

Book Reviews

L. A. Gerd, *Rossija i pravoslavnyj Vostok. Konstantinopol'skij patriarkhat v konce XIX v.*, Pis'ma G. P. Begleri k prof. I. E. Troickomu 1878-1898 gg., Saint Petersburg (Izdatel'stvo Olega Obyshko) 2003, pp. 416 (*Biblioteka khristianskoj misli. Issledovanija*).

In his foreword to this publication, Georgij Mitrofanov, priest and professor in the Theological Academy of St Petersburg, notes that one of the benefits conferred by freedom of research in the Russian archives in the last ten to twelve years is the opportunity to study in them the relations between the Russian Church and the Patriarchate of Constantinople. This is borne out by the present volume, in which these relations are the focal point of a lengthy sequence of letters (196 in all) written by George P. Begleri (1850-1923), who was an agent of the Russian Shipping and Trading Company in Constantinople. The letters were written to the eminent Russian Byzantinist I. E. Troickij (1832-1901), who taught in the Theological Academy of St Petersburg, and span a period of no less than twenty years (1878-1898). (Concerning Troickij, L. A. Gerd has recently published an interesting study based on material from his private archive: "I. E. Troickij po stranicam arkhiva ucheneogo", *Mir russkoj vizantinistiki. Materialy arkhivov Sankt-Peterburga*, edited by I. P. Medvedev, St Petersburg 2004, pp. 8-40). In her introduction to the present volume, which is titled "The Patriarchate of Constantinople and Russia at the End of the Nineteenth Century", Gerd discusses this subject, starting with some biographical information about Begleri. He had studied in Russia and also served in Tsar Alexander II's guard. After revealing a student conspiracy to assassinate the Tsar, fearing reprisals, he left the country and returned to his birthplace, Constantinople, where he worked as a representative of the Russian diplomatic authorities, having first served as an agent for the police. A man of great culture and learning, Begleri, who was related to some eminent clerics in the Patriarchate of Constantinople, met Troickij in 1878, after the Treaty of San Stefano, and at once began writing letters in which he gave the Russian professor information about issues relating to the Patriarchate and the city's Greek community. Troickij then brought the letters to the attention of a powerful member of the Russian Holy Synod, K. P. Pobedonoscev, who read them carefully, underlining the points that especially interested him. Thus Begleri, who believed that it was only from Russia that the Patriarchate

and the Greek people should expect help to lighten or cast off the Ottoman yoke, became an official informant of the Russians. Prof. Gerd's review of the Patriarchate's relations with Russia is brief, but rich in substance and shows that she is very familiar with the Greek literature on the subject.

Begleri's first letters, in Greek or in Greek and excellent Russian, were written just after the Treaty of San Stefano (July 1878) and the departure of the Russian troops from Constantinople, and they provide interesting information about the subsequent Turkish violence against, and massacres of, the Christian population. By and large, Begleri's letters contain information about the Patriarchate of Constantinople, the various Patriarchs, and the prelates and other people in the Patriarchate's service, as also news about events in the Greek community of Constantinople. He frequently offers his own views and opinions, and these are extremely interesting. Generally speaking, his information is very interesting, although it tends to fluctuate between serious intelligence about people, events, and publications and, often, gossip and trivialities. Part of the correspondence concerns Greek and Russian publications relating to history and archaeology and also press articles. Especially interesting is what he says about the backstage manoeuvring connected with the election of a new patriarch. It is worth noting that his letters span a period during which patriarchal elections were held seven times and they offer the reader details that are not found in other sources, for which reason they are extremely interesting. Each letter has its own subject-matter and Begleri touches upon an astonishing range of topics. Especially interesting, however, is his information about the Patriarchate, the activity of the Russian ambassadors in Constantinople and the consuls in Thessaloniki, as also what he says about Russian monks on Mount Athos. In short, Begleri's letters constitute a first-class historical source, which should not be ignored in future by anyone investigating the subjects they mention. This letter-writer was a very conscientious agent and informant of the Russian side. Prof. Gerd's comments on the letters are also interesting. The volume concludes with a very useful index of names of people mentioned in the letters, though unfortunately there is no index of the subjects discussed in them, which would have made it much easier to look for specific information. The book is graced with rare photographs of patriarchs, Russian diplomats, and other notable figures. Prof. Gerd's edition of Begleri's letters makes a very important contribution to the study of the history of the Patriarchate and the Greek community of Constantinople at the end of the 19th century.