



CRIMEAN WAR 1853-1856 – Audio #4

[Brisk, elevated intro music]

NARRATOR

This programme is brought to you by the Museum of the Second World War in Gdansk as part of World Battlefield Museums Forum.

Welcome! Courage, sacrifice and heritage are values crucial to understanding battlefields and reflecting on the fate of man and his historic struggles. As places of remembrance and focal points to pay our respects, battlefields bring back images of the past we can explore and research.

Preserving and conserving battlegrounds, artefacts and infrastructure for future generations should be our major goal. Only when this goal is achieved, can we think about battlefields as open-air museums and commercial tourism destinations.

After all, battlefields are guardians of memory shaping our collective historical identity.

[Chopin's piano music]

NARRATOR *(What was happening at this time – leading up to the battle)*

Europe had enjoyed forty years of relative stability since the Treaty of Paris in 1810. The continent and its colonies were effectively ruled by the Pentarchy – five dominant powers: Austria, France, Great Britain, Prussia and Russia. But by the late 1840's, territorial and national ambitions were beginning to boil over across the Continent. The Crimean War was yet another conflict between Russia and the Ottoman Empire for control of the Black Sea basin. Great Britain, France and Sardinia, the so-called allied states, sided with the Turks in wanting 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.



PATRICK MERCER, EXTERNAL EXPERT, OBE

We went to war with Russia because we were trying to support Ottoman Turkey and trying to buy off France, Britain's traditional enemy, by finding a new enemy upon whom to focus, namely expansionist Russia. Russia was looking to increase her holdings in places like the modern Caucasus. Britain did not like her empire being encroached upon, wanted to prop up the Turkish empire and similarly wanted to form some form of alliance with the traditional foe, namely France.

People are universally condemnatory about the Russian war and, in particular, about the Crimean campaign where most of the fighting occurred. Because it wasn't thought to be conducted particularly well on the ground. The first point is that this was entirely an amphibious campaign, in other words, every nail, every bullet for a horse shoe, every bit of powder, every gun barrel that we needed, had to be delivered to a hostile shore, namely the Crimea, many thousands of miles away from Britain and from her colonial possessions and from friendly Turkey.

Now the fact that it was sustained for over eighteen months entirely by the shipping of France, Britain and, to a lesser extent, Turkey, was a very remarkable achievement, nonetheless, it was extremely difficult.

The popular opinion inside the United Kingdom would be that the most important battle, the most memorable battle was the Balaklava on the 25th of October 1854. It was certainly eye-catching. It involved large numbers of cavalymen and it involved many members of the British aristocracy.

But on the 5th of November 1854, a great battle was fought to the place called Inkerman, largely forgotten but this was a conflict of over seventy thousand troops who clashed for the best part of eight hours, just outside Sevastopol which left over fifteen thousand casualties, mainly Russian, but also British, and to a lesser extent, French, and really made sure that the Russians were not able to throw the British and the French back into the ocean before the start of the winter of 1854.

To my mind, that is the most significant battle of the campaign. It was extremely bloody. It lasted for several hours and more Victoria Crosses, Britain's highest award for bravery, were won at that battle, rather than at any other. More than anything else, the Crimea was a triumph for British bravery, British grid and British initiative at a low level.

Today, I think, we concentrate far too much on strategy, the political aspects of military campaigning and we neglect the fact that, unless you have men who are brave, unless you have men who are determined, unless you have men who are prepared to kill the enemy, then battles will be lost, those are the lessons that we need to remember, should the British armed forces happen to get into action again.

[Dramatic music with tension building up]

NARRATOR *(Basic details about the battlefield: location, natural features, propensity for attack/defence)*

[Nostalgic piano music in the background]

Crimea is a peninsula facing northern Turkey across the Black sea. The northern and central part of Crimea is covered with a gently sloping plain. The southern part of Crimea boasts three, flat-topped mountain chains parallel to the southern coast, creating a mild Mediterranean climate there. The strategic port of Sevastopol is at the southwestern tip of Crimea.

JULIAN FARRANCE, NATIONAL ARMY MUSEUM, LONDON *(Details about the battle(s))*

[Staccato, rhythmic music]

The Crimean War is an interesting war because it's all about technological development in some ways. You've got telegraphs and you've also got the development of weaponry so the British soldiers have got a new weapon. They've got a rifle. So rifle is actually not that new. They've been around since Napoleonic period but only in the hands of specialists.

