THE GREAT WAR THAT ALMOST WAS: THE CRIMEA, 1853-1856

by

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(Editor's Note: *Volume I, Number 3 (Winter 1972) contained an article "The Improbable Alliance: The Central Powers and Coalition Warfare, 1914-1918," by Lieutenant Colonel James B. Agnew. In that article, Colonel Agnew analyzed and drew lessons from coalition warfare as exemplified by the Quadruple Alliance (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Turkey, and Bulgaria) during the Great War, 1914-18.*

In this article Colonel Agnew again focuses on coalition warfare in Europe, but this time in the mid-19th century, highlighting the emergence of an "unlikely coalition"–France, Great Britain, Turkey, and Sardinia–against Imperial Russia in a location (the Crimea) far from the shores of the major allied powers. He examines the factors that brought England and France together as war partners during the mid-19th century in an alliance against Czarist Russia. He points out the price paid by England and France for their failure to achieve unity of command; and he delineates the lessons applicable to 20th-century warfare that were lost to European powers following the Crimean War. Increasingly, the causes for the war were almost forgotten by the time the allies invaded the Crimea.)

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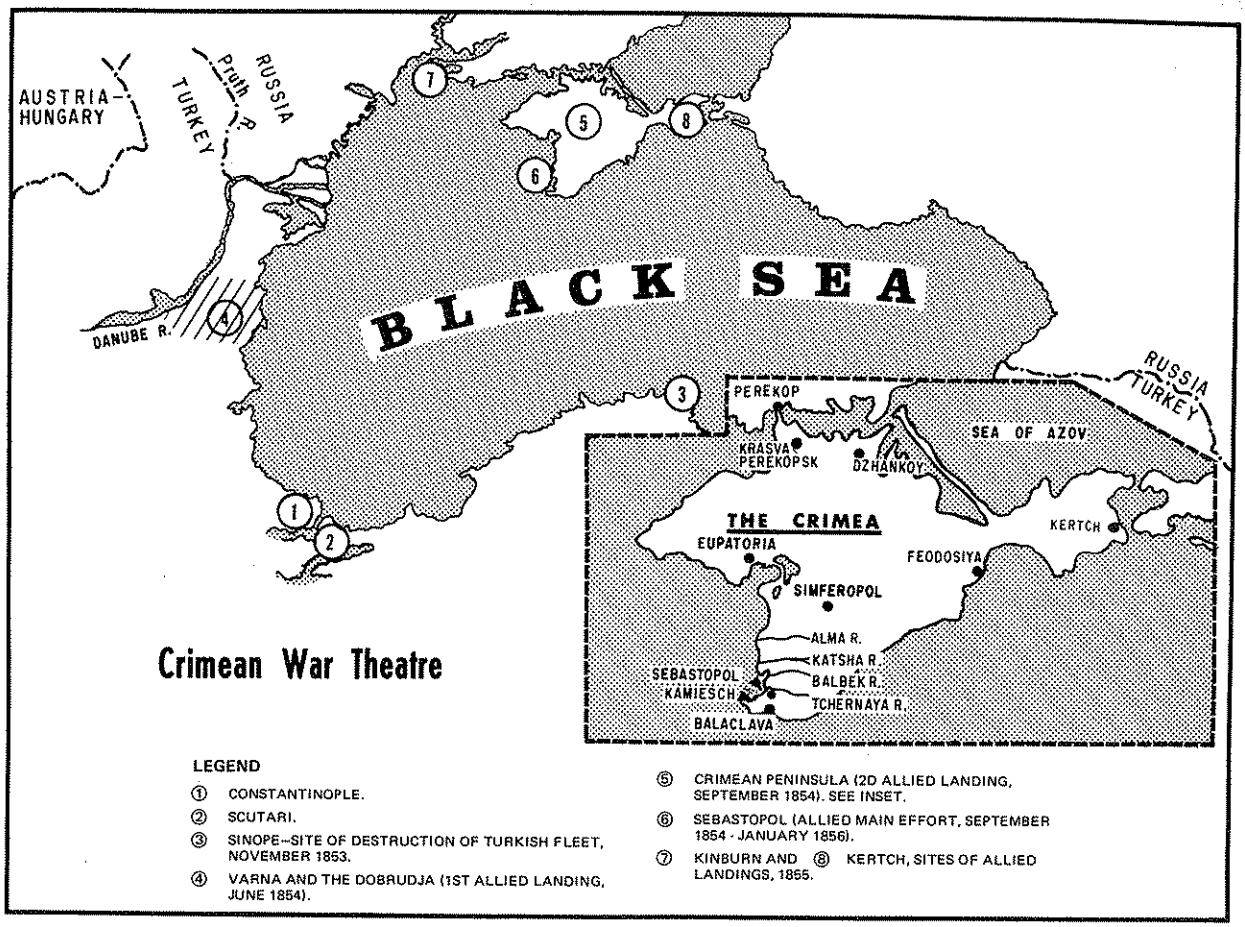
> This was the first time in centuries that the British and French were allies rather than enemies in a major military contest, and that it occurred while France was under a Napoleon made it the more remarkable.
>
> B.D. Gooch, *The New Bonapartist Generals in the Crimea,* (p. 40).

