

THE SIEGE OF SEVASTOPOL

Breaking Russian domination in the Black Sea basin

Geopolitical Situation

The Crimean War was yet another conflict between Russia and the Ottoman Empire (Turkey) for control of the Black Sea basin.

The Western powers sided with Turkey: Great Britain, France and Sardinia (the so-called allied states), who wanted to prevent Russian expansion in the Middle East.

The destruction of Turkey would have meant Russia's hegemony in the area. In the spring of 1854, the conflict developed from a regional conflict to a clash of major European powers.



Turkey is dying. We can try to keep her alive, but we will not succeed. She should die and she will die.
— Russian Tsar, Nicholas I

Russia versus Turkey

- 1774** The **Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca**
Russia was able to expand its influence in the Black Sea basin, its fleets obtaining the right to sail through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles, which belonged to the Ottoman Empire.
- 1792** The **Treaty of Jassy**
After the end of the Turkish-Russian war (1787–1792), the Crimea was annexed to Russia, which was increasingly strengthening its rule over the Black Sea.
- 1812** The **Treaty of Bucharest**
The treaty ended the war between Turkey and Russia (1806–1812), as a result of which Moscow gained the Moldavian Bessarabia.
- 1815** The **Treaty of Vienna**
After the defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte, a new political order was established between the European powers. All disputes between them were to be settled by compromise.
- 1829** The **Treaty of Adrianople**
This treaty ended the two-year Turkish-Russian war. It confirmed Russia's gains in the region of the Caucasus and the Danube Delta. It was the beginning of the loosening of the Balkans from Ottoman rule and of Russia gaining control of the Black Sea.
- 1853** **Prelude to war**
Russia issued an ultimatum regarding the right of guardianship over holy places in Palestine. Turkey rejected the request. Russian troops then entered Moldavia and Wallachia. As a consequence, Turkey declared war on Russia.

Prelude to Battle – Estimated Strengths of Forces



Aleksandr Sergejewicz Mienszykow



François Certain de Canrobert
English soldiers considered him shaky and indecisive. They called him "Can't Robert."