Now we've got all of the soldiers armed with rifles. What that gives is much more accuracy and much greater range. So when these Russian cavalry men come over on top of the causeway and see this one solitary regiment in their way, they must be thinking, "This is going to be relatively easy", and that

may be reinforced when they think that the Highlanders fired a bit too early, because they fire very quickly, and they're doing that because the new weapon gives them that greater range.

And they actually manage to break that Russian formation and the Russian cavalry withdraw back over the causeway into the north valley. And 'The Times' war correspondent that's been mentioned earlier, William Howard Russell, is looking down upon that action and he said that the Highlanders look like a thin red streak tipped with the line of steel, and from that point on British Infantry under duress are always referred to as 'The Thin Red Line'.

So that's the initial attack. The Russians have managed to get through the Turkish redoubts but have been pushed back, but they're not beaten yet. The cavalry force that's already attacked goes back and joins an even bigger one that's moving down the north valley towards Sevastopol. And they come crushing over the hill just to the point that the British heavy brigade, heavy cavalry, have been sent down to try and support those Highlanders that were attacked.

And they sort of catch the heavy cavalry at the middle of nowhere and, bearing in mind, that they're on top of the big causeway, they've got the height, they caught the British Cavalry unawares – they're in a perfect position to just roll down off the hill and completely wipe them out. But the heavy cavalry, under the command of General Scarlett, turns and charges it uphill into the Russian formation. That's completely unheard of but it does work.

It surprises the Russians so much that, eventually, their formation is broken and they give up. These gun redoubts have been captured by the Russians and he really doesn't want to lose them because he thinks it will look very bad in the press.

Lord Raglan decides he's going to have one last action. He's going to send his light cavalry brigade to go up onto that causeway ridge and skirmish into the redoubts to stop the Russians taking away their cannon. But they've got to advance on that position.

And now that's actually not what the commander-in-chief had intended, so he sent them the wrong way down this valley, which Lord Tennyson is going to refer to as the Valley of Death, and that's essentially when they find themselves going.

So the light brigade of cavalry advances into the Valley of Death and they've got essentially cannons directly in front of them. The third Don Cossacs battery is right to their front. They've got the British positions that have been captured by the Russians that are to the south, and they've got Russian positions on the ridges to the north, so they're going into a three-sided box which opens up on them as they advance into it. And upon the big [...] ridge the general staff can just watch in horror with their mouths hanging open as the light brigade of cavalry melts as it goes down that valley.

And above the crackle of the muskets and the crash of the artillery and screams of the horses, you can hear the troops' [...] screaming "Close up! Close in!" as the command essentially shrinks in on itself. Amazingly, they don't break. They keep on going and they hit the battery like a hammer. And the soldiers themselves – they are ordered to do an impossible thing that essentially is going to guarantee most of them getting killed, but they get down onto the position, and they actually do it.

What it does gain, is it gains this immortal memory within British society - the charge of the Light Brigade and the battle of Balaclava will always hold this position because of the soldiers of the six hundred sabres.



NARRATOR

Initially, there was a lot of public support for the war. This was the first war with intense media coverage. The telegraph [*telegraph sound at the background*] had been developed in 1844 by Samuel Morse and this allowed messages to be transmitted very fast. Correspondents such as William Howard Russell of The Times, were now able to send messages and communicate with the public on a daily basis. Editorials in British newspapers influenced public opinion in favour of Turkey and against Russia. Czar Nicolas I is portrayed as a brutal despot, having earlier suppressed the 1830/31 uprising in Poland and again in Hungary in 1849.

But what was it like for people at the front line?

WITNESS 1 – SOLDIER REPORT

All the elements of destructions are against us, sickness and death, and nakedness, and uncertain ration of salt meat. Horses – die by the score every night at their peg, from cold and starvation. Worse than this, the men are dropping down fearfully. I saw nine men of 1st Battalion Royal Regiment lying dead in one tent to day, and 15 more dying! All cases of cholera. The poor men's backs are never dry, they go down to the trenches at night wet to the skin, lie there in water, mud, and slush till morning, come back with cramps, go to a crowded hospital marquee tattered by the storm, and die there in agony. It is my duty as a C.O. to see and endeavour to alleviate, the sufferings and privations of my humble but gallant comrades. I can't do it. I have no power.

[Brisk, elevated intro music]

NARRATOR

This programme is brought to you by the Museum of the Second World War in Gdansk as part of World Battlefield Museums Forum.

