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## The Crimean War as a Test of Russia's Imperial Durability

*Although the Crimean War ended in defeat, the Russian Empire survived, acquired a new appreciation for its own diversity, and initiated a national reform program with far-reaching consequences for its people.*

The Crimean War ended in a defeat that was not only the most dramatic suffered by Russia in the entire nineteenth century but also highly unusual in that the nonmilitary aspect of the conflict had a decisive impact on its outcome. The issue was not that thoughts of defeat predominated; on the contrary, the war sent society into an upswing that was perhaps the most far-reaching in nineteenth-century Russia. In addition, isolationist and anti-Western sentiments strengthened by the absence of allies did not have a determinative effect on the country's ongoing development. From a historical perspective, Russia contrived to turn defeat into rousing victory—again, though, not on the field of battle but in terms of peacetime reforms and diplomatic initiatives.

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Although the Crimean War (the kind of external impetus that modernization theory regards as significant) drew a firm line between the old Russia and the new, we should not see this outcome as an instance of absolute cause and effect. Vladimir Sergeevich Solov'ev actually believed that "even without the Crimean War, Alexander II would probably still have carried out his reforms, perhaps in a sturdier and more multifaceted way."<sup>1</sup> Modern scholars have also wondered whether the defeat rendered reform imperative, if the reforms constituted a single system (and if so, in what way), and, finally, how organic and productive the changes really were.

The war highlighted many Russian defects previously visible neither to the Russians themselves nor to outsiders, thus fulfilling a "diagnostic" mission that Soviet historians followed Lenin in accentuating. Military might and economic potential, foreign policy strategies and domestic stability all underwent a durability test in 1853–56, but what matters for our present purposes is that the war motivated an evaluation of the robustness of the imperial structure, of the correlation of centripetal and centrifugal forces, and of the integrity of the state, and a comparison between Russia and other empires based on those criteria.

Every major internal and external shock during Nicholas's reign gave rise to anxiety regarding Russia's imperial edifice. That was the case in 1831 and in 1848–49, when Russia's share of the former *Rzeczpospolita Polska* was viewed with particular alarm.<sup>2</sup> The "specter of communism" haunting Europe in the mid-nineteenth century was not haunting alone, since Europe was also living in expectation of the disintegration and partition of empires, and those expectations became an important factor in international politics. The fragility of imperial formations is even indicated by the metaphorical labels that were affixed to them: a "sick man" (the Ottoman Empire), a "patchwork empire" (the Austrian Empire), and a "colossus with feet of clay" (the Russian Empire).

The "springtime of nations" was, as we know, allowed to proceed no farther than the threshold of the Russian Empire, a circumstance that provided fertile soil for messianic notions of Russia's exceptional nature and special calling. In his textbook on Russian geography, the royal intimate Konstantin Ivanovich Arsen'ev confidently wrote, the "lands of Siberia, Transcaucasia, Finland, and the Kingdom of Poland assure the state's external security without encumbering its internal governance."<sup>3</sup> Russia's display of strength and imperial good fortune peaked during the celebration of Nicholas I's twenty-five years on the throne.

By then, though, the reign had already entered its concluding and gloomiest phase, in which it was burdened by the grievous trial of war. "May Germans, Poles, Muslims, and so forth be mechanically, forcibly soldered to Russia?" Aleksandr Vasil'evich Nikitenko reasoned in 1849. "They may be held one beside the other, but to fuse them into one indivisible moral whole is impossible. They must be content to cohabit with Russia. That is the only achievable unity under such circumstances, a unity of interests."<sup>4</sup>

On the eve of the Crimean War, Nicholas had tried to open discussions with the British on the Ottoman Empire, which he believed was about to disintegrate. Expanding on his old ideas of "disinterest," he declared the abandonment of the expansionist plans of Catherine II, who had once openly announced, "Were I to live two hundred years, then all of Europe would, of course, be subject to the Russian scepter."<sup>5</sup> The principle of "disinterest" was notably founded on an acknowledgment that Russia had enough territory and that further growth would put it at risk. Nicholas advocated the controlled disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the creation on its ruins of a system of states neither powerful nor overly inconsequential, under the guardianship of the great powers, headed by Russia and Britain, since the British also feared the consequences of the Ottoman Empire breaking up on its own.<sup>6</sup>

A few months later, after the international situation had undergone some drastic changes, Nicholas was worried that the initiative in the Balkans had passed into enemy hands, primarily those of Britain, which would "take the lead in the liberation of Europe's Christians" but in so doing would act contrary to Russia's interests. "We remain faithful to our previously declared principle of renouncing, to the extent possible, any conquests," he wrote in November 1853, "but we also acknowledge that the time has come to restore the independence of the Christian peoples in Europe, who have spent several centuries under the Ottoman yoke." As Nikolai Karlovich Shil'der, who published that royal memorandum and produced a commentary on it, wrote, "The lore of the Holy Alliance, which had bound Russia hand and foot, was at last about to lose its grip, and the egoism of the Russian state would then assert its lawful rights."<sup>7</sup> This contradicted Sergei Semenovitch Uvarov's well-known statement, articulated in the late 1840s, regarding the appropriate attitude (a highly restrained attitude) for Russia to adopt toward Slavs in other countries and threw light on the discord between Nicholas and Karl Nesselrode, his foreign minister of many years, who

remained true to the conservative principle of dynastic legitimacy.

At the same time, a scenario that involved the loss of Russia's sovereign territory—which even Nicholas I, who had until recently been prepared to divide up the sultan's domains with the British, conceded could happen—was being quietly examined. In December 1853, the historian Mikhail Petrovich Pogodin considered the worst possible outcome (the loss of Russia's Slavic allies) and urged his readers to “reinforce Kiev and repair Boris Godunov's wall in Smolensk” because “Russia had descended to the level of a second-class power prior to the Truce of Andrusovo.\* . . . Progression or regression—such is the immutable law of history.” The tsar himself read Pogodin's text and noted the remark about the Smolensk wall.<sup>8</sup> The “warmonger Palmerston” actually was hatching plans to dismantle the Russian Empire, as was Napoleon III. The war had hardly begun, but imperial integrity was already a high-profile topic.

The war of 1853–56 took place mostly on the peripheries of the Russian Empire, never on home soil. It was, nevertheless, entirely natural to link the notion of another invasion by an enemy coalition with the memorable events of 1812, and the prospect of contending with an enemy at home did much to revive society's interest in identifying its national makeup and gauging its unity and the elements that made up its regional mosaic. A not inconsiderable role in this, though one overlooked by scholars, went to the militia, being mustered for the third time in nineteenth-century Russia.<sup>9\*\*</sup>

The national mobile mass levy [*gosudarstvennoe podvizhnoe opolchenie*] was an enormous undertaking involving approximately three million men. Militia contingents were basically concentrated in Crimea, on the Azov shore, on the left bank of the Dniester, and around the Baltic, with brigades deployed as far afield as the Kingdom of Poland. Although the absolute majority of militia brigades had not seen action by the time they were disbanded on 5 April 1856, the men in those brigades had marched for several hundred miles. Many died of cold and disease, but those who returned home—both the rank-and-file and the officers of this socially heterogeneous group—did so seasoned by a unique experience and imbued with perceptions and impressions that

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\*The Treaty of Andrusovo granted Kiev and Smolensk to Russia in 1667.—Trans.

