were also Estonian and Latvian in addition to Russian was a significant event. At the same time, the seminarians were fully dependent on the church, which was key for poor Estonian and Latvian peasants. For many years, the Riga Theological Seminary was one of the leading educational institutions where Estonians and Latvians could generally receive secondary education.

The result was impressive – by 1848, 48 Orthodox parishes were operating in the Livonia province. In total, 67 thousand Latvians and almost 64 thousand Estonian peasants (17% of the Estonian part of Livonia) converted to Orthodoxy

for several years. In general, every 8th inhabitant of the province converted to Orthodoxy. On the island of Ezel (Saaremaa), up to 80% of the peasants converted to Orthodoxy (Adamson & Valdmaa, 2000). In 1850, Nicholas I approved the report of the Holy Synod on the transformation of the Riga Vicariate into an independent diocese. The jurisdiction of the newly formed diocese included Courland and Livonia, and since 1865, the province of Estonia. Already in 1850, there were 142,166 people converted to Orthodoxy in Livonia and Courland. 108 churches and 2 monasteries served their spiritual needs. By 1866, the number of Orthodox reached 180 thousand. As a prominent political figure of the empire and, by the way, the defender of the Ostsee nobility, Count P.A. Valuev, an eyewitness of what is happening, wrote, "this movement contradicts everything that history represents about religious changes" In the report of one of the Baltic gendarmes, submitted to the 3rd Department in June 1848, it was emphasized: "... Religion is the strongest bond of the people, a peasant will never call a fellow countryman a person who does not go to the same church with him" (Gavrilin, 1999).

The Orthodox clergy understood well what they were doing. Thus, in 1865, the rector of the St Petersburg Theological Academy, Bishop John (Sokolov) of Vyborg, who reviewed the Riga Theological Seminary, recommended that the history of Latvians and Estonians be thoroughly studied there to "develop national consciousness in them through parish priests", and "not to give the right to the priesthood to those who have not studied local languages" (Orthodoxy in Latvia, 2006).

The pressure of landlords and Lutheran pastors on those who accepted Orthodoxy, as like to an even greater extent the news that the transition to the "royal faith" would not provide the peasants with land at all, caused some of the converts to depart from Orthodoxy. In addition, many Orthodox Estonians and Latvians in large numbers began to move deep into the empire, losing touch with their small homeland.

Many more Estonians and Latvians could potentially convert to Orthodoxy. The movement for Orthodoxy covered Livonia. However, in the provinces of Estonia and Courland, the movement of conversion to Orthodoxy was suppressed in the bud. Therefore, there was no mass conversion to the "royal faith". When the peasants in Estonia began to convert to Orthodoxy, the Metropolitan of St Petersburg forbade this province to accept Estonians into Orthodoxy. And under such conditions, a handful of missionaries have achieved amazing results. As noted by Patriarch Alexy the Second of All Russia, a native of Estonia, a descendant of the Ostsee Ridiger family, "the harvest was abundant, but there were few reapers in the

field of Orthodoxy: Bishop Filaret and no more than ten priests" (Orthodoxy in Latvia, 2006).

Such amazing successes were explained not only by the talents of Orthodox missionaries. As the modern researcher L.M. Vorobyova rightly wrote: "The strength and stability of this movement, of course, was given by the connection with the social protest, which came out in an extreme form – the desire to change religion and move out of Livonia. The basis of this protest was the rejection by the peasants of their relations with the German landowners, who were perceived as not corresponding to the acquired position of free people and incompatible with physical survival. Russians, declaring their desire to join Orthodoxy, instinctively sought to undermine the unjust German-Lutheran domination, finally find a master in the person of the Russian tsar, become his direct subject, i.e., Russian, and thereby somehow make their lives easier. It was a peaceful protest against Lutheranism, which sanctified the injustices of the Ostsee order, and a desire to weaken the German yoke by coming under the sovereignty of the sovereign where it was possible and permissible. At the same time, Latvians and Estonians spontaneously and unconsciously worked for Russian interests, creating a basis for expanding the presence of the state religion in the Baltic Region" (Vorobyova, 2013).

As we can see, everything that happened does not fit into the classical canons of imperial rule at all.

The consequences of the mass conversion to Orthodoxy had other consequences. As a modern researcher notes, "trust in the old political and religious order that existed in the Latvian lands was largely undermined. The undermining of the old order was expressed in the fact that religious aspirations changed, German institutions weakened and their influence on Latvians decreased, who began to treat them with less respect. In addition, the dissatisfaction of a small number of educated Latvians with the existing order and their place within it has increased in the Latvian lands. Educated Latvians began to feel a sense of German authorities' distrust. It began the development of scepticism, which "gradually eroded faith in traditional values and hierarchies ... it can be said that without the transition of some Latvians to Orthodoxy in the 1840s, Latvian nationalism would not have arisen, that is, without the revival of the religious, there would be no revival of the national." (Kirchanov, 2009)

However, the general desire for a change of faith was the desire to get land. The resettlement movement of legally free and landless peasants resumed long ago in the late 1840s. "In the spring of 1847, many Latvian peasants broke down doors, windows and fences of their homes and in large groups (tens and hundreds) went

"to warm countries" (to the black earth provinces of Russia) with the hope of getting land and bread there" (Strods, 2000). With the help of the troops, the peasants were returned home.

The authorities of the empire found themselves in a difficult situation. I did not want to quarrel with such an influential part of the elite as the Baltic nobility. But it was also unwise to leave the vast, fertile and uncultivated lands of the outskirts of Russia without farmers. Official Petersburg eventually made a Solomonic decision. Officially, resettlement to the peasants of Livonia was allowed by a special Provision from 1849, but with many restrictions that made it very problematic for most peasants to move to other outskirts of the empire. However, the situation did not require the adoption of Orthodoxy for the settlers, which somewhat slowed down the spread of the "royal faith" among the Baltic States natives.