Uncensored information, straight from the front lines, was beginning to show a side to this conflict that even Palmerston's enthusiasm and patriotic stance used earlier to stir up passionate national feelings amongst the population, was beginning to lose its effect. And it wasn't just events on the battlefield that made uncomfortable reading.

WITNESS 2 – Florence Nightingale (the start of nursing)

[Sorrowful piano music]

On Thursday last, we had 1715 sick and wounded in the hospital, among whom 120 are cholera patients, and 650 severely wounded, in the building called the General Hospital, of which we also have charge, when a message came to me to prepare for 570 wounded on our side of the hospital, who were arriving from the dreadful affair of 5th November at Balaclava, there were 1763 wounded and 442 killed, besides 96 officers wounded and 38 killed.

NARRATOR

In 1854, Florence Nightingale brought a team of 38 volunteer nurses to care for the British soldiers fighting in the Crimean War. They arrived at the military hospital in Scutari and found soldiers wounded and dying amid horrifying sanitary conditions. More soldiers were dying of diseases such as typhus, typhoid, cholera, and dysentery than from battle wounds. The soldiers were poorly cared for, medicines and other essentials were in short supply, hygiene was neglected, and infections were rampant.

[Rhythmic pensive music with drums playing]

The Crimean war also provided an opportunity for subjugated nations to fight for their liberty.

KAROL SZEJKO, MUSEUM OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR IN GDANSK *(Polish involvement in the Crimean War)*

In the late 18th century Poland did not exist on the map of the world – it had been partitioned between the 3 aggressors – Tsarist Russia, Austria-Hungary, and Germany. The failed Polish November Revolution of 1830 was brutally quenched by the Russians. Thousands of Polish patriots were sent to Siberia, but this did not suppress Poland's drive for freedom.

In 1831 political exiles Hotel Lambert group emerged in Paris and it fuelled Polish hopes for independence. It was led by Prince Adam Czartoryski and Count Adam Zamojski and those aristocrats lobbied for the Polish cause in France and Britain. So with no country and with no army, in any way they could, the Poles tried to push for freedom. It was believed that the formation of the Polish units fighting against Russia would galvanize widespread political support for the Polish cause. One such opportunity presented itself when Crimean War broke out – In which Britain and France, stood up against Russia. This was exactly what was needed to begin forming Polish military units to fight alongside the western Powers.

So Hotel Lambert sent Michał Czajkowski, their envoy to Turkey. Czajkowski was a Polish poet, political adventurer, and military leader, and in Turkey he was allowed by the Sultan to assemble an army of Cossacks who had escaped from Russia. The Cossacks were living in their villages on the northern perimeter of the Ottoman Empire. Michał Czajkowski soon converted to Islam, and assumed the name of Sadik Pasha. The commanders of the Cossack unit were Poles and the unit was named Ottoman Cossacks. The unit itself was a proper ethnic mix. There was a good number of Hungarians, Serbians,

Russians, Jews and Roma. By early 1855 the unit was 800 men strong and had 700 horses. The unit was financed from various sources, including private donations. So for instance, Prince Adam Zamojski used some of his own money to supply clothing and boots. Sadly though, the Ottoman Cossacks did not fight any decisive battles in the course of the Crimean War. The unit was mainly used for reconnaissance missions.

But Zamojski and Czartoryski had also made previous efforts to form a purely independent Polish Legion. They had this huge idea to use the Polish Legion in a Pan European war that they thought would break Russia's hegemony in Europe. So in late 1855 Adam Zamojski was given permission by the British Government to form the first unit called Second Cossacks Ottoman Regiment and then re-named to Cossack Cavalry Division. Zamojski would often add the word "Polish" in front of the division's official name to encourage more Poles to enlist - this was a clever trick. The soldiers wanted to serve under the Polish flag and refused to accept the Turkish command, so quite naturally the Turks refused to support a foreign military unit. Again, The Cossack Cavalry Division did not take part in any major battles and the unit was soon disbanded.

Through Crimean War the Poles wanted to break the Russian bondage and they pinned their hopes on Turkey, but unfortunately it just didn't work. The Polish mirage of freedom that loomed with the outbreak of the Crimean War vanished rather quickly. In 1863 another January uprising broke out against Russia. And again it failed and the story repeated itself – thousands of Polish patriots were again deported to Siberia.

[Sounds building up tension]



NARRATOR

...and how is it remembered?

