

## **When modern Europe rediscovered the Bulgarians. The reflections of the Crimean War (1853-1856) in Bulgarian history**

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**Abstract.** The article presents the Crimean War (1853-1856) as the event that became the reason for the increased interest of modern Europe in the Bulgarians in the 19th century. It discusses the topics of whether the war caused an economic crisis, how the Bulgarians treat the allies of the Ottoman army (the French and the British) and how the French perceive the Bulgarians. It was over the period of their presence in the eastern Bulgarian lands during the Crimean War that the Western Europeans rediscovered the Bulgarians, became closely acquainted with their way of life and culture, and described them in their memories of the war, published after its end. A conclusion might be drawn that the expansion of scientific knowledge about Bulgarian history must necessarily go through the attraction of new sources, yet unused though, including and above all through the study of foreign archival documents and literature.

**Keywords:** Crimean War (1853-1856), France, Europe, Bulgarian history, modernization

There is enough evidence that the Bulgarians, with their past and present, were well known to the peoples of Western Europe already in the Middle Ages. Over time, such information was expanding, especially in the 18th and 19th centuries, when the European elite was better informed about the Bulgarian way of life and culture. But there was a period, a little way back in the past, when in the countries of Western Europe, not only travelers, diplomats and merchants, as was the case until then, but also the wider strata became closely acquainted with the population of the Eastern Balkans, the eastern Bulgarian lands (i.e., the Western Black Sea coast), learned more about the people living there, mainly Bulgarians, Turks and Greeks, but also Tatars, and got to know their way of life and customs. The time referred to is the middle of the 19th century, and the specific reason for this is the Crimean War (1853-1856).

It could be reasonably argued that the Crimean War was the military conflict within the Eastern Question that focused on itself the greatest European public interest for the purposes of the 18th and 19th centuries. The reasons are

easy to explain: in the Crimean War, which started as another Russo-Turkish war, France, England and Sardinia were subsequently included as allies of the Ottoman Empire; it was instrumental for the creation of the model of war of the New Time, in which the technically advanced nations prevailed, i.e., those who relied on modern communications and means (telegraph, reliable navy, weather forecasts, medical care); the victorious Western European countries imposed a new status quo in the Eastern Question, and that was part of the prelude to the preparation for the great wars of the 20th century, a prelude that started as early as the first half of the 19th c.

In this context, the Crimean War should be considered as a war, which was different from the previous wars. On the one hand, it was the first war in Europe in which new modern technologies gave an advantage to one of the belligerents: that was the already industrialized West, represented by its greatest powers at the time, i.e., by England and France. The Paris Peace Treaty of March 1856 established the new status quo in the Eastern Question: according to Articles 11, 12 and 13 of the Treaty, the Black Sea became a neutral territory, free from hostilities, “the maintenance or construction of naval arsenals along its shores becomes unnecessary and pointless” (Article 13); “Navigation on the Danube will not be subject to any obstacles and burdens” (Article 15); a special International Commission was established, which was to ensure safe and trouble-free navigation on the Danube River (Articles 15, 16 and 17) (*Traité de paix de Paris*, 30 mars 1856).

In the next two decades at least, the Black Sea and the lower reaches of the Danube would be a space solely for trade and free communications, and this would have a positive effect on the development of the region.

The Crimean War was the last major military conflict in Europe that managed to preserve the good “old chivalric morale” between the belligerents - after each major battle, armistices were declared to bury the dead; the war ended with a mutual exchange of honours between the armies. Here are some specifics about it:

- During the heavy combats fought at the siege of Sevastopol, after the battles with many killed and wounded, a truce was necessarily given in order to bury the dead. This happened on 22 March 1855, when a powerful Russian counterattack was repulsed at the Mamelon vert fortification (600 Russian soldiers were killed, 650 English and French were killed and wounded); a truce was announced on 24 May 1855, and also on 18 August after the battle at the Chjornaja River, when the casualties on the Russian side were over 3,300 people (*Atlas historique et topographique* 1858, 2, 3).