The Crimean War of 1853 through 1856. Who remembers who fought in it? What was it all about? Why was it relatively brief? Who won, and what were the terms of the peace settlement? What were its aftereffects; and what lessons, applicable to 20th-century warfare, were lost on European powers following the Crimean War?

The two most common reminiscences of the Crimean War in the English-speaking world concern relatively minor episodes: (1) *The Charge of the Light Brigade,* that sanguinary Tennysonian recapitulation of a particularly stupid tactical maneuver; and (2) in no less heroic terms, the superb exertions of the corps of English nurses of Florence Nightingale, working medical miracles in the suburbs of Constantinople and Balaclava. And that's about it. Few appreciate the disruptive influence of the war upon the standing European order of the times following 40 years of peace. In its aftermath, a fearful Prussia was united and by 1871 had conquered France, and was herself vaulted by the fortunes of the Crimea to continental eminence for two decades. The fragmented states of Italy were also united in the wake of declining Austrian influence following the Congress of Paris in 1856 which promulgated the peace terms. The Congress corroborated the destruction of the prewar great power



structure, formerly a cooperative, consultative system of five major states.

The Crimean War was short by Napoleonic or 20th-century standards, but not by those of the 19th century, excepting the American Civil War which was atypically long. The hostilities consumed only 31 months, dating from Russia's occupation of Turkish territory (July 1853) until the armistice (January 1856). It is not generally regarded as a "Great War," but it had many of the earmarks of one, to wit:

– It involved the national interests of all five "Great Powers" of Europe (the Concert of Europe) and a host of lesser ones. Three of the great powers (Britain, France, Russia) were actual belligerents. The other two (Austria-Hungary, Prussia), while not participating in hostilities, had considerable influence on the conduct and outcome of the war. The United States was even considered to be a potential warring power.[1]

– It was a large war in terms of space and cost. It was widespread geographically, a fact that is little remembered. Battles occurred not only in the Crimean Peninsula, but in what is present-day Turkey, Bulgaria, Rumania, the Baltic region, and the Far East (a British naval squadron actually attacked Russian Kamchatka). There were also very heavy casualties, estimated at over half a million

THE CRIMEAN WAR HAD THE POTENTIAL FOR BECOMING A GENERAL EUROPEAN WAR, INVOLVING AS IT DID THE INTERESTS OF ALL THE GREAT POWERS OF EUROPE.

deaths, of which not quite 200,000 were battle deaths and the remainder from disease, mainly cholera.[2]

– It capitalized on the state of contemporary technology and even advanced it. Although the "Brown Bess" musket from the Napoleonic period was very much in evidence, the breech-loader was issued to selected elements of both allied and Russian forces. Breech-loading cannons were utilized. The majority of the vessels of the allied fleets were steam powered, and amphibious warfare came into its own in the Black Sea. By mid-1855 there was a direct telegraphic link from Paris to the French headquarters in the Crimea, permitting General Canrobert and, later, General Pellissier to receive almost instantaneous counsel from the French Emperor and the War Ministry. The period also witnessed construction of the first military railroad in history, as well as the first floating bakeries, foundries, and hospital ships.[3]

The war escalated from a relatively minor religious issue involving France, Russia, and Ottoman Turkey into the political and economic realms, attracting British attention to the Eastern Mediterranean. In July 1853, Russian troops crossed the Pruth River and occupied the Turkish principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia. In response, Britain and France ordered naval squadrons to Besika Bay, west of the Dardanelles. Tensions built during the summer, until an overly enthusiastic Turkey declared war on Russia on 4 October. By April of 1854, France and England had allied with Turkey and a state of war existed!

A MOST UNLIKELY COALITION

In 1815 England had led the coalition that had brought Napoleonic France to its knees; indeed, England had been Bonaparte's jailer until his death in 1821. As late as 1852, the Duke of Wellington, architect of Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo, still strode the political stage, Britain was riding the crest of a floodtide of liberalism and reform—having recently extended the suffrage, reformed its bureaucracy, and repealed the detested Corn Laws. Colonialism was peaking under an expansionist Queen and Parliament. Britain, in 1853, was in a crusading mood.

Across the Channel the post-Napoleonic period brought shifts in power alignments. Louis Phillippe had fallen and a new Napoleon had risen. Louis, nephew of Napoleon I, had been elected in 1848 for a period of 4 years. In 1851, in a manner not unlike that of his illustrious uncle, he insured for himself a longer tenure by a militarily supported *coup d' état,* confirmed by plebiscite. He forthwith proclaimed France the seat of the Second Empire and himself Emperor Napoleon III. Europeans pondered where the first blow would fall. Louis seized upon the Russo-Turkish religious issue as an opportunity to show a suspicious Europe that France was no longer dormant.

Thus constitutional, liberal England and revanchist Bonapartist France, longstanding adversaries, jointly embraced the cause of the archaic, decadent Ottoman Empire, which had managed to antagonize almost every Mediterranean state in the previous two decades.

Finally, in 1855 little Sardinia-Piedmont entered the war, sending a 10,000-man troop contingent to the Crimea and rounding out the coalition. Sardinian entry was based on anticipation of postwar concessions from the allies, and the fact that Britain was picking up the tab for her expenses. The Sardinians were the Hessians of the 19th century!

This then was the array that confronted Czarist Russia as the conflict built to a peak in 1854.