EMMA MAWDSLEY, NATIONAL ARMY MUSEUM IN LONDON

So the Crimean War is promoted by this museum through our exhibits. We have one of the best collections of relics relating to the battle in the world. We have some really important items relating to Florence Nightingale – we have one of her original lamps, we have her jewellery, we have her medals. We also have some very important battle paintings, we have one by Richard Caton Woodville on the Charge of the Light Brigade.

We also have the original hand written order of the launching of the Charge of the Light Brigade. In addition to the poetry and to the art works, there're paintings that were painted. One of our most popular paintings in the museum is by Richard Caton Woodville and it's painted in 1897, so it was quite a while after the event, but it was still very popular, and it was actually sold as a supplement to the Christmas edition of the illustrated magazine, and it's one of the most popular paintings in our museum collection. There's also another similar painting by the same artist in Madrid that is equally very popular.

Another way that we remember the war is also through sculpture. So there is also a very important sculpture in Britain – Florence Nightingale, in central London, in Waterloo Place. And other people also became famous – a chef, Alexis Sawyer, transformed cooking for soldiers, linked to the famous people like Florence Nightingale, people like William Howard Russell, as well as those celebrities of the army. It's a heritage battlefield because it's very much part of the country's consciousness.

There are very few battles that have ingrained themselves on the memory of this country. Even though a lot of people don't even know where the Crimea is, they will know about the Charge of the Light Brigade. It's become part of our DNA, partly because of it being quite such a disaster. It's a small group of cavalry soldiers against all odds, and I think in Britain we do rather celebrate our disasters as much as when we win. We commemorate them almost more than our victories.

NARRATOR

The Charge of the Light Brigade by Alfred Lord Tennyson
[Sombre pensive music in the background]

I

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.

II

"Forward, the Light Brigade!"

Was there a man dismayed?

Not though the soldier knew

Someone had blundered.

Theirs not to make reply,

Theirs not to reason why,

Theirs but to do and die.

Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

III

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.

IV

Flashed all their sabres bare,
Flashed as they turned in air
Sabring the gunners there,
Charging an army, while
All the world wondered.
Plunged in the battery-smoke
Right through the line they broke;
Cossack and Russian
Reeled from the sabre stroke
Shattered and sundered.
Then they rode back, but not

Not the six hundred.

V

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon behind them
Volleyed and thundered;
Stormed at with shot and shell,
While horse and hero fell.
They that had fought so well
Came through the jaws of Death,
Back from the mouth of hell,
All that was left of them,
Left of six hundred.

VI

When can their glory fade?
O the wild charge they made!
All the world wondered.
Honour the charge they made!
Honour the Light Brigade,
Noble six hundred!

NARRATOR [*Why is Crimea a Heritage Battlefield?*]

[Elevated music with drums playing]

The war was over by 1856. The victorious powers met to discuss terms in Paris. In an interesting turn of fate France was represented by Count Alexander Colonna-Walewski, the French Foreign minister who was a member of both the Polish and French nobility. The Treaty of Paris meant peace for most of Europe for nearly 60 years. But there were unforeseen consequences: Sardinia's involvement in the war signified Italian involvement and that meant the Prime Minister of Piedmont was invited to the Treaty of Paris peace talks. The Kingdom of Italy was proclaimed just eight years later. Austria's refusal to engage in the war helped create the conditions for the unification of Germany in 1871. On the military front, the war also led to huge reforms in the British army. The spectacular bravery of its

soldiers and its organisational faults were all very publicly visible thanks to new communication technology and the resulting media and public scrutiny.

NARRATOR

Another unexpected development was Florence Nightingale's contribution towards a revolution of the treatment system of wounded soldiers and battlefield medicine.

MARY GAROFALO, AMERICAN NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH IN MARYLAND, USA