\*\*Previous musters occurred in 1806 and 1812.—Trans.

would become an important source of information for their compatriots. The inhabitants of regions where the militia had been quartered also learned much that was new.

The 29 January 1855 manifesto on the levy was one of Emperor Nicholas's last acts as tsar. While the first round of conscription took place in the interior provinces of Great Russia, the second and third, in July and September 1855, were in the Volga region (Saratov, Simbirsk, and Samara provinces) and the Urals (Perm, Viatka, and Orenburg provinces), respectively. On this occasion, militia units were also formed in Left-Bank Ukraine (Malorossiiia), where mounted Cossack regiments supplemented the regular brigades, and in eastern Belorussia (Vitebsk and Mogilev provinces), where half the normal conscription quota was applied. The latter two rounds of conscription thus encompassed provinces closer to the main theater of war than the first round had. The separation of Vitebsk and Mogilev provinces from the other western provinces also hints at the integrationism that had characterized Nicholas's reign.

Of the thirty-one provinces subject to the levy, twenty-six were in Great Russia. The militiamen were able to keep their beards; and their uniform, far anticipating the military fashions of Alexander III's time, was distinguished by an oddly unsoldierly "union of military accouterments with the Russian national costume, and a cross on the cap into the bargain."<sup>10</sup> As Evgenii Aleksandrovich Golovin, commander of the Smolensk militia, said, this new branch of the armed services, "distinct only in being purely Russian by outward appearance and dress, doubled the size of our land forces."<sup>11</sup>

No order followed to form a militia in the remaining seven western provinces [i.e., excluding Vitebsk and Mogilev—Trans.], the Kingdom of Poland, the Baltic provinces, and Novorossiiia, or in the ethnically diverse Kazan and Astrakhan provinces or the sparsely populated Arkhangel'sk province, although all regions of the empire without exception were ordered to stand ready to field militia brigades.

According to a report from Leontii Vasil'evich Dubel't, head of the secret police, Vil'na Governor-General Il'ia Gavrilovich Bibikov warned, "Do not conceive the idea of requiring a militia from the western provinces too, for the inhabitants of that area are not reliable."<sup>12</sup> (Nicholas I's wartime scenarios actually factored in a Polish uprising in the event of an enemy advance and a Russian retreat.)<sup>13</sup> The Polish memoirist Tadeusz Bobrowski emphasized that no militia was convened in the Southwest,

close as it was to the theater of war, due to the "government's mistrust." Militia service was no longer just a matter of making material donations, either, since the militia officers had to be selected from the local nobility and the noble corporations were forming provincial committees.<sup>14</sup> Apprehensions about the Poles extended beyond the boundaries of the former *Rzeczpospolita*: as Nikolai Ivanovich Kostomarov attests, when fires broke out in Saratov, "there was among the people, as police officers tell it, much talk of the English and French, but in the higher echelons, suspicion fell on the Poles."<sup>15</sup>

As for the local landowners, the Dubno police chief predicted that, if ordered to form brigades in Volynia province, they would be "prepared to sacrifice estates and people, but each fears to sacrifice his own person." That said, these individuals were devoted to Russia and sincerely desired the speedy restoration of peace.<sup>16</sup> Bobrowski noted that in its manifestations of loyalty, society in the western provinces was following the example set by the Great Russian provinces, but mainly to escape suspicion. He believed patriotic outpourings may have been "more sincere" in the Baltic provinces, which had provided the empire with both generals and diplomats.<sup>17</sup>

Individual Polish magnates who gave the militia brigades a cordial reception were duly praised in the press. For example, one paper reported that in Nemirov (Podol'ia province) the militiamen had "encountered in Count Potocki a true Russian patriot," for which he received the Order of St. Vladimir, Third Class. The warm welcome accorded by Count Branicki of Vasil'kov district [*uezd*], Kiev province, also merited a note.<sup>18</sup> But as one member of a brigade from Vladimir province, comparing his impressions of the attitude in Vil'na toward troops on their way to war in 1848 and in the towns of central Russia (Tula and Orel) in 1855, exclaimed, the "circumstance is the same, but what a difference in the inhabitants' mood!" There were conspicuous distinctions both in the way the troops were received and in the reaction to news from the battlefield. In Vil'na a man in uniform "was not entirely at ease even when alone in public places, where he risked hearing some highly unpleasant things said."<sup>19</sup>

Yet we may infer a similarity to the situation in Vil'na in 1848–49 from Bobrowski's description of scenes in the Southwest. "When we caught sight of those throngs of armed but far from military men on the boundaries of our province, scarcely halfway to their goal," he wrote, "not only did they exhibit no enthusiasm but even a certain despondency and doubt was apparent." The discontent of the "Great Russian militiamen" may

have been compounded as they moved through lands whose inhabitants could not have cared less about military matters and met those “detachments of absolutely alien *katsapy*”<sup>\*</sup> with utter indifference. The militia officers must have felt how low-key their welcome was.<sup>20</sup>

Taking a cue from rumor and items in foreign newspapers, a police officer in the border shtetl of Radzivilov (Volynia province) depicted the future dismemberment of the empire to the governor-general as follows: “The French, being confident in the success of the war against Russia, will in a timely fashion apportion Russia out by annexing the Kingdom of Poland to Prussia, Courland to Denmark, Crimea to Turkey, and the Caucasus will remain free. To Austria must be annexed Moldavia and Wallachia.” Other reports suggested that the Jews of the Pale were eager to transfer their allegiance to Austria.<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, the villages of Volynia province (Dubno district) that were separated from Austrian territory “by nothing but a wattle fence” were abuzz with word that “Poland will surely be restored” with a population of twenty-two million.<sup>22</sup> Petr Aleksandrovich Valuev, governor of Courland, wrote in his diary late in 1855, on the subject of Volynia: “The local Warsaw Poles have not been transformed by Messrs. Bibikov and Co. All their sympathies rest with the French. The allies’ successes bring them joy. . . . Some Poles want to see our southern Pomor’e conquered.”<sup>23</sup> According to the governor of Volynia, particular blame for spreading untrustworthy information and opinions must lie on “conscription squads emerging from the Kingdom of Poland, which retail such rumors during nights and days spent amid the simple class of people.”<sup>24</sup>

There were substantial nuances differentiating the state of mind in various parts of the Right-Bank Ukraine. “The rumors and political news that are abroad in border districts of these parts,” a communiqué to the governor-general of Podol’ia and Volynia dated 12 March 1855 reads, “differ greatly from those spreading in the populace of districts far from the borders. In the former, the tidings are more alarming, the rumors of political events are ill-disposed toward Russia, and even the tidings of military actions in Crimea, aside from being completely false, are also more inimical to Russia.”<sup>25</sup>

Areas close to the state frontiers received support from the center of the Polish emigration in Paris, to which secret gatherings of the *szlachta*

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<sup>\*</sup>*Katsapy* is a derogatory name for Russians.—Trans.



of Volynia and Podol'ia provinces dispatched their representatives for instructions.<sup>26</sup> In the hinterland of the empire, that role went instead to the newly energized peasantry, in whom the Cossack spirit had awoken. The villagers in most of the districts of Kiev province, which was not one of the provinces in which the first-round levy had been conducted, believed that a decision to revive the Cossack host and a call for immediate insurgency had been kept from them. There was a mass boycott of corvée [*barshchina*] duties and intimations of an intention to take over all the land, which inevitably exacerbated relations with the landowners, a great number of whom were Polish.