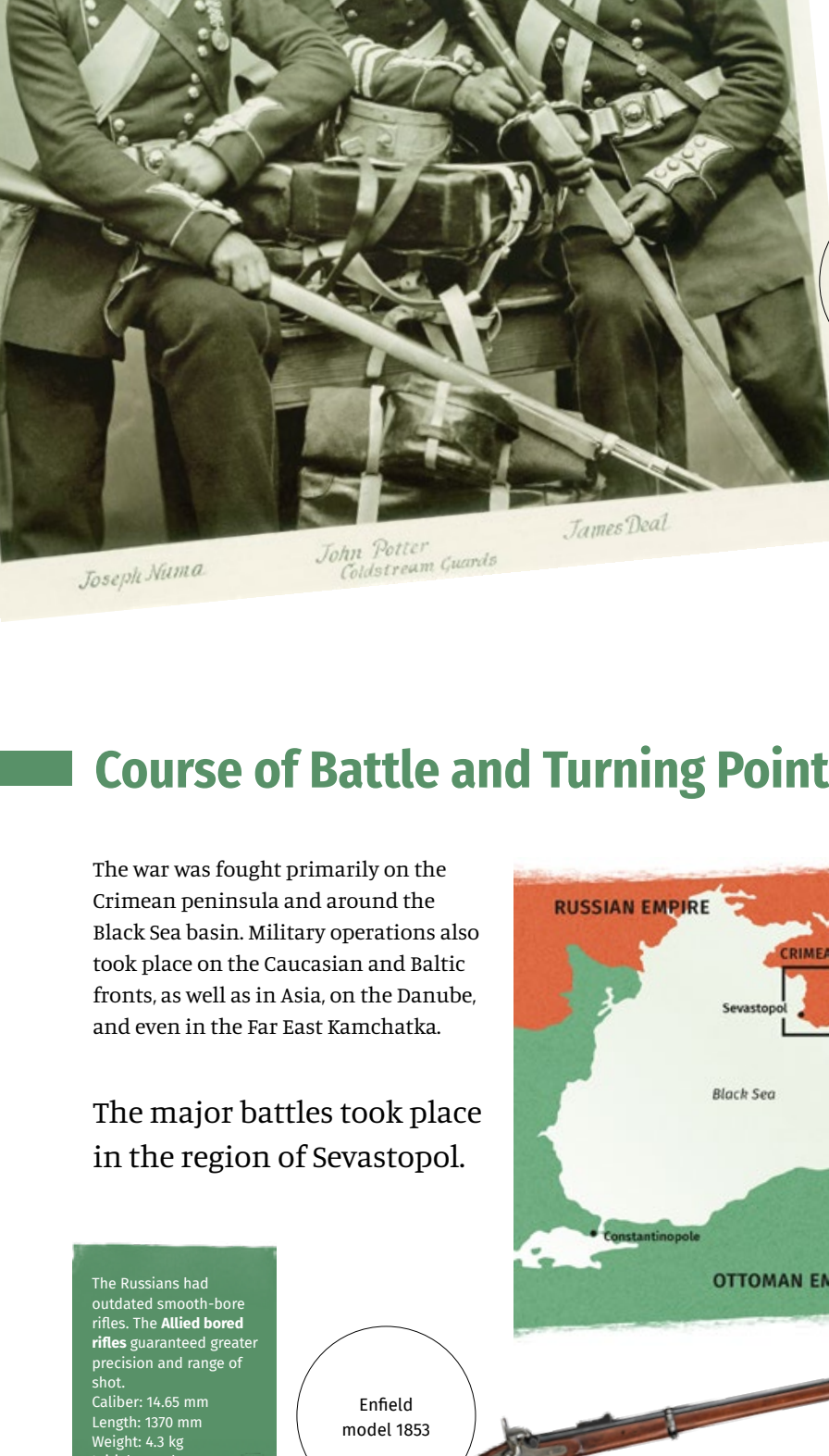


Lord Raglan
Born: FitzRoy James Henry Somerset, 1st Baron Raglan – Commander in Chief of the British Army



Sardinia
21 000

Coldstream Guards – Scots guards in fur caps



Poles fought on both sides of the conflict. Although the Sultan Cossacks of Władysław zamoyński and Michał Czajkowski (Sadyk Pasza) did not play a significant role during the fighting, their participation revealed the independent aspirations of Poles who saw the defeat of Russia as an opportunity to rebuild their homeland.

Course of Battle and Turning Points

The war was fought primarily on the Crimean peninsula and around the Black Sea basin. Military operations also took place on the Caucasian and Baltic fronts, as well as in Asia, on the Danube, and even in the Far East Kamchatka.

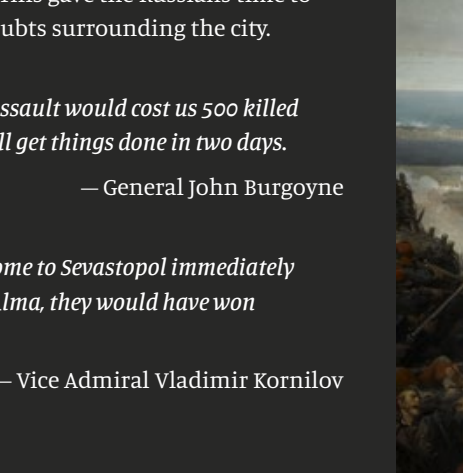
The major battles took place in the region of Sevastopol.



September 20th, 1854 Battle of the Alma River

Despite an outbreak of cholera among the soldiers, the Franco-British army defeated the army of Adm. Menshikov in the Alma River area, near Sevastopol. The battle ended with a panicky Russian retreat. For the first time, the Allies made large-scale use of modern Minié-type bullets which caused immense damage.

The Russians had outdated smooth-bore rifles. The Allied bore rifle guaranteed greater precision and range of shot.
Caliber: 14.65 mm
Length: 1370 mm
Weight: 43 kg
Initial speed: approx. 270 m / s
Range: 1100–1800 m



Minié-type rifle
The Minié bullet for bored rifles (named after its inventor Claude-Etienne Minié). Owing to its design, it acquired a high velocity which made it more accurate. It also had a greater range. It caused terrible injuries and often the only way to save the lives of the wounded was to amputate their limbs.