Austria-Hungary and Prussia, of the remaining "Great Powers," elected to remain neutral, although Vienna's neutrality was as ambivalent as the Black Sea winds. Her actions earned for her a bounty of Russian resentment which would endure into the fateful days of 1914.

COALITION OPERATIONS: INSTITUTIONAL AND STRATEGIC ARRANGEMENTS

With respect to their readiness to wage war in a locale far from the Continent, the French were better prepared at the outset than were

the English. From strategy formulation to logistics, Paris had a head start, due in part to the loss in 1815 and to a continuous colonial struggle in Algeria since 1830, thus confirming the ageless maxim that the vanquished learn more from a war than the victors. Though there were traces of Bonapartism evident in the French military establishment, the army had developed Algeria. On the other hand, most British commanders were dedicated but aging relics of the Iberian Campaigns of 1808-12 and Waterloo (Lord Raglan, the initial British Commander in Chief was 66 years old and a "dapper youth," compared with some of his septuagenarian subordinates).

Institutionally, the war apparatuses of the two governments differed as widely as the ages of the respective commanders. In France, a single War Office administered all aspects of military planning and operations, officer assignments, troop levies, and logistics. Conscription was in effect. A former soldier, Marshal Vaillant, was Minister of War. Military personnel supervised contract administration of such diverse functions as baking and cobbling and insured that each regiment had such services organic. Both combat arms and administrative forces could be tailored for the job at hand; for each combat force there were attached sufficient engineers and service troops to provide the requisite support. Mail, pay, and rations all reached the soldier on time.

The situation in Britain, by comparison, was dismal. Cromwell's heritage lingered—a distrust of standing armies. As of January 1854, there were no divisions in the Army; only insufficiently filled territorial regiments and far-flung colonial contingents. During the conflict, Parliament never passed a conscription law, relying instead on foreign mercenaries (Germans, Sardinians) to fill out her contingents when sufficient red-blooded Englishmen and Scots did not step forward. Military authority in England was factionalized among Parliament, the Cabinet, and the Crown. In 1853 conduct of military operations was charged to the Minister of Colonies; the "Horse Guards" approximated a general staff and controlled cavalry and units; artillery and engineers reported to a separate ordnance department. One executive agency paid the troops, another supplied them, still another coordinated their transport. In most cases, the only common superior was the Queen.[4]

There were additional impediments, but the examples cited herein suggest the magnitude of managerial chaos facing the British.

In Constantinople, the Ottoman institutions were even more fragile than those of the British. In the 19th century, the Empire was held together by arcane political ties among Sultanates. Turkey lacked homogeneity of population; Greeks, Levantines, and Arabs were more numerous than Anatolians. The war capability was a hollow shell. Troops in Constantinople were well equipped and trained; elsewhere they wore rags and were poorly disciplined and unskilled. Authority for strategy formulation appeared to oscillate between the Imperial Sultan and Reshid Pasha, the Prime Minister. While the Turkish troops would give a passable account of themselves throughout the war, they did not enjoy the fruits of full partnership; observe these remarks of their partners:

> Napoleon III: "They are beasts!"[5]
> Lord Cowley, British Ambassador to France: "No Turk is to be trusted."[6]

Turkey was not so much an ally of France and Britain as she was an "excuse."

Grand strategy promulgation began early in the affair during the fall of 1853. Accounts indicate that Napoleon III took the lead,[7] and at his insistence, the Anglo-French fleets were sent jointly into the Black Sea on 3 January 1854.

The manner which Britain and France fabricated combined strategy was by a series of conferences, held at irregular intervals, frequently in the respective capitals or on the so-called "neutral ground" of Vienna. Napoleon III seemed to prefer the use of established diplomatic channels, consulting frequently with Cowley, but often using his prerogatives to engage in direct

correspondence with Victoria. There developed an exchange of visits between the heads of state, commencing in 1854, during which strategy was discussed, usually by the French Emperor and Prince Albert (Victoria usually being excused from these sessions in the fashion of the era).