After the imperial manifesto had been read in the church on the estate of Władysław Branicki, peasants in the congregation asked the priest, "Tell us, good father, how long will the Poles torment us?" They demanded a second reading of the document and of the schedule of rules regulating relations between peasant and landlord.<sup>27</sup> In February 1855, the constable of Vasil'kova reported that "there have spread among the townsfolk false rumors of a division of Poland and of an alleged proposal to take all inhabitants of the Russian Orthodox faith from this place and resettle them beyond the Dnieper."<sup>28</sup> The not-unfounded rumors and gossip about the anti-Polish tenor of this *kazatchina*, as the movement was called, intimidated landowners in the Southwest. The efforts made by the Polish scholar Elżbieta Orman to reinterpret the Kiev *kazatchina* as in no way anti-Polish leave much to be desired, even though the unruly peasants also mistreated Orthodox clergymen and pushed back against the troops. (Orman does, admittedly, apply certain stipulations that render her conclusions less categorical than they might be and is, in particular, quite cautious in dealing with Polish testimony.)<sup>29</sup>

The Kiev *kazatchina* of the first half of 1855 was a kind of unsanctioned levy that could only be "disbanded" by armed force. There was, incidentally, a precedent for such unsanctioned levies, since the call for recruits for the Baltic reserve galley flotilla (the "maritime levy" of 1854) had drawn peasants not only from the named provinces (St. Petersburg, Olonets, Novgorod, and Tver) but also inhabitants from hinterland provinces, Tambov in particular. A significant number of the volunteers had even converged on Moscow.<sup>30</sup>

In discussing the Kiev *kazatchina* in his much-bruited "historico-political letters and notes," Pogodin included reminders of the long-ago Koliivshchina rebellion [1768–69] and the more recent slaughter in Austrian Galicia. "Volynia, Podol'ia, and Kiev Region," he wrote, "groan



under the yoke of the Catholics, Poles, and Jews.” He pointed out that the empire’s western boundaries, including Belorussia, were on the verge of exploding: “How much fuel is there on all the western frontier that borders Malorossiiia! Some day, patience will run out, one luckless spark will fall, and all will go up in flames!”<sup>31</sup>

But the tone of “On the Political Condition of Kiev, Podol’ia, and Volynia Provinces” [O politicheskoi sostoianii gubernii Kievskoi, Podol’skoi i Volynskoi], a memorandum submitted personally to the tsar no later than 1855, was tranquil. The local authorities found “more frivolity than criminal intent” in the “speculations and gossip” of the Poles. “Seeing the ever vigilant watch that is kept over them, the Poles have remained calm and even have sought in outward manifestations to show their sympathy to the government in the form of various offerings.” But, believing that it could trust only the Orthodox, the administration took preemptive measures against its Polish subjects, sending the “influential and dangerous” off into the heartland, doing everything possible to weaken the area’s links with the Kingdom of Poland and the rest of the world, and tightening surveillance over the state peasants, a group that included “many individuals formerly of the Polish *szlachta*.” The non-Polish peasants, meanwhile, were said to be acting “only on an unfortunate delusion.”<sup>32</sup> “Is it possible to conduct a criminal investigation on a whole people, on a people’s entire history?” mused Stepan Stepanovich Gromeka, official at large for the governor-general of the Southwestern territory, who viewed the Kiev *kazatchina* as a manifestation of “popular traditions and beliefs.”<sup>33</sup>

Illarion Illarionovich Vasil’chikov, the territory’s governor-general, made it his business, though, to staunch the flow of unreliaables being exiled to Great Russia, explaining to his sometimes overly zealous subordinates that unreliability must not be too broadly interpreted. He himself received (especially as the war drew to a close) instructions to the same effect from the Interior Ministry and the Third Section.<sup>34</sup>

There is a draft proclamation for public distribution prepared for Vasil’chikov and corrected by him in pencil, which expanded on the royal manifesto of 19 March 1856 that announced the war’s end. After listing the numerous wartime services performed by the nobility of the three provinces, the proclamation concluded that it “had shown itself wholly worthy to be the highest representative estate in the land.” “I had the happiness once again to bear witness before the sovereign emperor during my recent sojourn in the capital to the nobility’s diligence

and useful deeds, for which it has repeatedly conferred on itself the supreme benevolence, and His Majesty with pleasure deigned to hear my report on the same.” We also see the striking deletion of the following passage: “In its loyal diligence, it [the nobility of the southwestern provinces—L.G.] vied with the nobility of other provinces across the vastness of Russia and served as an example to the other estates in the region.” A passage on the return home of nobles found guilty of “thoughtless conduct” was taken out, too.<sup>35</sup> Both of these were, by and large, positive statements, but they were edited out in the interests of more circumspect phrasing.

Letters written by Ivan Sergeevich Aksakov, who served in the militia, to family members contain more important information. “It has been long since Malorossiia saw a bearded Russian soldier; and when it encountered one again, it must have felt the same sense of umbrage and resentment that it had experienced earlier,” he observed. “You really can’t help remembering Konisskii.” And for his part, even on the Left Bank of the Dnieper, this Great Russian was “as it were in foreign parts, not in Russia, and looking at the inhabitants as people completely alien to him.”<sup>36</sup> Aksakov was so categorical because he was so well read. *The History of the People of Rus* [Istoriia rusov], which has been ascribed to Georgii Konisskii, was still exerting an appreciable influence on images of Ukraine even in the mid-nineteenth century, and the residents of Abramtsevo, as we learn from Vera Sergeevna Aksakova’s diary, were avid readers of historical narratives of Malorossiia, which had become far easier to find in the latter half of the 1840s thanks to the publishing activities of the Society of Russian History and Antiquities. The society had produced the first complete edition of *The History of the People of Rus*, which had previously been known only in manuscript.

That said, there is also direct testimony of how acutely the militiamen from Vladimir felt the strangeness of life in Ukraine. “Their wooden cottages with a stove, a floor, and sleeping benches had been replaced by a Ukrainian hut with no floor and no native stove.” Nor did the “victuals of Malorossiia” suit the militiamen’s gastronomic preferences; they missed their “cabbage, cucumbers, and kvass, all of which constituted a requirement for the stomach of a Great Russian peasant,” who enjoyed his “sour and salty food.” “The lack of the foods to which we have become accustomed at home,” another memoirist attests, “forced not only the soldiers of the militia but also us men of means to pine often for our own dear province of Vladimir.”<sup>37</sup> The deputy governor of Kiev province’s

conviction that there were no substantial distinctions between the locals (*khokhly*)\* and the population of a classic interior province like Vladimir stirred Gromeka to commit his skepticism to paper.<sup>38</sup>

The militiamen in Vitebsk province also clearly saw much that was unfamiliar in the daily life there. “By the practices and usage of those parts,” a volunteer from Tver recalled in his memoirs,

the rustics rarely live in innumerable villages, contrary to the custom within Russia, but, rather, mostly in individual homes or homesteads. . . . The arrangement of manor houses and peasant huts, the way of life, the habits, and even the food were all unfamiliar and at every step provided novelty and a different experience for newcomers. The huts with no chimney but a huge hearth and earthen floors, shared in winter with domesticated livestock, rubbed the militiamen the wrong way when they were first introduced to their quarters. The poverty, which manifests in a lack of the staples of life, and the rather uncivilized, slovenly, and unsociable demeanor of the villagers hampered the gregariousness that the Russian, especially the Russian soldier, uses to put himself at ease and feel at home wherever he may be.