October 17th, 1854 – September 8/9, 1855 The Siege of Sevastopol

Sevastopol Fortress

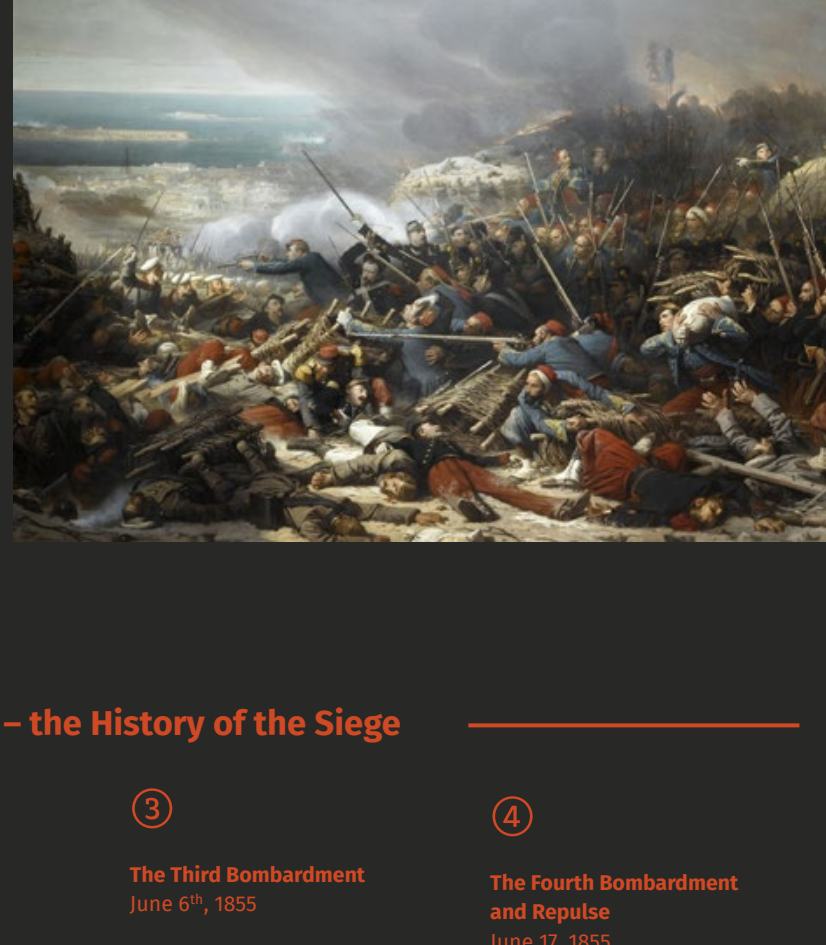
Since 1804, Sevastopol had been the main Russian naval base on the Black Sea. In addition to permanent fortifications, the city was protected by a ring of bastions, forts and redoubts (Great and Little Redan, Malakoff-Kurgan ridge, Sandbag). The Russian fortress was defended by 974 guns and the artillery of the Black Sea Fleet ships. The fortress garrison numbered from 20 thousand, up to 30 thousand personnel.

A Missed Opportunity

After the victory at the Battle of Alma, the road to Sevastopol was open. The city's Russian fortifications were insufficient and the defense was leaky. However, the allies did not seize the chance to quickly capture Sevastopol. This gave the Russians time to strengthen the redoubts surrounding the city.