- After the armistice and the conclusion of the peace treaty, the two warring armies, still in the Crimea, paid mutual respects. On 13 April 1856, at the invitation of the commander-in-chief of the Russian army, General Alexander von Lüders Allied, allies' generals attended a parade of Russian military units encamped on the heights of Mackenzie's farm (plateau de Mackensie), and four days later the gesture was responded: at the invitation of the commanders, the French and the English, General Lüders attended successively the parade of the two armies (*Atlas historique et topographique* 1858, 4).

There is hardly a moral war, but the one that took place 170 years ago, the Crimean, provides examples of behaviour between the warring parties that, even in very difficult and complex situations, can be followed today.

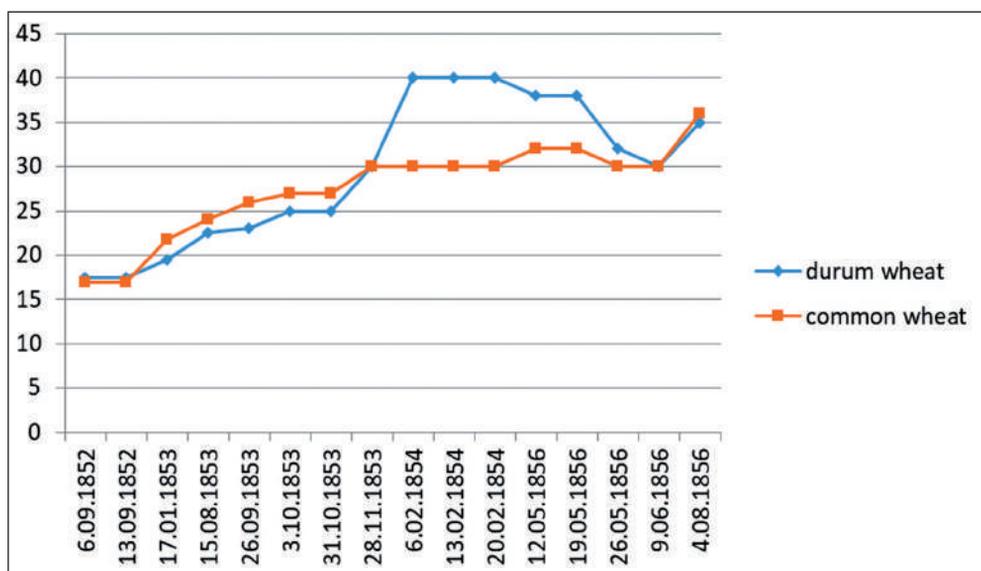
The Crimean War had a tangible impact on the Bulgarians and on the course of Bulgarian history at that time. This explains why today it continues to be cited in scientific and educational sources as an important chronological boundary in our national history: it was a benchmark of a new stage, during which the process of establishing secular education and culture ended; the Church movement achieved its ultimate goal, i.e., the right to establish a Bulgarian ecclesiastical organization (Exarchy); the political struggles for the restoration of Bulgarian statehood on the Balkan (mainly Greek) and European model were led by organized structures (Genchev 1995, 5-14; Mitev 1999, 6-10).

In the memories of contemporaries, the event left a lasting mark - long after the end of the war, it would be talked about and written about on one occasion or another. However, what was new in the assessments of this war was that, unlike the previous Russo-Turkish wars, which until that moment had burst out at every twenty years, there was also something positive to note. And if contemporaries could not make a comprehensive assessment of what happened (it is normal, for this purpose a greater distance in time would be needed), then they almost unanimously pointed to what was most easily noticeable - the appearance and stay of the allied troops in the Balkans created an opportunity for more - enterprising traders to accumulate good capital.

What is the impact of the Crimean War on the local economy? What is its significance in the dynamics of the Bulgarian economic development in the 19th century, does this war lead to an economic crisis in the sense of hesitation, a deviation from the long-term development trend: what is the most general definition of a crisis in economic theory? The answer to this question can hardly be unequivocal.