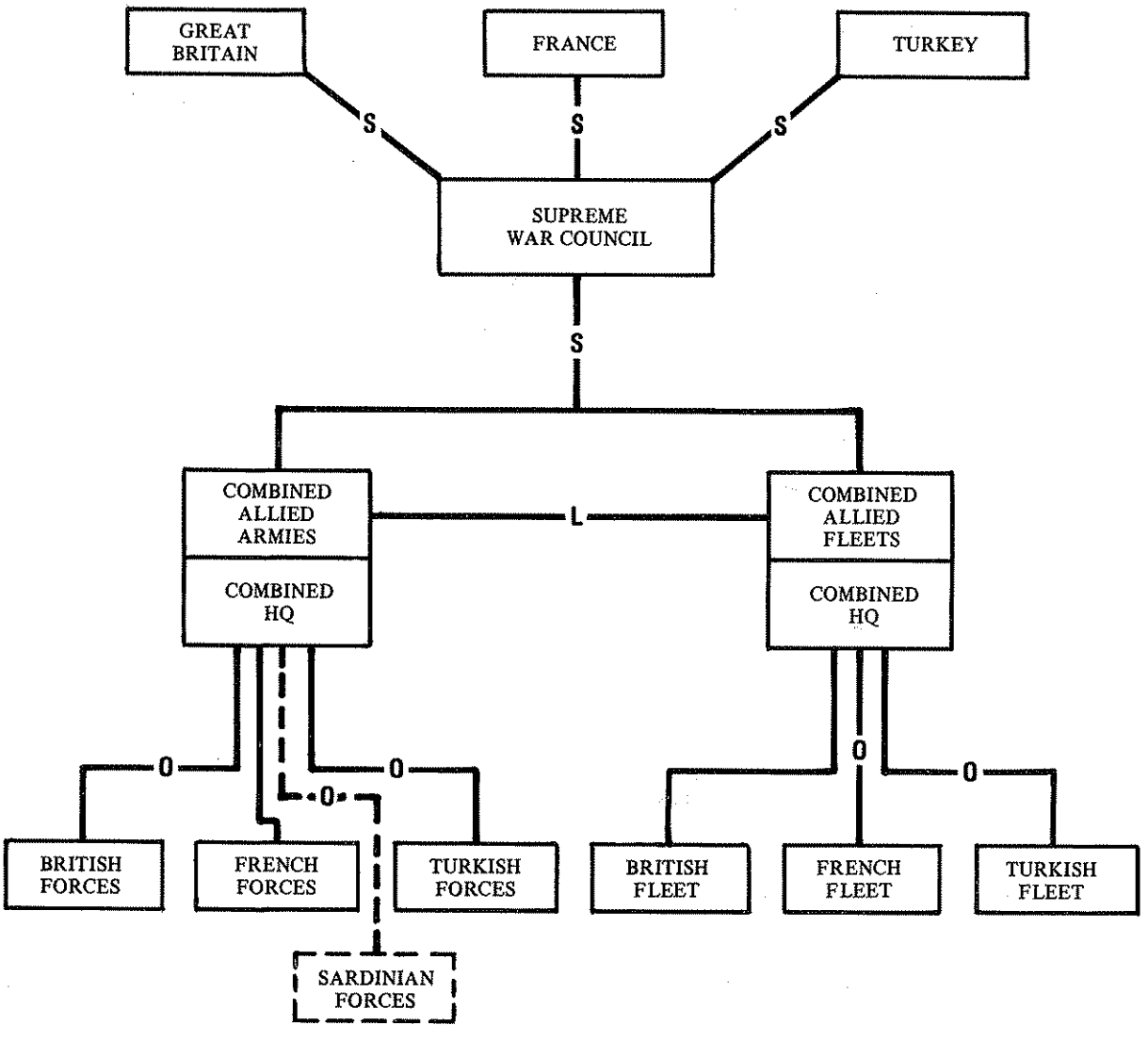
As to agenda items during these high-level discourses, the extremely critical subject of supreme command and its exercise was raised as early as February 1854 between the French and English. Napoleon's formula (see Figure 1) sought French land dominance during days of "vital action" (presumably all battles); however, any joint action taken would be subject to previous consultation among the commanders of the national contingents involved. On sea, the British would command all naval forces. Napoleon further proposed central direction of both forces by some institution approximating a mutually representative supreme war council. The British demurred, preferring "cooperation" on land and sea, with no centralized strategic agency (see Figure 2). National prestige and fear of French military domination prompted Britain's posture, which never changed during the disastrous days following the Crimean battles of Balaclava and Inkerman, and the trying winter of 1854-55 when adoption of unity of command could have reduced the wearying attrition suffered by the Turks, French, and British alike. Napoleon III persisted in his proposal, using a rationale more economic than strategic, to which the British ear should have been more attuned. He pointed out that England was traditionally a seapower and France historically performed better in land operation. He told the British that if both pursued development of land *and* seapower concurrently, upon the termination of hostilities France would have a navy which would appear as a threat to English sea control and that England would have raised an army for which she had no further use. Traditional Francophobia prevailed, however, with the result that the war was conducted on the British model of strategic cooperation, with the anticipated inherent problems.

In the final months of the war, discouragement and perplexity at the shortcomings of operations conducted in the ramshackle "cooperation" mode resulted in some second thoughts. The advent of the second Crimean winter and the absence of an agreed-upon strategy for an anticipated campaign in 1856 led England, France, and Sardinia to convene the first combined Council of War in late 1855. Present were the dominant political and military figures, recalled from the active theater. This could have become the genesis of a supreme war council or combined chiefs of staff, but its merits were never tested, for even as it was convening the war was approaching its conclusion.[8] Russia, fearing active Austrian intervention, agreed to an armistice on 14 March 1856. Forty-five days later, peace negotiations were concluded, and on 12 July 1856 the last allied soldier departed the Crimea.

Whether centralized direction was a continuation of the foresight of Napoleon III (always the advocate of supreme command), Albert, or Palmerston, is not clear. Perhaps it was due in part to the obtuse influence of the fourth estate. The Crimea was the first modern war which received extensive daily public attention from recognized international journalists at the scene of action. Such reportorial giants as William H. Russell of the *London Times,* William ("Crimean") Simpson, artist for the *Illustrated London News,* and Alfred Lanoux of the *Paris Moniteur,* were in no way reluctant to disclose to news-hungry readers any and all allied shortcomings, from major tactical blunders to the inequitable awards and decorations policies. During the war, censorship was not practiced by either France or England, and on-the-spot military reforms can be attributed to journalistic intrepidity. Had the same pressures forged a firmer coalition in 1854, the war's duration might have met the expectations of the optimists.