A sense of “ease with the local requirements and the nature of the area” came only with the passage of time, and the growing rapport with the “local common folk” was much assisted by the barter with which the inhabitants of Vitebsk province made up their shortages, mostly of grain and salt.<sup>39</sup>

The locals, meanwhile, saw the militiamen as outsiders. In Vitebsk province during the winter of 1855, the “cold was as intense as the deepest frosts of Great Russia, and since those parts were, by their western nature, not habituated to such a chill, the blame for the abrupt change of climate must, willy nilly, fall as a reproof on the militia, which had allegedly carried with it the earth’s harsh caprices from the Volga’s distant shores. The natives may have been even more confirmed in that superstition by the sight of the militiamen outside without ear coverings in temperatures of twenty below, singing and dancing, and doing so for several such days, during which none suffered from the cold or fell sick.”<sup>40</sup>

Notions common in one region could well be “exported” to another. So, for instance, on 3 October 1853, a Russian Orthodox official named Rotmistrov serving on the Livonian island of Ezel [modern-day

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\**Khokhol* (pl. *khokhly*) is a derogatory term for Ukrainians.—Trans.

Saaremaa—Trans.] and a guest in the home of Captain Andrushchenko, a native of Poltava province, proposed a toast “to the glory of Ukrainian arms,” assuring his listeners that “Ukraine will be separated from Russia, will be independent and autonomous,” and that the “ragtag” empire would “collapse.” “Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine, and Georgia,” he said, “are displeased with the Russian government for countermanding and destroying privileges granted and confirmed in ancient times. In the event that war is declared between Russia and Turkey and Russian troops are sent away to Turkey, then Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine, and Georgia will rise against Russia and the English and French fleets will assist them.”<sup>41</sup>

Yet N.A. Obninskii, a Kaluga province brigade commander, noted that “as we entered Malorossiiia, matters took a turn for the better. It was found that the *khokhol* sympathized more with the militia; the militiamen were better fed; and all estates strove to show themselves cordial and hospitable to the brigades as they passed through.” (Obninskii’s brigade had, remarkably enough, come to Malorossiiia from the interior provinces of Tula, Orel, and Kursk.) None of this, though, prevented him from writing about the narrow-mindedness and indolence of the *khokhly*, the only word he used to designate the population of Malorossiiia.<sup>42</sup> “There is no other way to describe our campaign,” wrote D. Samarin, “than in the words of the soldiers, who expressed themselves thus on Malorossiiia and Ukraine: ‘What campaign is this? Some five months we have traveled from station to station as nothing other than guests.’” Ukrainian-language poems published during the war in Moscow (with some expressions glossed for Russian speakers) had a semantic leitmotif that emphasized the unity of all parts of the empire:

For we be sons of Russia  
As our grandsires were in days of yore.

Those pieces of Ukrainian doggerel had something to say about Georgia’s loyalty to Russia, too.<sup>43</sup>

Ivan Aksakov was more categorical in his assessment of Novorossiiia as a part of the imperial whole: “Evidently that alien population has no attachment to Russia, there being naught to attach to, because it is not in Russia but in Novorossiiia; there is no local soil into which roots might be sunk.” The German colonies in Saratov province were, in his opinion, more intimately associated with Russia than were Novorossiiia’s colonist settlements. Additionally, the Russians who had settled there were mostly runaways hostile to Russia and would not care at all if the territory were

to be detached from the empire. In Novorossiia, “Russians might as well be in a foreign land.”<sup>44</sup>

Interior Minister Dmitrii Nikolaevich Bludov had held similar views in the late 1830s: “The territory of Novorossiia, which was organized far later, to this day presents neither the integration in the mass of its population nor the consensus and unity in popular action that are discernible in the interior provinces; here, due to the newness of the area’s population, the multiple ethnicities of its inhabitants, and the striking dissimilarity even of the natural scene, there are as yet no special local, and in some localities even social, ties other than a subordination to a single center of government.”<sup>45</sup> Yet in the eyes of the authorities, Novorossiia was far less problematic than the neighboring Western territory, with its characteristically Polish sociocultural dominant. Not coincidentally, the idea of combining the provinces of Novorossiia with contiguous parts of the western provinces was repeatedly considered from the 1830s to 1860 during discussions of ways to solve the Polish problem.<sup>46</sup>

This region, although much closer to the main theater of war than Great Russia, had far less “heartfelt involvement” in the war. “The point of attack on Russia was aptly chosen,” Aksakov concluded. “This is its weakest spot. I am certain that if the landing had been made in Arkhangel’sk province, in Finland, or even in the Baltic provinces and St. Petersburg, it would have caused the Russians, Finns, and Letts to wage a local people’s war.”<sup>47</sup> Aksakov’s forecast requires us to take a closer look at the areas he mentions.

On assignment from the Naval Ministry, Sergei Vasil’evich Maksimov spent 1856 traveling around Arkhangel’sk province, where the northern shores bore the telltale traces of war, and speaking with eyewitnesses of and participants in the recent events. The local inhabitants of the region [Pomors] complained of the “affronts” of the British but emphasized that they had not harmed the civilian population except when the civilians had given them good cause. The British had limited themselves to destroying state warehouses and had even permitted the local inhabitants to take some of the supplies. In several instances, the appearance of armed residents had kept the enemy troops from landing, which gave rise to a dismissive attitude: “Cowardly our adversary was, right cowardly . . . ask this of all the Pomors, of any you will, and all will tell you the same. The people on the enemy vessels were the most paltry, the most shabby, and not worth an empty eggshell, as God is my witness! . . . Had our lads been a bit quicker on the uptake, we would have rounded them all up alive, swear

to God!" Yet the kind of resistance associated with the district town of Kola, which lay close to the borders of the Grand Duchy of Finland, was rare, due to the lack of organization and shortage of military personnel across that vast region.<sup>48</sup>

Even so, modern Russian scholars caution against underestimating Pomor patriotism and the local authorities' efforts to defend their shores. The hastily armed and poorly trained peasants were indeed a deterrent even in the face of total Anglo-French naval dominance. The authorities tried to lift local spirits by talking the enemy down and extolling Russian valor; and among the propagandists, none was more visible than Roman Platonovich Boil' [Boyle], the military governor of Arkhangel'sk, who was English by extraction.<sup>49</sup>

"In Helsingfors [Helsinki]," an alarmed Dubel't wrote in the fall of 1854, "the authority and oversight of the police are so feeble that officers from the enemy fleet come there and dance at the balls, and no one troubles to ask who they are and where they come from. The citizens of Helsingfors also visit the enemy fleet at will. That is most ill advised."<sup>50</sup>