The data from the French consular reports for the period July - the beginning of August from the residences in Constantinople, Edirne, Thessaloniki, Varna and Trabzon showed that in Edirne the prices of the main types of foodstuffs had doubled since the arrival of the French troops in the city. In Thessaloniki, the prices were the highest, although the city was far from the path of the troops, but the reports indicated that in the interior of the region the prices were much lower, for example in Bitola (in the so-called *Upper Macedonia* region) they were at least 1/3 lower than those of Thessaloniki. However, in the ports, mainly in Volos and Kavala, the difference was barely perceptible, if it existed at all, noted the French Consul in Thessaloniki (AMAE, CCC, Constantinople, t. 94, fol. 263, 276-281).

In the period from September 1852 to August 1856, the pages of the *Tsarigradski vestnik* [English: *The Constantinople Journal*, Translator's note] published information on the prices of grain on the market in the Ottoman capital. It is noteworthy that, despite the war, "Azov grain", "Bessarabian grain", and "wheat from the Crimea" continued to be present in this largest market in the Ottoman Empire. Figure 1 presents the prices of durum and common Rumelian (i.e., Bulgarian) wheat published in the newspaper, which confirmed the trend of price movements documented in the French diplomatic correspondence.



**Fig. 1.** Price movement (in kuruş per *kile*<sup>1</sup>) of durum and common Rumelian wheat on the market in Constantinople in 1852-1856 according to data published in the *Tsarigradski vestnik*

Source: *Tsarigradski vestnik*, III, 99, 6.09.1852; 100, 13.09.1852; 105, 17.01.1853; 134, 15.08.1853; 140, 26.09.1853; 141, 3.10.1853; IV, 145, 31.10.1853; 149, 28.11.1853; 159, 6.02.1854; 160, 13.02.1854; 161, 20.02.1854; VI, 258, 7.01.1856; 260, 21.01.1856; 264, 18.02.1856; 266, 3.03.1856; 268, 17.03.1856; 276, 12.05.1856; 277, 19.05.1856; 278, 26.05.1856; 280, 9.06.1856; 288, 4.08.1856.

Much more detailed are the data on food prices contained in French diplomatic correspondence. From 15 November 1855 (New Style), the reports of the French ambassadors in Constantinople gave monthly information on the retail prices on the metropolitan market of bread of the first and second quality and of the main types of meat: beef, veal and mutton, in kuruş and in francs. Based on this strictly guided reference, in Figure 2 we present the movement of the prices of first quality bread and mutton for the period from 15 November 1855 to 15 May 1858.

Data from historical sources, both foreign and domestic, indicate that there was an increase in the price of basic foodstuffs, more noticeable at the beginning of the war and in the autumn of 1855. The specific reasons are indicated in French diplomatic correspondence: the poor harvest, the Black Sea ports blocked by the war, the difficulties in transport, and in grinding the flour. But in a longer, future-oriented timeline, something else must also be

<sup>1</sup> A unit of measurement for cereals, varying in volume for different regions of the Ottoman Empire. The most widely used was the Istanbul *kile*, which was equal to about 25 kg (Velkov et al. 1993, 896).



more and created good opportunities for the more enterprising Bulgarians to get rich. There is a lot of historical information about this, but it would be enough to quote the memories of Mihail Madzharov, who wrote the following: "The Crimean War [...] poured out a large amount of foreign gold and gave many Bulgarian merchants the opportunity to get rich. The prices of all items doubled and tripled. Many of our residents spoke with a sigh about the Crimean *murabe* [English: *war*, Author's note, I. R.]. Some of my relatives used to tell me that 'money was earned from money and there was never enough of it'". And further, Madzharov assured that all the capitals of his fellow citizens of Koprivshitsa, who were devastated by the 1876 April Uprising, had their origin in the Crimean War (Madzharov 1968, 43).

During the years of the war, some of the most enterprising and successful Bulgarians in their business ventures in the 19th century accumulated the main part of their fortune: Hristo P. Tapchilestov, Evlogi and Hristo Georgievi, and many others. In just three years (1851-1854), the capital of the Constantinople based trading house of Hristo P. Tapchilestov established by a Bulgarian born in the town of Kalofer, who gave his name to the company, grew 2.3 times, and in the period 1854-1857, it further grew by about 4 times, to reach in 1858 the huge sum of nearly 4,800,000 kuruş (Davidova 1998, 45-46). Conditions for capital accumulation were good not only for large traders but also for local trade. For example, the Varna merchants - Greeks, Bulgarians, Turks - were actively involved as commissioners in the supply of provisions to the allied armies. It was during the war years that the first wealthier merchants from the Bulgarian community in Varna accumulated capital: the brothers Nikola and Sava Georgievi, Rali and Hristo Mavridi and others, arrived in the port city from the interior - from Tarnovo, Shumen, Kotel and Kotel district, and also from Targovishte (Dimitrova 1975, 98).