Another early strategic issue was the determination of a suitable theater of operations. Why the Crimea, rather than Russian Poland, Odessa, or even Baltic Russia? The rationale underlying the Black Sea option is relatively complex: in an effort to enforce an 1854 ultimatum to Russia to

PROPOSED COMBINED COMMAND FOR THE CRIMEA
(AS ENVISIONED BY NAPOLEON III, ABOUT 1 JAN 1855; NEVER REALIZED)



LEGEND

—S— STRATEGIC DIRECTION

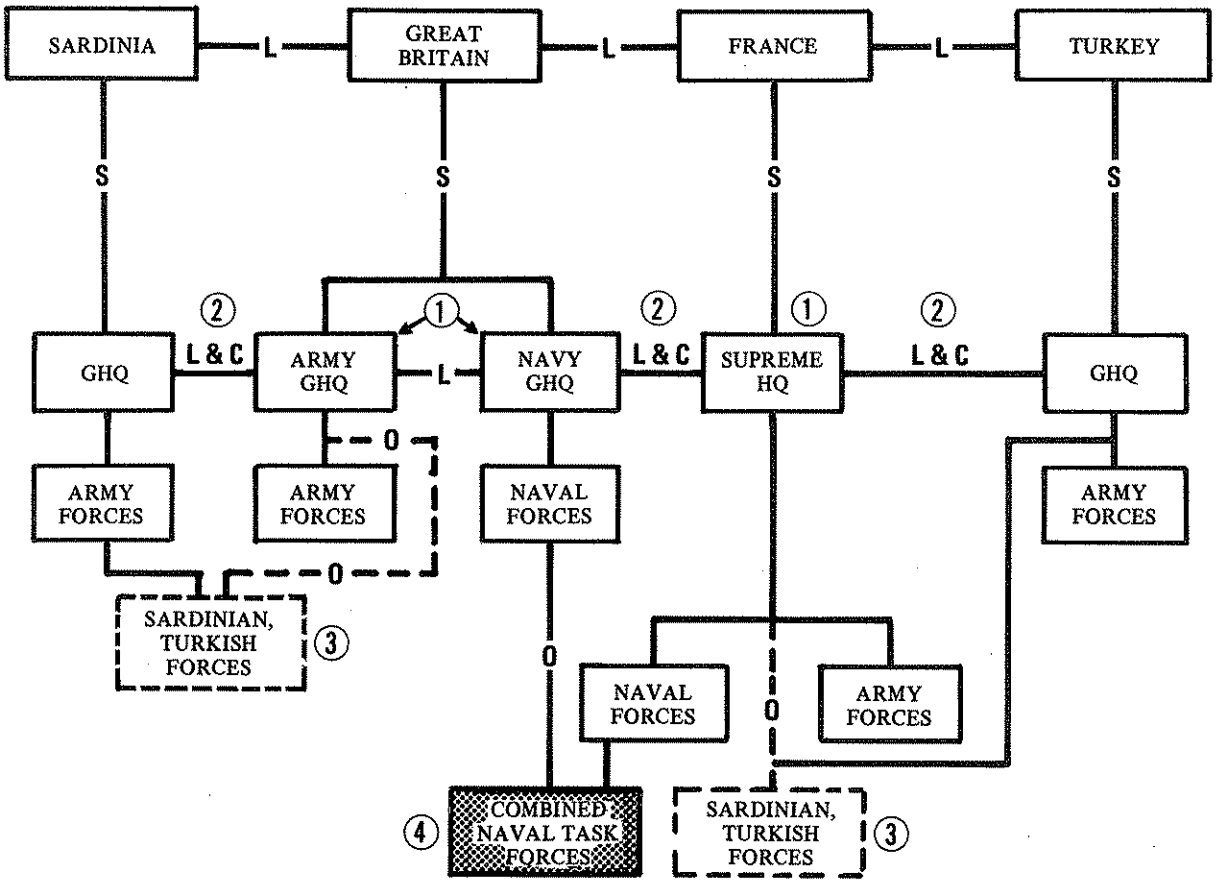
——— COMMAND

—O— OPERATIONAL CONTROL

—L— LIAISON

Figure 1

COMBINED FIELD COMMAND IN THE CRIMEA
(ACTUAL, ABOUT 1 JUN 1855)



LEGEND

S — STRATEGIC DIRECTION	L — LIAISON
COMMAND	L & C — LIAISON AND COOPERATION
O — OPERATIONAL CONTROL	

NOTES:

(1) BRITISH DID NOT ACHIEVE JOINT COMMAND; WHEREAS, FRENCH DID. FRENCH ARMY COMMANDER WAS ALSO JOINT CINC.

(2) NO COMBINED COMMAND WAS EVER ESTABLISHED, NOR COMBINED CINC APPOINTED. THE BEST DESCRIPTION OF RELATIONS AMONG THE CINC'S OF THE FOUR POWERS WAS LIAISON AND COOPERATION.

(3) THE STATUS OF TURKISH AND SARDINIAN FORCES WAS PECULIAR–ALTHOUGH THEIR NATION-STATES WERE FULLY SOVEREIGN, THEIR FIELD COMMANDERS WERE SELDOM CONSULTED IN THE DECISIONMAKING PROGRESS. OFTEN, THESE FORCES WERE PLACED UNDER OPERATIONAL CONTROL OF BRITISH OR FRENCH COMMANDERS.