The modern Finnish scholar Matti Klinge, however, highlights not only local patriotism but also the political loyalty of the Finns. Their positive attitude toward the emperor and the Russians ("public opinion in Finland was wholly Russophile") was fostered by the not inconsiderable damage inflicted by the allied fleets on the grand duchy, which caused the Finns to fend off enemy landings and willingly join the military units that were being mustered. But the ineffectiveness of the imperial armed forces during the bombardment of Sveaborg and the British decision not to destroy Helsingfors, which lay close to that fortress, changed the atmosphere. An illustration of the distance between the Finns and Russia is seen in the fact that Finnish students demanding reforms after the war "conducted themselves as though Finland had been on the winning side."<sup>51</sup>

In early 1854, a priest reported to his bishop rumors passing between the peasants and the landlords regarding the return of Livonia to Sweden and told him that a "throng of Estonians" in Derpt [Tartu] district had expressed a desire "to become nationals of Sweden." But although the matter was referred to Aleksandr Arkad'evich Suvorov, governor-general of the Baltic provinces, it was decided that this had been a false alarm. The ultimate conclusion drawn was that the "state of mind of the peasants throughout the province is entirely satisfactory."<sup>52</sup> Yet in early 1856, [Interior Minister] Petr Valuev recorded having heard about "secret connections linking the Polish emigration, local officials of Polish

provenance, and many officers in the Baltic corps who are also Polish by origin.”<sup>53</sup>

Lev Aleksandrovich Tikhomirov, however, held that the empire’s Achilles’ heel was not Novorossiia but the Caucasus. “If,” he argued many years after the event, “rather than fighting with us in Crimea, the allies had landed in the Caucasus, we would have risked losing all our possessions in both the North Caucasus and Transcaucasia.”<sup>54</sup>

But let us return to Novorossiia and the wartime assessments of it, which predominantly diverged from Aksakov’s. “‘Very well, now. We shall see how it will be in the steppes,’ said the soldiers [as they left Khar’kov province—L.G.]. ‘I sincerely own,’ wrote Samarin, who himself had witnessed that campaign, ‘that we too, sharing that same doubt, had compounded for ourselves a strange concept of the barrenness of our blessed Ukraine.’” But, contrary to the alarmist expectations, once in the steppes, the soldiers encountered “abundance and profusion and brotherly cordiality and a purely Russian hospitality.” Samarin noted the warm welcome of the “observably Russified” Greek colonists, Baden Germans, and Nogai,\* calling the last group “Russian at heart and in nature, as if having belonged to Russia from time immemorial, and devoted to it, as a good master is to his family, as a warrior is to his flag.” “Inscribed deep, deep in the soldiers’ memory,” he continued, “is the goodwill of a people united to Russia for only eighty-one years, of a foreign faith, habits, and mores, but akin in feelings and sons of the same mother—Mother Russia.”<sup>55</sup> Samarin, of course, had in mind here the imperial identity promoted by the mass patriotic propaganda of wartime, which included the preaching of interfaith unity.

The inhabitants of Samara proved to hold similar views when a Bashkir regiment passed through their Volga area town. “Their reasoning was not that these were Muslim infidels; in them, they saw warriors on their way to strive on the field of battle in defense of Russia.” An imam’s farewell to the soldiers in Nizhnii Novgorod led one observer to conclude, “In the orbit of social life but more so in trade, we are wholly obliged to consider ourselves one family.”<sup>56</sup>

The paradox of the Russian Empire being in the war as the defender of Orthodoxy while the Christian powers of the West allied with the Turks is hard to overlook. Arguments contrasting civilization and barbarism were variously applied in evaluating the international and domestic situation.

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\*A Turkic ethnic group in southern Russia and the Caucasus.—Ed.



The rallying of Christians (the “Anglo-French”) and Muslims in a war against Russia was assessed as unprincipled, unnatural, and criminal. Russia’s non-Christian (predominantly Muslim) peoples were viewed as its subjects, and their support of the empire’s military efforts was interpreted as irrefutable evidence of that empire’s durability and viability.

Reality, though, was far more complex. There were instances, including in Nizhnii Novgorod province, of Volga Tatars wanting to stay out of the militia, not least because they feared forced conversion to Orthodoxy if they did join.<sup>57</sup> And in the years immediately following the war, many tens of thousands of Nogai, along with Crimean Tatars and mountain men from the North Caucasus, resettled in the Ottoman Empire, the migration continuing until “not a single” Nogai remained in the northern districts of Tavrida province.<sup>58</sup> Even in the late nineteenth century, the author of an article about the “Nagai” published in a reputable encyclopedia was writing that the “reasons for the resettlement are unknown. The actions of the local administration likely facilitated it.”<sup>59</sup>

As they traveled under arms across the empire, the Russians (both simple soldiers and often aristocratic officers) had their first encounters with levy-exempt Jews.<sup>60</sup> Long before the “classical” pogroms, Jews could well become the butt not only of raucous jokes but also of physical reprisals. The reaction of the militiamen in a Tver province brigade is indicative: “On entering Vitebsk province, the militiamen noticed a national group that was new to them, never before seen in the society they frequented and in their everyday lives. It was a multitude of Jews. . . . The impact of that surprise was inexpressibly amusing. . . . Suddenly irrepressible laughter broke out in the ranks, but occasioned by what? The militiamen were overcome by the sight of Jews in numbers rarely seen at home and then only when they made the rounds of the district with pockets full of trumpery for sale.” The soldiers had an aversion to the appearance of the shtetl and to the life lived there, which clashed sharply with anything that might have been familiar to the “demanding eye of the Russian peasant,” while the “variance between the religions in every detail met with revulsion on both sides and caused discord.” The arrangements made by the local authorities to quarter the militia only compounded the situation and impaired mutual understanding.<sup>61</sup>

Jews in Novograd-Volynskii district complained that the “soldiers of the militia [were] goading them.” A report to the governor’s district representative dated 6 November 1855 advised that the “militia was not greeted here with the same cordiality that it was accustomed to see in

other provinces; and to express their displeasure to the inhabitants for such a welcome, the soldiers beat them on the slightest pretext, especially the Jews, fights with whom occur constantly, at every encounter between them and a militia soldier.” But the local authorities, which were committed to assist the militiamen, did what they could to “offer them a cordial welcome and generally to oblige them.”<sup>62</sup>

Attitudes toward the Jews might depend on the brigade’s mustering locale, the place and circumstances of contact, and the commander’s own stance. The behavior of Christians in the Pale of Settlement was probably in some measure adopted here, too. Significance also unquestionably attached to the local official line, which was influenced by the numerous wartime cases brought against Jews for the dissemination of seditious rumors. In certain aspects, the model of Russo-Jewish contacts in the mid-1850s supplied the prototype for the situation during World War I, when liberal Russians vociferously proclaimed the danger posed by the virus of anti-Semitism then spreading through central Russia.<sup>63</sup>

Tension was also growing within the Jewish population itself, whose situation sharply deteriorated in the Crimean War (“it was a trying time for them”), even giving rise to an eruption of eschatological sentiments. Suffice it here to mention the “hunters” of the *qahals*,\* who targeted their fellow Jews as recruits.<sup>64</sup>