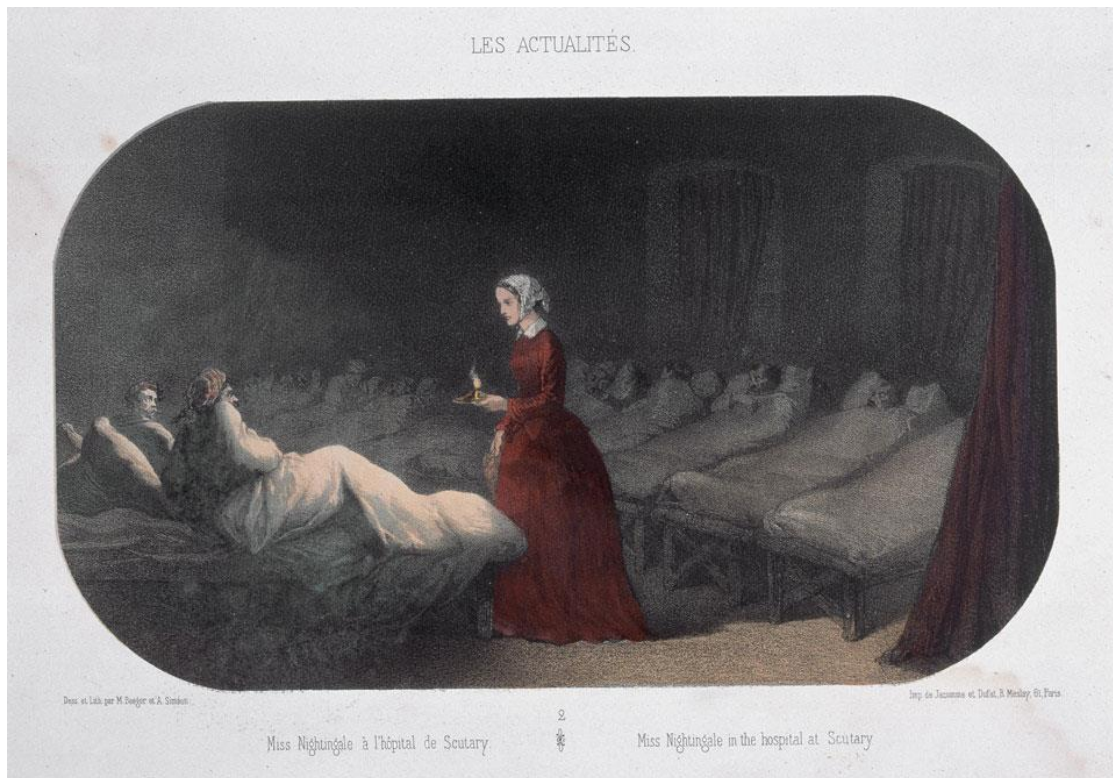
[Nostalgic piano music]

The loss of life in the Crimean war was colossal; of the 1,650,000 soldiers involved in action, 900,000 perished. The majority died from diseases, not their wounds. Florence Nightingale and her volunteer nurses found there was no clean linen; the clothes of the soldiers were swarming with bugs, lice, and fleas; the floors, walls, and ceilings were filthy; and there were rats under the beds. There were fourteen baths for approximately 2000 soldiers but no towels, basins, or soap.

Florence Nightingale was one of the first women to be held in such high esteem during a military conflict. Her work brought the field of public health to national attention. She was one of the first in Europe to grasp the principles of the new science of statistics and to apply them to military – and later civilian – hospitals.

Armed with her experience from the Crimean war, in 1860 she created a nursing school in London which was the first profane nursing institute in the world.

She continued to improve educational standard for nurses and influenced health care standards. It can be concluded that without her efforts in healthcare, the world would be a different place.



KAROL SZEJKO, MUSEUM OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR IN GDANSK

[Atmospheric music in the background]

The Crimean War ended with Russia's humiliation. Was the sacrifice of the soldiers worth it? Today, the futile loss of life and the scale of human misery during the Crimean War is beyond our understanding. But the war itself shocked the British society and initiated the process leading to a better understanding of human suffering. That war actually defined future generations of the British people.

World Battlefield Museum Forum works in collaboration with museums and institutions that commemorate iconic battles. In this programme with National Army Museum in London we bring to you a gripping battle story from Crimea.

NARRATOR *[Summary]*

The impact of the media was huge and this was not lost on publishers, writers or indeed governments or the military. Information had started to become a crucial weapon but it also led to questions on censorship.

For one of history's landmark wars, with so many iconic battlefields, it is ironic that the battlefield itself is virtually unmarked and un-commemorated in Crimea itself.

[Rhythmic music in the background; tension building up slowly]

There are many lessons to be learned from the Crimean War. Certainly there were blunders, but there was also incredible bravery. The battles led to so much change, yet the battle-site is still witness to conflict and bloodshed even now.

It is an almost self-fulfilling prophecy that *whoever is unaware of history, is doomed to repeat it.*

[Brisk closing music]

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