In fact, that was the time when the local economy fitted into the European economy (that is, the world) and it began to respond to the manifestations of the world economy. The increase in prices came as a result of modernization, the increased demand for goods from the Bulgarian market, the increased interest in these goods on the part of Western European merchants and industrialists - a process that began as early as in the 1840s and early 1850s. The Crimean War was only to accelerate such a process. Despite the disasters and robberies that accompanied it, it contributed to the increase of local wealth, which in the next two decades would be allocated into economic initiatives, cultural and educational endeavors, even in financing the national revolution.

However, the Crimean War also had another significant effect - it drew the Europeans' attention to the Eastern Balkans, to the Bulgarian lands and to the population living in them to the greatest extent (until that moment). It was in the second half of the 19th century, and even until the beginning of the next 20th century, that the bookstores of Western Europe were flooded with voluminous books dedicated to names, facts, and events of the Crimean War. Some streets and landmarks of Paris and London immediately adopted the names of iconic places and events related to the war, and bear them to this day. Memory about it remained alive for a long time. The military actions were described, the victories on the battlefield were presented, but lessons were also drawn from the defeats,

which were also not easily forgotten, the disasters that accompanied the troops “in the Orient” were recalled - let us specify that at that time in France, the war was known as the “Eastern War” (la Guerre d’Orient) rather than the “Crimean War” (this happened later).

French literature on the Crimean War, published in the years immediately following it, was particularly abundant. Both overview chronicles and stories of the war appeared on the book market, such as Bazancourt’s book *L’expédition de Crimée jusqu’à la prise de Sébastopol* (“The Crimean Expedition, to the Capture of Sevastopol”) and that of Léon Guérin with the title *Histoire de la dernière guerre de Russie, 1853-1856* (“History of the Last War of Russia, 1853-1856”) - both in two huge volumes, both in several editions, the first of which appeared more in 1857-1858, as well as many reminiscences and descriptions of officers who took part in the war. César Lecat Baron De Bazancourt’s book (1810-1865) presented even on the title page as “charged with a mission to the Crimea to write a history of the war” (i.e., he was the official French historian of the war), and the book itself was subtitled *Chroniques de la guerre d’Orient* (“Chronicles of the War in the East”) - is still used today as a reliable source of information by all researchers of the historical event. In this book descriptions of some landmarks all across the Bulgarian lands, marched across the French Army, of the Bulgarian towns and of the local people occupy a worthy place. These descriptions are indicative of the curiousness and even of the will to know deeper a world unknown to that time to the Western Europeans. Numerous quotations from Bazancourt’s book *L’expédition de Crimée...* could be cited, but here we will limit ourselves to just two.

The first one presents the mysterious beauties of Varna, seen through the eyes of a Frenchman: “All Turkish towns have very much in common when it comes to construction. Varna makes no exception to this general rule. One part of the houses is built of hewn stones, another part is made of wood and completely covered in greenery. Houses and trees coexist brotherly; these latter wrap their branches around the walls, which in turn open to allow them a passage and thus form movable lacy roofs over the streets, through which the sunbeam shines or a corner of blue sky slips. Nothing is so lovely and at the same time so extraordinary as this kind of covered market, along which the trees tower, the vines climb up, projecting their long fantastic shadows on the walls and on the faces” (Bazancourt 1861, 83-84) - this is too poetic writing for a military historian, for a man engaged in writing military history. There is no doubt about his good intentions.