(4) COMBINED NAVAL OPERATIONS WERE THE BRIGHTEST SPOT IN COALITION OPERATIONS. THE BRITISH AND FRENCH ADMIRALS DEVELOPED EXCELLENT WORKING RELATIONSHIPS AND WERE NOT LOATHE TO SUBORDINATE THEIR FORCES TO ALLIED COMMAND.

Figure 2

evacuate the Ottoman provinces, the allies conducted a joint landing at Varna, Bulgaria in June. This operation, generally referred to as the "Dobrudja Debacle" concluded in August following several inconsequential actions, wherein allied commanders saw their force strengths reduced by 20 percent because of cholera and fever rather than Muscovite muskets. When Russians evacuated the Danubian provinces, the allies faced three choices: pursue them on land into Russia, strike elsewhere, or go home. The Turks, having held their own, preferred the latter, but other considerations influenced their partners. Napoleon III had not garnered much contemporary glory for France. Besides, he needed diversion for his near-mutinous army after Dobrudja. The British noted also that any glory, however shabby, had accrued to the Turks in their defense along the Danube. France and Britain agreed that the Czar had not been taught his lesson and that the fortress of Sebastopol, the seat of Russian Black Sea naval power, rather than the warm water port of Odessa, would make a capital objective. In the cosmopolitan capitals of Europe all agreed that the Crimean campaign would be a short, brisk, and glorious military undertaking. Had anyone recognized the portent of the poorly coordinated, abysmally supported, indecisive operation to come—one which would extend through not one, but two Crimean winters—he likely would have reconsidered his choice in August of 1854.

FIELD OPERATIONS

Several interesting facts about Crimean operations should be brought to light, more to dispel popular misconceptions about the fighting than for any other reason.

The Crimean War, despite the romanticism conjured up by fictional accounts (and later movies) such as "The Charge of the Light Brigade" was neither entirely a Napoleonic-type, wide-ranging campaign of infantry and cavalry actions nor a classic investment, despite the year-long siege of Sebastopol, a port and fortress city. Divided into northern and southern portions by its east-west harbor, the city was more heavily fortified on the north. The allies elected to besiege only the southern half of the city, even though initial landings were made to the north. As a consequence, Sebastopol was never sealed and its defenders had access to reinforcements and supplies from the interior of the peninsula throughout the entire war.

There were really only four noteworthy open-country battles during Crimean operations, none of which exceeded 1 day's duration. The first was Alma, occurring on 20 September 1854, near the site of the initial landing of the allied armies north of the fortress city. After Alma, the Russians retired to Sebastopol's redoubts and the future battles—Balaclava, 25 October 1854, Inkerman (10 days later) and Tchernaya, in August of 1855, were all initiated by Russian offensive endeavors to raise the siege. None achieved this result although Balaclava and Inkerman nearly succeeded. The final Anglo-French assault on the Russian strongpoints—the Redan and Malakoff—occurred 8 September 1855, and could, in a sense, be termed a battle; however, the French carried their objective in 15 minutes, following 10 months of siegework! Unhappily for national prestige, the British failed that day to take the Redan, their designated objective. In a sense, the Crimean War was an admixture of dash, heroics, and élan during brief periods of open warfare preceding and interrupting the normal course of prolonged months of tedium, exposure, cannonade, and debilitation characteristic of siege operations. As the casualty rates rose from action against a stubborn enemy and disease, the British policy of "cooperation" became increasingly untenable. The enlightened suspected that a better mode for prosecuting the effort could be found. Allied dissension on all aspects of operations was evident from the initiation of combined efforts, and continued throughout the period of hostilities.

Some examples:

— Prior to the high-level decision to move the theater of operations deep within the Black Sea, there was a three-way split among the field commanders about where to begin operations. Fearing a much more rapid Russian advance on the Bosporus than was actually achieved, the British commander,

Lord Raglan, advocated a landing in Western Turkey, around Gallipoli, with a view to commencing offensive operations to save Constantinople. The French Commander in Chief, General Saint-Arnaud, faithfully represented his Emperor and demanded first priority for the Crimea. The Turks, as the offended party, insisted upon an expedition into central Bulgaria to reinforce their fortress Silistria and drive the Russians from the Empire. As we have learned, their political superiors reached an unlikely compromise—the landing at Varna.

– Having experienced the inopportune Varna episode and with no more Russians to fight west of the Dneister River, the allied commanders, in August 1854, faced the question of "What next?" The French Commander, Saint-Arnaud, raised the merits of operations against the Russian homeland, the salubrious Crimean climate and the potential benefits of destroying a primary Russian port, Sebastopol. With equal force, Lord Raglan pointed to the near-total lack of intelligence on both the Crimean area and the enemy, the allied shortage of cavalry and siege equipment, and the adverse effects of weather on naval support, capping off his arguments with reference to the "adventuristic" nature of the enterprise. The national governments decided the issues and the combined force was ordered to proceed to the Crimean Peninsula to arrive in September 1854.

