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GEORGIA IN EKATERINA II AND VOLTAIRE'S CORRESPONDENCES

A series of correspondence between prominent French thinker Voltaire and Catherine the Great comprises long period from 1763 to 1778. These correspondence deals with quite a few problems of the epoch. Georgia as a subject of the correspondence appears in their writings from the beginning of 1770 when the Russo-Turkish war (1768-1774) entered into the active phase. Russian Empress remembers the existence of Georgia only during the war. She decides to involve Georgian kings Erekle II and Solomon I in the military actions against Turkey. On his part Solomon I asks the Russian Empress to give him the helping hand. Under these circumstances Ekaterina II pardons Count Tottleben, Mayor-general, and transfers to the Turkish theatre of operations making him the head of the troops who would fight from Georgia. Erekle II agreed to initiate military actions if Russia increased the number of warriors up to five thousand. Erekle II and Solomon I agreed to launch military actions against Turkey. This was the reason why the Russian Empress expresses her opinion about Georgian kings in the correspondences addressed to Voltaire.

Georgian theme became active after Solomon I refused to send girls as part of his tribute to the court of Mustafa III. The Empress is interested with the fact and praises Georgian kings, particularly Erekle II. She is pleased to inform Voltaire about the joint actions carried out by Solomon I and Tottleben and their sieges of Shorapani, Bagdadi, and Kutaisi fortresses. She makes Voltaire acquaint to the city of Kutaisi.

On his part the French enlightener provides his comments on the participation of Georgians in this war. Russian Empress extols Count Tottleben for his valor and contribution for the relief of Georgia's sufferings but overlooks the new problems brought by him to Georgia that also disgraced Russia's fame. In any case I think that the opinions expressed by Ekaterina II and bringing them to Voltaire were a fact of great importance.