Latvian peasants moved to new unauthorized resettlement in 1853, when the authorities of the newly built city of Yeysk, knowing nothing about the peculiarities of Baltic life, allowed Latvians to move to the shores of the Sea of Azov. As a result, hundreds of peasants rushed to the south, and it seemed only the beginning of a general exodus. Baron Tiesenhausen gloomily predicted that soon "Livonia may remain uninhabited, and as a result of a labour shortage to cultivate the land, poverty will come" (Strods, 2000).

To prevent the peasants to leave, the provincial authorities set a fairly high fee for those who wanted to go away from Livonia. Only after paying the necessary amount and paying off all debts, the peasant could get permission from the parish court to relocate. It is easy to guess that the landlords did everything to ensure that their farmhands remained on their estates. And many Estonians and Latvians were able to already escape from their masters to free lands. According to the calculations of modern Latvian scientist H. Stroda, the land of modern Latvia and Estonia in the 1850s left 1-3% of the rural population (Strods, 2000). And this is only a small part of those who sought to relocate, but could not.

A new movement for resettlement to free lands deep into Russia took place in 1860-1862. 25-30% of the peasants of the province of Estonia participated in the movement, although only about 3,200 peasants managed to leave in those years (Kahk & Sijlivask, 1987).

To understand the circumstances of the problems, Nicholas I acted in his characteristic spirit, creating in 1846 a special Ostsee committee, whose purpose was to consider the land ownership problems in the Baltic States. The chairman of the committee was General Count Pyotr Petrovich Palen, a Courland landowner, the son of the murderer of Emperor Paul the First, a brave combat general, a veteran of all

the wars of Russia in the first half of the 19th century. Being both an Ostsee landowner and one of the highest officials of the empire, standing above the narrow-pedigree Ostsee claims, Palen turned out to be a good leader of the committee. The committee included, along with senior officials of the central government, also Baltic landowners. Interestingly, many of the Ostsee representatives did not speak Russian, and therefore the texts of the accepted documents were printed in French, which everyone understood. The work of the committee turned out to be ineffective – it was difficult to fully integrate the region into Russia, improve the life of the peasants and at the same time preserve the special rights of the Ostzeites. However, many decisions were made that improved the lives of peasants. So, the Ostsee Committee in 1849 recommended "temporary" rules according to which the land remained with the previous owners, but the rights to sell the land were significantly limited. According to the 1849 rules, the land could be sold or leased only to peasants directly cultivating it. To finance such sales, a special peasant land bank, which issued a loan to peasants at 4% per year, was established. Purely feudal norms that had been in force since the conquest of Livonia were abolished. In particular, it was forbidden to transfer land ownership in exchange for labour. Now the land could be acquired only through purchase and sale. It was these rules that operated on the territory of the Baltic States until the 1917 revolution that became the basis of a new social order in the region, in which the land gradually passed from the Ostsee nobles, descendants of the "dog knights", into the hands of the local peasantry.

A new, albeit weaker wave of conversion to Orthodoxy is associated with the reign of Alexander the Third. Unlike his predecessors, the new monarch did not support the special rights of the German nobility and encouraged the conversion of local residents to Orthodoxy. Besides conversion, the number of Orthodox grew due to the resettlement of Russians from the deep provinces of the country to the Baltic States, as well as a large number of interfaith marriages (according to the laws, if one of the spouses was Orthodox, then his family members automatically became Orthodox).

In 1882-1887, 15,652 people converted to Orthodoxy in the entire Riga diocese, which was headed by Bishop Donat during these years. In 1887-94, when Arseny led the diocese, another 12 thousand people converted to Orthodoxy. Among the Livs, the prominent priest John (Harklavs) preached, who built the Orthodox Church of the Nativity of Christ on Cape Kolka in 1892, the place of compact Livs' residence, which still exists today. Perhaps the spread of Orthodoxy among the Livs, turning them not only into an ethnic but also a confessional group, could cover up their assimilation.

In 1897, according to the data of the All-Russian population census, Orthodox Christians were among the permanent residents of the three Ostsee provinces: Livonia – 14.5%, Estonia – 9.1%, Courland – 3.7%.

Active church construction has also unfolded. The Cathedral of the Nativity of Christ was opened in Riga in 1884. In 1895-1900, the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral was erected in the centre of Revel. In 1891, the Pyukhtitsky Assumption Convent was founded. In 1893, Arseniy founded the Trinity and Sergius Convent in Riga. In 1896, the male St Alekseevsky Monastery was built in Riga, too. By 1914, there were 267 churches and 71 houses of worship in the Diocese of Riga. Orthodox parishioners, Russians and natives, in 1914, there were 273023 people (excluding Old Believers).

Conclusion

Thus, religion plays a decisive role in the identification and destinies of people. It is the main issue in the border and developed territories. The turbulent events of the last century changed almost everything in the life of the Baltic States, but they could not destroy the Orthodox character of the region. Already by 1848, 48 Orthodox parishes were operating in the Livonia province. In a few years, 17% of the population of the Estonian part of Livonia converted to Orthodoxy. By 1866, the number of Orthodox Christians in Livonia and Courland reached 180 thousand people converted to Orthodoxy. 108 churches and 2 monasteries served their spiritual needs. In 1897, in Livonia, the Orthodox among the permanent residents were 14.5%. In 1914, there were already more than 273 thousand Orthodox parishioners, Russians and aborigines. Since the late 1980s, Orthodoxy in the Baltic States has entered a new stage.

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