Under the general heading of unity, we can see sympathy for the Jews in the description of the reading of the imperial manifesto in a Simferopol synagogue: “In that service there was none of the shouting that had been so disagreeable to any who even walked past the Jewish synagogue on a Saturday during the service in times past.”<sup>65</sup> Militia member Viktor Tseadovich Gertsyk was generally benevolent toward the Jews, noting especially the practical assistance they proffered: “I have nothing to say of praise or benefit to the Jews, who are claimed by many to exploit the people; but where is there no exploitation?”<sup>66</sup> Similarly, the former officer Obninskii saw in the Jews of Malorossiiia and Novorossiiia a source of practical activism, which they managed to rouse even in the extremely sluggish Ukrainians. Obninskii’s comparison of the entrepreneurial spirit among Jewish businessmen and Russian merchants by no means rebounded to the credit of the latter and led him to an important conclusion. “Governments, it seems to me, have no business distinguishing among their subjects. A loyalty oath should confer equal privileges on all: pray

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\*The *qahals* were regulatory bodies in Jewish settlements that were officially abolished in 1844 except in the Baltic region.—Trans.

as your father prayed, speak as you see fit, but you are my subject and therefore avail yourself on an equal footing with the rest.”<sup>67</sup>

During the Crimean War, Novorossiia took place of honor on the empire’s mental map largely thanks to such new axiological reference points as Sevastopol, the “city of Russian glory” and Odessa the “priceless pearl in our crown,” whose metamorphosis may be the more indicative of the two. In the first half of the nineteenth century, Odessa was a “city of Babylon”: “here are naught but Popondopulos, Macaronis, Arab-oglys, and suchlike riffraff, or Shlemkas, and Dudels with their little puppy dogs. One longs to see a national visage, however unsightly.”<sup>68</sup> But in no time at all, the 1854 bombardment of that noncombatant port by enemy ships turned it into a heroic outpost of the empire. Hot on the heels of that event, Petr Andreevich Viazemskii wrote:

But thou, Odessa, youthful martyr,  
The southern star of Russian skies,  
Young sister in our homeland’s family,  
Tsarevna among Russian towns! . . .  
More dear to us through these thy wounds,  
For vengeance due thee Russia howls.<sup>69</sup>

Similar thoughts and feelings also inspired another, less renowned author to pen the following poetic missive to that city on the Black Sea:

But none of these, thy bounteous riches  
None of thy abundant gifts  
Could win for thee the brotherhood  
Of cities of the Orthodox.  
A new arrival by the threshold,  
At the borderline you stood. . . .  
And no kinship found we ever  
In thy annals, though we read  
Inscribed there the noble names  
Of Governor de Richelieu  
And of Commander de Ribas. . . .  
But triumph now! Thou wert baptized  
By hail of enemy grenades  
And art now in the family ties  
Of Russia’s many glorious cities.<sup>70</sup>

But while destroying certain stereotypes, the Crimean War helped create others, including some that were to play an important role beyond the nineteenth century.

There was also another stratum of notions about Novorossia, since by the mid-nineteenth century the northern shores of the Black Sea, especially Crimea and Odessa, had become a promised land for masses of fugitives, thus engendering an exuberant popular mythology.<sup>71</sup> Almost immediately after peace was signed, serfs, mostly from Ekaterinoslav and Kherson provinces, streamed to the Isthmus of Perekop, with a simultaneous migration to the portion of Bessarabia that Russia had lost [to Moldavia—Trans.] in the peace negotiations.<sup>72</sup>

But even the resounding glory of Sevastopol, whose heroic defense was so consequential to national consolidation, was apt to cede to the attachment to one's own "little motherland." When preparing to leave for Sevastopol in 1855, the son of Major-General Ivan Samoilovich Ul'ianov, a Don Cossack by birth, was advised not to "go chasing after acts of valor for Sevastopol. Sonorous as they may be, great as they may be, we have a matter even more sacred and dear to our hearts, which is the defense of our motherland." The upshot was that the young man went instead to defend Taganrog, in the lands of the Don Host.<sup>73</sup> "Sevastopol is not all of Russia. Sevastopol is not even Rus," Elena Andreevna Shtakenshneider wrote in her diary when the city was surrendered, freshening the memory of the mental boundaries in place within the empire.<sup>74</sup>

The bluster about unity that filled the patriotic publications unquestionably predominated on the face of it. In a manner characteristic of that mindset, the famous man of letters Nestor Vasil'evich Kukol'nik wrote, "I am certain that if Lord Palmerston were to be seated in a sleigh and driven through Russia's provinces, he would be the first to stand in Parliament and caterwaul, 'My fault and I won't do it again. Hoorah for Russia.'" "Aligning historical events by their nature," Kukol'nik continued, "our present time in Russia very much resembles the period that preceded the First Crusade."<sup>75</sup>

Dissertations on Russian unity were often constructed on a contrast with a derogatory critique of Russia's hostile neighbors, whose primary target was the Austrian Empire, which in Nicholas I's prewar plans was to be involved in partitioning the sultan's domains. "Austria is no self-contained and cohesive state like France, England, Russia, Prussia, or even any secondary state with a strong and compact nationality all its own," Viazemskii wrote.

Austria is a second Turkey, less the fanaticism and barbarism that in this instance also constitute a national force. . . . Although only a small share of the Austrian Empire, Austria is, contrary to the laws of physics and logic,

greater and stronger than the whole. Long ago, Voltaire spoke of the late lamented Holy Roman Empire, wondering why it was holy, why Roman, and why an empire? The name has changed in the interim, but even now one may ask: what does the Austrian Empire mean? It is comprehensible so long as you live in Vienna but more difficult to understand in Trieste, Venice, Milan, and Prague, in Buda and Krákov, and in the dozen capitals that stud this empire. . . . What is most striking about the Turkish Empire is the dearth of Turks, and in the Austrian Empire the dearth of Austrians.

Viazemskii also quoted Fedor Ivanovich Tiutchev's "The entire Austrian Empire is an Achilles' heel."

By contrast, the "Russian nation is not an arbitrary agglomeration of various races: no one national element holds sway. We are a nation, and nations do not disintegrate and do not perish other than by the will of God, when their hour has come." Viazemskii refuted the idea that Russia could ever be dismembered, seeing in its "common and ubiquitous resistance" an ability "to hold its territory" and the "triumph of moral force over material force." After expressing himself adamant on Russia's self-sufficiency and issuing a call for isolationism ("from this time on, we are no longer Europeanized"), Viazemskii exclaimed, "Let Russia be a second China, but a China with a future."<sup>76</sup>

"Austria has less inner strength and fewer guarantees of longevity than Turkey," Pogodin asserted. "Austria would have perished irremediably, breaking into its component parts, had Russia not saved it." Pogodin also called the power of the Habsburgs an "artificial monarchy."<sup>77</sup> As Konstantin Petrovich Pobedonostsev recalled later in a letter to Alexander III, in 1856 it had "seemed strange" to speak of peoples in the plural relative to Russia: "it was noted that the Austrian emperor may speak of his *peoples* but with us, the *people* is one and the power is indivisible." There was even some head scratching over the 17 April manifesto on the upcoming coronation in which Alexander II referred to a vow "to live solely for the happiness of our subject peoples."<sup>78</sup>