– The landings in the Crimea commenced on 14 September, in the vicinity of Eupatoria, about 20 miles north of Sebastopol. The French disembarked a force of 25,000 and sufficient tentage and transport to accommodate all elements, completing disembarkation one day later. In contrast, the British required until the end of 18 September to land a force of similar size, without tents or blankets (and it rained the first night ashore). Throughout the next 9 months, logistical problems of every description would plague British operations, a manifestation of institutional dormancy for 40 years, official apathy, fiscal parsimoniousness, and lack of planning foresight on the part of British commanders and their untrained staffs. It is to England's credit that by the summer of 1855 her logistics system was so improved that it exceeded that of the French in magnitude and efficiency, due in large part to skillful improvisation.

– On the eve of the Battle of Alma, Lord Raglan, a sincere and compassionate gentleman but a tactician of no great repute, had no plan for the following day's initial encounter with the Russians. When General Saint-Arnaud visited British headquarters to coordinate the morrow's actions, Raglan would neither acquiesce in a French version for the attack, nor could he offer one of his own. He remained silent on the occasion. The absence of British staffwork, a function of British institutional malaise and an officer promotion system based more on birthright and influence than competence, resulted in near disaster during the battle. Believing that the British would attack in concert with the French in conformity with his plan of the evening before, Saint-Arnaud moved the French troops in the morning against the Russians in fortified hilltop positions. Alas, no British troops moved until the afternoon, and then only in piecemeal fashion, when French guns were in danger of capture. Fortunately, there was enough "coincidental" combat power to force the Russians from the heights.

– Following Alma, the allies missed an excellent chance to initiate a vigorous pursuit and destroy the remainder of the Russian Army before it could take refuge in fortress Sebastopol. However, Saint-Arnaud insisted that the French were in no condition to pursue without a night's rest. (But what of the Turks, who had not been committed all day?) On the morning of the 21st, Saint-Arnaud was ready to begin pursuit but now Raglan demurred, requiring 2 additional days to treat wounded, bury dead, and retrieve baggage. The Russians thereby garnered 3 additional days to effect a withdrawal to the outskirts of the city, improve upon already excellent fortifications, block the channel leading into the harbor, and prepare psychologically for a siege.

– The British picked Balaclava for a base of operations—a small port about 9 miles from

ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS, 1854

Generals Raglan and Canrobert, allied commanders in late 1854, visit French outposts before Sebastopol. (Note Raglan's empty sleeve; he had lost his arm in the Napoleonic Wars.)

the area of operations against Sebastopol—and began using a local dirt road as the primary route of supply. Very little thought was given to the likely effects of snow and rain on the logistic route, for all were blandly assuming that the war would be over before the arrival of winter. As could be expected, by November the route had become a mire, restricting all but foot travel. The French occupied the bay of Kamiesch, nearer the scene of action, and began immediately to corduroy, creating passable routes throughout the winter of 1854. Besides its shortcomings as a logistics base, Balaclava was a desirable (and vulnerable) tactical inducement to the Russians. Had it been taken in October or November of 1854, it is not unlikely that allied forces would have withdrawn from the Crimea. There was room enough, and less danger, had there been joint usage of Kamiesch; the French had offered to share it. There is an interesting sidelight to Balaclava: in an attempt to escape the adversities of the dirt route, the British constructed the first military railroad in history during 1855 and early 1856, running from Balaclava to the siege works before Sebastopol.

– Personalities played a great part. Mutual accommodation was not improved by developing attitudes of hostility among the component commanders or their subordinates in the early months of the Crimean operation. For example, Saint-Arnaud's reputation among the English was that of a political dabbler, alleged embezzler, and a commander more interested in show and protocol than tactical accomplishment. Conversely, the French viewed the British senior officers as Wellingtonian relics, indecisive and with little interest in, or at best intense ignorance of, troop welfare. Both the English and French despised the Turks for numerous reasons, real and imaginary.

– Attrition among senior officers deterred

the development of a common style of cooperation which might have overcome the worst features of the system that was in effect. None of the commanders in chief had the longevity to become accustomed to their counterparts' styles. Saint-Arnaud, the original French commander, died on 29 September 1854 of a lingering illness accentuated by the stresses of Varna and the Crimea; his replacement, General Canrobert, elevated from division commander, had difficulties not only with his allies but with Napoleon III. Following abrasive differences concerning strategy, he requested and was granted relief from command on 16 May 1855, being replaced by General Pelissier, Algerian veteran, but new to the Crimea. Lord Raglan, the gentlemanly but indecisive British commander met *his* demise on 28 June 1855 from cholera and acute diarrhea. His place was taken by a self-acknowledged incompetent, General James Simpson, who in turn yielded command to Lord Codrington for the final stages. The senior Turkish commander, Omer Pasha, did not arrive in the Crimea until March 1855, although a Turkish contingent had been present from the first. Admiral Bruat, French Naval Commander in 1854, died in 1855. Thus, a union that was not particularly cohesive at the outset was further impeded by the ceaseless parade of personalities across the stage of the war.