Even a victorious assault would cost us 500 killed [...] the cannons will get things done in two days.
— General John Burgoyne

If the enemy had come to Sevastopol immediately after the battle of Alma, they would have won it easily.
— Vice Admiral Vladimir Kornilov

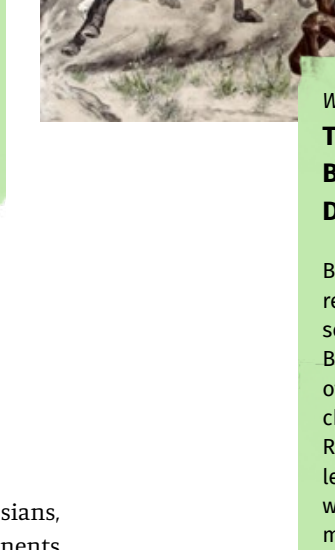


War Facts
The British did not bring enough ambulances to the Crimea. It took them two days to transport the killed and wounded from the battlefield. The wounded were often evacuated on mules. Many died on the battlefield.

Sewastopol – the History of the Siege

- 1** **First Bombardment**
October 17th, 1854
126 cannons and naval guns from the Allied fleet. Death of adm. Kornilov, commander of Sevastopol's defences. Large losses on both sides and among the Allied fleets.
English grenades burst all around us, shocking the gun crews and throwing dirt mixed with the remains of the dead at us.
— Colonel Edward Todtleben
- 2** **Second Bombardment**
April 9, 1855
501 cannons. The shelling lasted 8 days. Fog and rain caused the bombardment to be ineffective. A planned assault of the city was cancelled.
- 3** **The Third Bombardment**
June 6th, 1855
567 cannons. Russian fire destroyed most of the Russian cannons and decimated the defenders.
- 4** **The Fourth Bombardment and Repulse**
June 17, 1855
601 cannons. Fighting at Karabel and the Northern Quarrel. On June 18, a four-hour Allied assault on the city's redoubts was repulsed.

War Facts
Death of commanders
On June 20th, Russian Lt. Col. Edward Todtleben was seriously wounded. Lord Raglan, commander of the British forces, died on June 28th from cholera. On June 30th, the Russian vice-minister Makhmov died, hit by a sniper's bullet two days earlier. The deaths of the high-ranking commanders significantly lowered the morale of the city's defenders.



War Facts
The Great Redan
The Great Redan was one of the redoubts of Sevastopol. The British stormed it twice and lost around 3.9 thousand combatants in both attacks. (including 540 killed, approx. 3,000 wounded, 328 missing). Although this action became a legend, it was probably not necessary to conquer Sevastopol. On the Great Redan, as many as 30% of the Russian defenders were also killed. Most of the Russian guns were also destroyed.
The bombardment was so powerful that there was as if a uniform layer of canisters and bullets hung over us... anyone who tried to move forward was killed in an instant.
— Account of a soldier

5 **The Fifth Bombardment**
August 17th, 1855
704 cannons. The bombardment lasted 4 days followed by continuous harassing fire. The Russians suffered heavy losses – around 2,000 combatants, but they held their posts.

6 **The Sixth Bombardment and City Capture**
September 5th, 1855
775 cannons. Fire was concentrated on specific redoubts. 86,000 projectiles were launched within 24 hours.

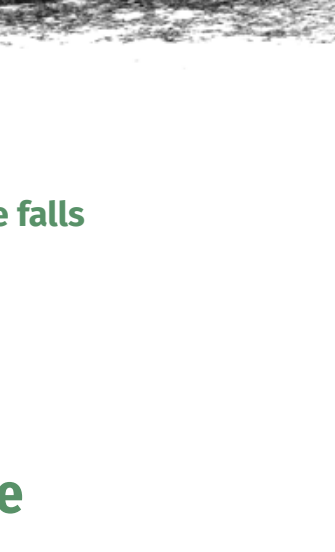
September 8th, 1855
The French conquer the Malakoff-Kurgan ridge, crucial to the defense of the city.

September 9, 1855
Conquest of the City
The Russians withdrew to the Northern district of the city, destroying their fortifications, and sinking their ships. Allied troops occupied the southern district.

October 25th, 1854 Battle of Balaklava

The task of the Russian offensive was to cut off the British supply lines and seize an important British port.