And this is how Bazancourt sees and describes the surroundings of Varna: “When, on a fine day, the rising sun gilds this spacious plateau<sup>2</sup> with its rays, through the curtain of greenery are seen guns gleaming and battalions in their manoeuvres. The drums, the trumpets, the military music are carried from echo to echo in the gorges of the mountains [...]. It is a panorama of a beautiful scenery and military activity, in the midst of which the waves of the sea roar and the masts of the ships shake as in a wind-swept forest” (Bazancourt 1861, 85-86).

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<sup>2</sup> The Franga Plateau.

The memoirs of ordinary Frenchmen (mainly officers or those who carried out missions during the campaign), published after the end of the war, are also interesting and informative. I will mention Alfred Masquelez's book *Journal d'un officier de zouaves* ("Diary of an Officer of the Zouaves"), published in Paris in 1858, and Camille Allard's *Souvenirs d'Orient. Les Echelles du Levant* ("Memories from the Orient. The Ports of the Levant"), published in Paris in 1864 (Allard 2013). Who are the authors? Allard was a young physician who had been around Varna and Dobrudzha during the war and made magnificent descriptions of what he saw and experienced. Alfred Masquelez was also a young man at the time. During the war he rose to commander of a company of Zouaves [foot soldiers of the French colonial troops in Algeria, Athor's note, I. R.], being sometimes trusted to command the regiment in the absence of the colonel, by 1858 he was early retired with the rank of captain. A brilliant military career was predicted for him, but the severe wounds received during the fighting in the Crimea, from which he barely survived and remained disabled for life, thwarted such a future. Still, Masquelez managed to get prestigious orders and honours: Knight of the Order of the Legion of Honour and member of the Imperial Order of the Medjidie. In his notes, published shortly after the war (1858), he described all that he experienced: the path of the French divisions moving on foot from Gallipoli to Varna, the camps near Varna, the "bad Dobrudzha", the cholera, the fire in the Varna fortress, the fighting in the Crimea, the plight of the wounded French soldiers (Masquelez 1858, 71). Masquelez's memoirs recreated the horrors of war, but also "suggested" the self-confidence of France's regained greatness after the definitively achieved victory.

Alfred Masquelez described the Bulgarian peasant with benevolence and the greatest detail: shaved, with only "that big inverted mustache that lifts the face, without, however, giving it a fierce look. On the contrary, he bears on his face the stamp of resignation and of a certain sweetness which inspires confidence and sympathy". "Like the Flemish peasant with his cart, it is difficult to imagine the Bulgarian peasant without his cart" - noted the young French officer and claimed that the Bulgarian had a friendly and confident appearance, different from the appearance of the oriental peoples (Masquelez 1858, 22-24). Similar are the descriptions in the book of Dr. Camille Allard, who is equally well-intentioned towards every single people represented in the region of his travels - Turks, Bulgarians, Tatars, Vlachs - and tries to describe the most characteristic of their traditional way of life and culture. Allard was fascinated by the hospitality of the Bulgarians, by the beauty of the Bulgarian women from Shumen, which he compared to the beauty of the Greek women of Asia Minor (Allard 2013, 127).

The attitude of the local Christians, Bulgarians and Greeks, towards the allied troops was different from that of the Turks, who expected their military assistance. The previous Russo-Turkish wars, whose combat actions were again unfolding in the Bulgarian territories, both north and south of the Balkan Mountains (Stara Planina), provoked disasters and large displacements here, but at the same time they strengthened the national liberation aspirations of the Bulgarian population and gave rise to expectations for help from Russia. In this sense, the French and English armies that came to the aid of the Ottomans were

unexpected and uninvited guests. This reserved attitude was very well noticed by the Allies themselves. It was noticed by Dr. Camille Allard during his stay in Varna: “the unfortunate Christian inhabitants”, wrote Allard, bear all the burdens of accommodating the foreign troops, while the Turks spare them; the Greek or Bulgarian hosts with whom he and his colleagues were staying were not enamored of this, and even “French generosity” at the time of departure did little to assuage their “anger” (Allard 2013, 45)