In sum, there were few aspects of field operations which were not adversely affected by the "cooperative" format, itself no substitute for the elusive unity of command. The price paid for unrestricted national sovereignty was a prolonged war, duplication of effort, unnecessary suffering, and an opprobrious waste of good men and material resources. This albatross must be hung about the British neck. Yet, in spite of the impediments posed by ambitious ministers, intractable functionaries, and astigmatic general staffs, there were some bright spots:

– There is little to criticize in Anglo-French naval operations during the war. The destruction of Russian naval power wherever it was met; the successful amphibious operations at Kinburn and Kertch; the systematic reduction of Russian seaport fortresses in the Black and Baltic Seas, all suggest that the land commanders could have profited from their naval counterparts' examples. The admirals *did* work with singleness of purpose.

– In logistics, the deficiencies of the British and French seemed to balance themselves out over time. By October 1855, it had become a tradeoff situation–British lumber for French tentage, etc. Dedicated subordinates of both forces "made do" with their allies' supplies whenever opportunities arose to compensate for shortages.

– While command friction never disappeared in the Crimea, the veterans in the ranks of all the allied armies had developed, by late 1855, a professional respect for the compensating strengths of their partners as fighting men, and tended to overlook the shortcomings of which they had been so critical in mid-1854. In short, they had learned to get along, tied, perhaps, by the common bond of mutual sharing of danger. One observer in a later war expressed this invisible link as the fraternity of "them that's been shot at together."

– By late 1855, there were some positive efforts, admittedly sketchy, to institutionalize the field aspects of allied coalition. The British, French, and Sardinians entered into a treaty in July 1855 to create a standing mixed commission to apportion the war booty (ranging from cast bronze cannons to barrels of paint) of Sebastopol among the participants. The commission, headed by General Pelissier, met at regular intervals to formally allocate the spoils of war among the participants. (The Turks, unhappily, were not included in the pact.) This act, plus the faltering steps taken late in the war to achieve a supreme command, demonstrated that the allies were slowly learning their lessons.

SOME CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The Crimean War had the potential for becoming a general European war, involving as it did the interests of all the Great Powers of Europe. That it did not is due to several factors, among them the restrictive state of technology, the reluctance of two of the

"Great Powers" to become active belligerents, and Russia's unproductive search for an ally. From 1848 to 1854, Europe was a revolutionary powder keg and a major war was barely averted, given the political climates of England, France, Austria-Hungary, and Russia.

Napoleon III emerged as the most colorful and influential figure of the conflict. His interests and involvement ran from grand strategy and diplomacy to field tactics. While events did not always go in the direction he planned, the repetition of favorable outcomes for France in the course of the war occurred often enough to suggest that he exerted strong influence. Like Napoleon I before him, he had several qualities that made for greatness. He possessed the vision and energy, lacked by the Bourbons, to recapture *la gloire* for France. Also, he dictated the formulation of objectives and strategy and personally supervised the appointment of senior officers to positions of responsibility to insure execution of his will. Finally, learning from history, he advocated a policy of command unity, 64 years before another allied entente would recognize its merits.

The war was given superficial treatment by historians and observers whose attentions were soon after directed westward by the American Civil War, at that time the more interesting. Thus, many Europeans either missed or ignored the lessons inherent in the destruction of the tenuous European balance as the rotten structure of despotism lurched its way toward the 20th century; Austria-Hungary, Russia, and Turkey continued along their decaying courses; France vaulted into continental leadership only to be displaced in 15 years by Prussia, the only state which appeared to profit from the Crimean experience. As for Britain, one historian, John Morley, summarized the cataclysm in terms of English interests.

> Three hundred thousand men had perished: countless treasure had been flung into the abyss. The nation that had won its last victory at Waterloo did not now enhance the glory of its arms, nor the power of its diplomacy, nor the strength of its material interests.[9]

NOTES

1. Captain Ingraham, of the USS St. Louis afforded asylum to one Koseta, alleged assassin of Austrian Baron Hackelburg in 1853. The European press made much of the issue, but the outburst was more heat than light. Marx, K. and Engels, F. *The Russian Menace to Europe,* Glencoe, Illinois.: The Free Press, 1952, p. 172.

2. Dupuy, R. E. and Dupuy, T. N. *The Encyclopedia of Military History from 3500 B. C. to the Present,* New York, Harper and Row, 1970, p. 829.

3. An excellent account of the logistical aspects of the war may be found in The Delafield-McClellan Reports, the only official US Army report on the encounter. Delafield, R. and McClellan, G. B. *On the Art of War in Europe,* Report to the Secretary of War, Washington, D. C.: George W. Bowman, 1861.

4. Marx and Engels advanced the dubious hypothesis that British military shortcomings at mid-century could be traced to Arthur, Duke of Wellington, who permitted the military establishment to decay, in order that no British commander could emulate his achievements during his lifetime. Marx, K. and Engels, F. *op. cit.,* p. 202.

5. Gooch, B. D., *The New Bonapartist Generals in the Crimea.* The Hague: 1959, p. 65.

6. *Ibid.*

7. Guedalla, P. *The Second Empire.* London: Hudder and Stoughton, 1932, p. 198.

8. That the lessons of history were lost on Britain and France is reflected in the reluctance of both states to subordinate their national sovereignties until the closing months of WWI, when adversity, and not vision, forced unified command on the allies. Agnew, J. "Coalition Warfare," *Parameters,* Carlisle Barracks, USAWC, Spring, 1971, p. 55.

9. Mosse, W. E., *Rise and Fall of the Crimean System,* London: Macmillan and Co., 1963, pp. 4-5. ■