Aleksei Konstantinovich Tolstoi would later, in the 1860s, wax subtly ironic over such notions, on the grounds that it would be difficult to give the multinational Russian Empire a strictly "Muscovite countenance":

Friends, hoorah for unity!  
Let's rally Holy Rus once more!  
Differences, like disorders,  
In the people I abhor.<sup>79</sup>

In the period of interest to us here, however, the patriotic élan and optimism were far from universal, because, as we have seen, they jostled with serious apprehensions as to the country's integrity and on qualms regarding what would come next. Furthermore, according to Evgenii Mikhailovich Feoktistov, educated society was exulting [in Russia's defeat—Trans.] as no true loyalist ever would and even harboring defeatist sentiments, since a Russian victory would inevitably have bolstered Nicholas's regime, the latter part of which was justifiably dubbed the "seven dismal years." He also attests that even Mikhail Nikiforovich Katkov, editor of *Moskovskie vedomosti* [a conservative newspaper—Trans.], was demonstrating signal restraint at that time. This reaction Feoktistov mostly blamed on the "egregious censorship," which demanded "that even patriotism be expressed in officially approved clichés," thus ruling out any self-directed activity in society outside that mold. He encouraged his readers to bear in mind the "subsequent attempts to extenuate, to depreciate," the intellectual elite's listlessness in matters patriotic.<sup>80</sup>

In 1857, Petr Valuev, author of the wartime favorite *A Russian's Thoughts* [Dumy russkogo], noted in his diary the existence of two languages, "one conditional, understood by all and applied by all, and the other precise and esteemed by few." He illustrated that idea with an example from the recent past: "Conditional: the Baltic provinces are replete with loyalist feelings and fervently devoted to Russia, and the nobility readily made copious sacrifices in the war just past. Precise: the Baltic provinces are a entirety only in administrative terms. They have no unity. The social estates are disconnected and have little thought of Russia. The local nobility made no contributions to the war just past, other than such as were solicited by those in command." The future head of the Interior Ministry [1861–68—Trans.], who even during the public surge in the latter half of the 1850s was haunted by the specter of imperial disintegration, held that "for the good of the cause, what is needed is not a *conditional* but a *precise* language."<sup>81</sup>

The Decembrist Alexander Poggio, who predicted in his postreform writings "the irrefutable, looming dissolution of Russia," had even harsher things to say. Condemning Russia's "predations" in Turkey and Poland, this native of Novorossiiia wondered, "What is the purpose of all these conquests that do not strengthen but weaken you? Lacking Poland, you outmatched Napoleon himself and took Paris; with Poland, you ushered the enemy into Sevastopol and gave away your sea."<sup>82</sup>

But for want of any major separatist movements in the troubled

wartime years, the “conditional language” prevailed. The inherent logic of that language influenced public opinion and provided a reference point for a partial adjustment made to domestic policy. In February 1856, for instance, two governor-generalships respectively centered on Khar’kov and Vitebsk were abolished when Sergei Stepanovich Lanskoï, the new interior minister, found that Left-Bank Ukraine and eastern Belorussia were too closely integrated into the empire to warrant separate administration. “Everyday experience proves,” he informed Alexander II, “that not only is government by a governor-general of no benefit there but, on the contrary, inasmuch as it forms a separate and superfluous level of administrative authority, only complicates and impedes the conduct of affairs.” Lanskoï’s plans were not, however, limited to those two regions.<sup>83</sup>

The official interpretation of the war’s outcomes from the viewpoint of the empire’s integrity was reinforced in several documents promulgated to coincide with the coronation of Alexander II in August 1856. In addition to the general manifesto on the accession, the “coronation package” also included a manifesto addressed to the inhabitants of the Kingdom of Poland, four imperial missives to individual provinces, and several edicts. The proclamations of gratitude continued the wartime practice of lavishing the most august approbation on a given region.

The basic manifesto enumerated areas that had suffered in the war, including Arkhangel’sk province and the Baltic provinces. The missives were addressed to Ekaterinoslav, Kherson, and Tavrida provinces and Bessarabia, which had been more seriously affected by the war than other locales. Special expressions of gratitude and sympathy were found for each.<sup>84</sup>

In his address to “all the estates” of Ekaterinoslav, Alexander invoked the valor of the Zaporozhian Cossacks: “Within the confines of your lands, on the banks of the river that witnessed Russia’s first glory and is cherished in the Russian heart, latterly the free sons of the rapids, as Christianity’s foremost bulwark against the barbarians, with knightly prowess devoted their lives to the defense of Orthodoxy and Russian nationhood. In the din of the recent hard-fought affray, there revived in you the zealous spirit that in times past animated your forebears.”

The inhabitants of Kherson province were reminded that, under the aegis of the “Russian Eagle,” in less than a century their lands had passed from savagery and desolation to enlightenment and prosperity. “Between you and the rest of Russia there lacked only the connection of suffering and forbearance, and lo in these years the hand of Providence has



bestowed on you the grievous trial of war. In this unforgettable age, you illustriously sustained the honor of the Russian name." Odessa was also celebrated, in the spirit of the patriotic verse cited above.

The letter to Tavrida province emphasized the tradition of the Christianization of Russia: "The sacrifice of purification, fraught with significance, offered on the ruins of Sevastopol was made on your soil, in the very place where some nine centuries ago the great enlightener of Russia [Prince Vladimir] accepted holy Christian baptism and whence the light of love and education poured forth onto the boundless expanses of our own dear North." "With the name of your land," the document continued, "henceforth shall be joined the memory of unexampled feats of selflessness and resounding deeds. Our heart sympathized with you in your sufferings, ached with your wounds." For the second time in eighty years (the first being when Catherine the Great subdued the region), Crimea found itself a focal point of Russian politics. The rescript failed to mention the wartime disloyalties of the Crimean Tatars, which did not, however, pass without consequences for them.

The inhabitants of Bessarabia had "manifested a true, disinterested devotion to the fatherland" that had adopted them and given them "good order, all possible well-being, and the rudiments of scholarship." "You have known how to value those gifts," the document went on, "and have offered Russia worthy thanks for them. You have linked your name with the triumphant moments of Russian history and have justified the sympathy that our great fatherland nurtures for you."

The missives written on the occasion of Alexander II's coronation were addressed not only to "all the estates" but also to several individual peoples. They saluted on an equal footing with indigenous Russians (the "true-born children of Russia") the "new-fledged settlers of another race." The Bessarabia missive spoke of "true-born natives" and the "region's newer settlers." The leitmotif of all the letters was to confirm that those relatively new parts of the empire had passed their graduation examination, because, thanks to energetic resistance on the borderlands and with the full cooperation of those borderlands, the enemy had never penetrated the Russian interior.