However, the French presence specifically in Varna in 1854-1855 had other dimensions as well, much more pleasant in terms of visible results, which gradually changed the attitude of the local people towards the French soldiers and officers. French modern culture, at that time well known throughout Europe, left its mark on the Black Sea city, albeit in years of war. In the long wait for hostilities, the two allied armies stationed in Varna and the surrounding area had enough time for both entertainment and work on improving living conditions in the city. Undoubtedly, the French were more active. They got involved in the construction campaign to expand the port, maked embankments along the shore, demolished old buildings, opened cafes, opened clubs, named streets and put signs on them: French Posts Street (Rue des Postes Françaises), Hospital Street (Rue de l’Hôpital). The process went so far that English correspondents pointed to the French as an example to their countrymen (The Allied 1854). The French officers opened a club in Varna - a pleasant place for conversations, songs, and playing dominoes. The need for luxury goods and fine drinks was satisfied by the lively trade. In addition to the locals in the city, various goods were sold by constantly arriving merchants from Constantinople, Toulon and Marseille, and from Algeria. A French amateur theatre called *Moulin (The Mill)* was created. The female roles were played by the soldiers with barely a mustache, and the clothes were sourced from the wardrobes of the merchants’ wives. There was no lack of audience, it was even “quite a good selection”, with visits from the English camp as well (Belar 1911; Dimitrova 1975, 89-90).

The modernization mission of the French in Varna during the Crimean War found its more lasting results through the communications they built here - a post office and a telegraph, which were used after the end of the war for civilian needs and greatly facilitated the lives of local people, mainly merchants. This circumstance also contributed to the changing positive attitude towards the French presence in the city and the region.

A few notes about the telegraph. In December 1854, the French Emperor Napoleon III (1808-1873, Emperor 1852-1870) issued a special decree opening the procedure for the construction of a telegraph line between Varna and Bucharest - **this was actually the first telegraphic communication in the Balkans and in Ottoman Empire**. England also joined the project. On 1 February 1855, a formal convention was signed between the two countries, which provided for the line to join the European telegraph network. France was involved in the construction, but half of the costs were at the expense of England, which received equal rights in the operation thereof. The funds for the maintenance of the facility after its construction were also shared equally, with both parties agreeing to close the budget annually. In January 1855, a loan of 25,000 francs was opened at the French Consulate General in Bucharest,

which was intended to cover the expenses of the officials entrusted with the construction of the telegraph line. Full support of the undertaking was provided both by the French and English institutions and by the central and local Turkish authorities. The construction works were carried out in difficult winter conditions, but they were completed in an enviably fast time frame: they began in February 1855, at the end of March the line was already laid to Ruse, in April the British delivered and laid the submarine cable in the Black Sea, and on 24 April 1855, the first telegraph connections from Varna to Ruse and from Varna to Crimea were made. The laying of the submarine cable between Ruse and Giurgiu was delayed, but very soon it was completed, after which the direct telegraph connection from the Crimea to Paris and London became possible. French telegraph offices were established in Varna and Ruse with directors and French clerks employed in them. The post of “Inspector-General of the French Telegraph Office in the Orient” was created. After the end of the Crimean War, France and England handed over the telegraph facilities to the Ottoman Government. This was officially done in January 1857 with most of the French employees remaining employed in the telegraph offices, but after contracts were concluded with the Turkish authorities. Although it may sound strange, it was the Crimean War that “brought” to the Balkans and the Ottoman Empire the most modern communication of the time, the telegraph, and that very soon after the beginning of its widespread use in the rest of Europe: for example, the laying of the submarine cable from Varna to the Crimean Peninsula was carried out only four years after the laying in 1851 of the first submarine telegraph cable ever - the one between France and England under the English Channel (Roussev 2021).

In a lecture entitled *The French in Varna in 1854*, read before the Varna branch of the Alliance française in the early years of the 20th century, the director of the local French school Privat Belard noted the following: “When the French troops settled in Varna, the question was: what were the mutual relations between the army and the population? [...] The French soldier tried to prove that he was not to be pushed shoulder to shoulder with the bashibozouk, or even with the regular Turkish soldier whom he had come to help. The French came here to assist the Turks, thanks to the policy of the time, they did not betray their tribe: their sagacity soon discovered to them the ludicrous sides and rude deeds of those for whom they had come, and their good-nature divined the sufferings of the oppressed population, and with a nobility, in spite of their awkward situation, they struggled to help the people [...]” (Belard 1911, 56-57).