War Facts
The Thin Red Line. A spectacular example of courage and the art of warfare
The name comes from the red color of the British uniforms. The 93rd Scottish Highlander Regiment, seeing the approaching Russian cavalry, formed a stretched out double rank (instead of the then traditional quadrangle, where only a quarter of the soldiers fired alternately). The British fired two volleys, and the Minié bullets managed to decimate the Russian hussars located at a distance of about 250–300 meters from the English ranks.
Remember boys: there is no turning back from here! Either you hold them or you die where you stand!
— General Colin Campbell



War Facts
The Charge of the Light Brigade – a Military Disaster
British daring and recklessness resulted in tragedy in the so-called Charge of the Light Brigade under the command of Lord Cardigan. The cavalry charge at the positions of the Russian artillery has become legendary over time. The charge was taken after orders were misinterpreted. British cavalry mistakenly attacked the guns, which were not indicated by the order. Of the 678 cavalry in the charge into the 'valley of death', 113 were killed, 15 were missing and 247 were seriously injured. 475 horses were lost.

War Facts
Murderous Winter
In the winter of 1854–1855, due to frost and heavy snowfall, combat activities practically ceased. Although the French forces somehow managed with their supply lines, the situation was dire for the British. The November storms smashed their ships land in winter clothes, food, medicine and tents against rocks, and the ports for unloading were also damaged. At the beginning of 1855, as many as 50% of British soldiers suffered from various diseases. Only 12,000 were fit enough to fight. The British were forced to carry supplies from Balaklava to Sevastopol on foot along snow-covered roads.

October 1855 Russia's Kinburn base falls into Allied hands.

After the Battle

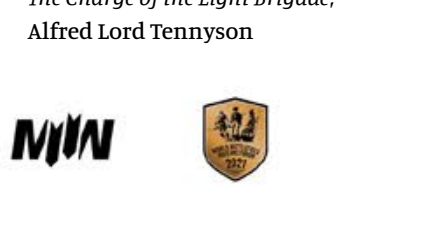
March 1856 The Treaty of Paris

The Crimean War ended with the defeat of Russia, thereby saving Turkey. The Paris Peace Treaty provided for the closure of the Black Sea to all warships. Moreover, Russia and Turkey were no longer able to maintain military facilities on its coast. Since the treaty, there have been minor border adjustments in favor of the Ottoman Empire.

The war exposed Moscow's weakness and backwardness in relation to the Western European powers. In view of Russia's efforts to take control of the entire Black Sea basin, their defeat in the Crimean War and the subsequent peace treaty were especially humiliating for her.

Losses

The Crimean War was the bloodiest clash of the mid-nineteenth century.



Allies approx. 16,900
France – 95,600
United Kingdom – 21,800
Sardinia – 3,700–6,700
Turkey – 45,400

Remembrance

Unveiled in 1861 in London, The Guards Crimean War Memorial consists of statues of three guards with an allegorical female figure called Honor. It is cast in bronze – including metal from melted down Russian cannons captured during the siege of Sevastopol.

The murderous charge of the Light Brigade was immortalized in Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, which has become a permanent part of the canon of British literature. Tennyson also wrote *The Charge of the Heavy Brigade*, but the poem was less popular.

*Half a league, half a league,
Half a league onward,
All in the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.
"Forward, the Light Brigade
Charge for the guns!" he said.
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.
[...] Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them
Volleyed and thundered:
Stormed at with shot and shell,
Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,
Into the mouth of hell
Rode the six hundred.

The Charge of the Light Brigade,
Alfred Lord Tennyson*

War Facts
Florence Nightingale – "The Lady with the Lamp"
After the reorganization of the allied forces in 1855, the catastrophic situation that had existed in field hospitals also began to improve. Florence Nightingale (1820–1910) contributed to this. She created the first-ever women's nursing corps, organizing hospital kitchens, the washing of bedding and clothes of the injured, taking care of sanitary conditions. She also kept statistics which showed that more soldiers were dying of disease, wounds and insufficient care than on the battlefield. She was called "The Lady with the Lamp" – she often walked among the wounded at night, taking care of their well-being. Her work in the Crimea contributed to modern definitions of medical standards.

Compiled by Wojciech Grott, Karol Szajko, Karol Polejewski
Graphic design: Natalia Gawryluk