The manifesto to the Kingdom of Poland, whose tone echoed that of the missives to Novorossiia, also broadcast the provisions of the coronation manifesto.<sup>85</sup> During the war, it stated, "our loyal subjects in the Kingdom of Poland were marked in equal measure with our other loyal subjects in devotion to throne and fatherland." This was a virtual reiteration of what

Alexander had said on a visit to Warsaw in May 1856: "In the recent eastern war, *your people* fought on an equal footing with the rest, and Prince Mikhail Gorchakov, having been witness to this, renders them their due in his assertion that they courageously spilled their blood in defense of the fatherland."<sup>86</sup>

Various edicts also extended favors to the Poles and Jews in the Western territory. The onerous rules for government service imposed on natives of those provinces in 1852 were abolished.<sup>87</sup> Conscription demands on Jews were eased; and the forcible enrollment of underage boys into military schools was abolished, as was the drafting of individuals without passports.<sup>88</sup>

During his coronation celebrations, Alexander thanked the marshals of the nobility in Vil'na province "for the heartfelt welcome given to my guards." "I am very glad to be able to thank you personally for your active participation in the recent war and for the cordiality you showed my guards," he declared while meeting with the local nobility on a visit to Vil'na two years later. He again noted the welcome given to the guards in 1849, an event of which he had the best memories. The nobility of the Northwest later supplemented the services already rendered by presenting some original ideas on the peasant question.<sup>89</sup>

Since Polish separatism had not been explicitly expressed on this occasion as it had in 1812, the Poles greeted the new reign "in fairly good odor, not politically compromised." As Zygmunt Staroropiński attests, the Northwest readily availed itself of Alexander's olive branch and "began to breathe more freely."<sup>90</sup> Indeed, the Polonophile sentiments that spread through Russian society originated directly from the Crimean War.<sup>91</sup> Without such sentiments, it is highly likely that there would have been no concessions made in 1861 and 1862 and no policy of appeasing Polish subjects, which one large-scale uprising after another had, until then, dissuaded St. Petersburg from pursuing.

But when, on the occasion of the coronation, certain brigade commanders petitioned for former militiamen to be allowed to keep their uniforms, they received a rather cynical answer that could be summarized as the "trouble's over, so what are the folk costumes for?"<sup>92</sup>

The Crimean War therefore convinced the authorities and society not only of the urgency of reform but also of the empire's durability, since virtually all its parts—including those that had not faced the trials of 1812 as well as those, like Lithuania, that had not withstood those trials—passed this imperial graduation test. Under the blows struck by a

powerful enemy coalition, many imperial institutions, including the army, the apple of the empire's eye, had begun to fracture, but the state itself did not come apart. In that respect, the alarming prognoses proved false, and Russia emerged from the war with negligible territorial losses. The empire's continuing stability reinforced the conviction that Russia had won a moral victory, which in turn helped considerably in swallowing the bitter pill of defeat and even in converting that bitterness into a transformative energy. The downside, though, was that the reform agenda would not include a systemic transformation of Russia's imperial structure, since it, along with the autocracy, was regarded as fundamental.

After the Crimean defeat, the Russian Empire did not react as Austria had done after its defeat of 1859, still less than it did after the debacle in 1866 that led to the formation of the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy.<sup>93</sup> Nor was a compact plan of action promulgated in St. Petersburg comparable to the sultan's edict of 18 February 1856 that confirmed and developed the Tanzimat reforms to include equal rights for the Christian subjects of the Sublime Porte and was, resistance from the Turkish side notwithstanding, appended to the Treaty of Paris.<sup>94</sup> The pressure on Russia, both external and internal, did not suffice to bring about a qualitative reversal in imperial policy, so that in the late 1850s, the empire's problems were being resolved situationally and with no cogent strategy, although the nationalist reaction to the Polish Uprising of 1863–64 did, as it were, set the tone. Even so, the policy for the borderlands and the country as a whole largely came into being in the antiphasal interval between order and chaos.

Meanwhile, the conviction that Russia's neighbors had forfeited their former viability grew stronger and became more emotionally charged. The "monstrous ingratitude" that the Habsburgs had displayed during the war released St. Petersburg from its position as guardian of the "patchwork monarchy," whose demise was deemed not only fitting but also desirable. "What a despicable state that Austria is!" Thus, in early 1856, Anna Fedorovna Tiutcheva, a lady-in-waiting, formulated what was all but the general consensus on this score. "May God in his mercy," she continued, "grant that I live to see it dismembered. I shall add that to my daily prayers."<sup>95</sup> Some bold historical comparisons were also drawn. "Russia is not Poland," Vladimir Fedoseevich Raevskii wrote in mid-1861 to Gavriil Stepanovich Baten'kov (both these Decembrists had been amnestied five years earlier). "Under the heaviest pressure it gained in strength and increased its span."<sup>96</sup>

The Crimean War significantly heightened interest in the specifics of individual parts of the empire, which the practical requirements of developing and implementing the Great Reforms reinforced. As early as the summer of 1855, the Naval Ministry—at the time, under the leadership of Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolaevich, the tsar's brother and a proving ground for reformist initiatives—had come up with a plan to send researchers on lengthy assignments to various parts of the country. Since the field researchers of choice were predominantly men of letters (aside from the above-mentioned Sergei Maksimov, including Aleksandr Nikolaevich Ostrovskii, Aleksei Feofilaktovich Pisemskii, and Grigorii Petrovich Danilevskii), this famous undertaking became known as the “literary expedition.” The ministry's first envoys were sent out even before peace was made. Since the immediate goal of each expedition was to meet departmental needs, the routes were determined by proximity to waterways (the White, Caspian, and Black seas, the Sea of Azov, and the Volga, Ural, Dnieper, Don, and Dniester rivers).<sup>97</sup> In practice, this field research quickly evolved into comprehensive regional studies, which, needless to say, carried echoes of the Crimean War.

The experience of war and the “literary expedition” of 1855–56, as well as impressions freshly gathered on his own travels, allowed Aleksandr Vasil'evich Golovnin, Grand Duke Konstantin's closest collaborator and a future minister of education, to grasp the special role played by the empire's central region. “At the present time,” he wrote in late 1860, “it is becoming clear that Russia's real strength lies not in the army, not in the fleet, not in skilled diplomacy, and not in the splendid edifices of our northern capital, but in the wealth, affluence, good governance, and reliable serenity of the provinces primarily populated by indigenous Russians that surround Moscow, which is Russia's heart.” Long before the problem of the “impoverishment of the center” was brought to the fore, Golovnin was calling on the government “to halt the further depletion” of that region.<sup>98</sup> The Crimean War thus undoubtedly contributed to the understanding of the connections and interaction between the center and the borderlands.

## Notes

1. V.S. Solov'ev, *Sochineniia*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 1988), vol. 2, p. 681.
2. A.S. Nifontov, *Rossiia v 1848 godu* (Moscow, 1949), pp. 286–87.
3. K. Arsen'ev, *Statisticheskie ocherki Rossii* (St. Petersburg, 1848), p. 25.
4. A.V. Nikitenko, *Dnevnik* (Moscow, 1955), vol. 1, p. 332.

5. G.R. Derzhavin, *Sochineniia* (Leningrad, 1987), pp. 362, 380.
6. *Istoriia XIX veka (pod redaktsiei professorov Lavissa i Rambo)* (translated from the French) (Moscow, 1938), vol. 5, pp. 206–7; V.N. Vinogradov, *Velikobritaniia i Balkany: ot Venskogo kongressa do Krymskoi voiny* (Moscow, 1985), pp. 234, 241–42.
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