Despite the romantic enthusiasm of the author, easily explained by the distance of the time, Bellard faithfully articulated the dilemma facing the French soldier in that era and in that environment. On which side should one stand in the inevitable (especially in military conditions) clashes between representatives of the Turkish population close to power and the Bulgarian liberation aspirations gaining speed? There is no doubt that the Frenchman of the 19th century could not help but oppose violence, robbery, murder committed against a peaceful, defenseless population, under whatever motives they were committed. When, in March 1856, a Turkish Pasha kidnapped a 16-17-year-old Bulgarian girl named Nedyalka from Tulcea, took her to the villages near Varna, where she

was hanged, it was the French, with their quick intervention, who helped the kidnappers to be arrested and tried, and the girl was given a solemn burial (Kabakchiev 1910, 47-48; Dokumenti 1948, 53-54; Dimitrova 1975, 99) (AMAE, CADN, fol. 43a-44a; fol. 44b-45a).

But let's return to the original memoirs of Mihail Madzharov, who, apart from opportunities to accumulate capital, evaluates the role of the Crimean War in Bulgarian history (in particular, the influence of the allied troops on the Bulgarians) much more complexly: "This war brought other changes to our homeland, wrote Madzharov 80 years after its end. - Although the English and French troops came to defend the Turkish rule over the Christians whom Russia wanted to liberate, yet their contact with these subjugated peoples caused a renaissance both politically and educationally [...]. The Crimean War opened a new era for Christians in Turkey. The foreign troops may not have left as large traces in Turkey as the Napoleonic troops after the French Revolution, but they still shook the minds of the Bulgarians, which had been asleep for centuries, to their core. No other more recent event has influenced the Bulgarians as strongly as these foreign troops. The Greek and Serbian uprisings touched only the fringes of our nationhood, and the Diebitsch March<sup>3</sup> passed like a thunderbolt that left nothing but destruction in its wake" (Madzharov 1968, 44).

After the end of the Crimean War, publications dedicated to the historical event appeared in France, which greatly impress with their appearance and content, with the large scale of the preliminary preparations, which undoubtedly attract the attention of the modern researcher. One of these French editions was entitled as follows: *Atlas historique et topographique de la Guerre d'Orient en 1854, 1855 et 1856 entrepris par ordre de S. M. l'Empereur Napoléon III* ("Historical and Topographic Atlas of the Eastern War in 1854, 1855 and 1856 prepared by an order issued by His Majesty Emperor Napoleon III") and was published in France in 1858, i.e., just two years upon the end of the military conflict (*Atlas historique et topographique* 1858). This is a luxurious, large-format, voluminous album, which, even with its appearance alone, at first glance shows that it was made by special imperial order. The title page also contains the following important clarification: "[The Atlas is] compiled on the basis of official documents and authentic information collected by the General Staff Corps. Engraved and published under the care of the Military Depot (Dépôt de la Guerre), His Excellency Marschall Vaillant (S. E. le Maréchal Vaillant) as a Minister of War and coronel Blondel, Director of the Military Depot (le colonel Blondel Directeur du dépôt de la Guerre)", i.e., as befits such an ambitious undertaking, the General Staff of the French Army, the highest military-political post in the country, that of the Minister of War, and the most professionally prepared service for this purpose, the Military Depot, were involved in the preparation of the publication. The Military Depot is a cartography and storage service for the military archives of the French Army, established as early as 1688 by King

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<sup>3</sup> It is about the march of the Russian army in the eastern Bulgarian territories during the Russo-Turkish war of 1828-1829. The commander-in-chief of the Russian army during this war was General Hans Karl Friedrich Anton von Diebitsch (1785-1831).

Louis XIV. The French state from the time of absolutism, due to its ambitious projects, sought to maintain a modern, well-prepared and well-informed army in every situation, and a consequence of this was the emergence of this specialized service, which continued to function in the following centuries.

What does the *Atlas* contain? As noted in the catalogues of the libraries in which it is kept today (and these are only the largest libraries and archives of Western Europe, since the circulation of the edition is limited), the *Atlas* is too large, 62/89 cm, and consists of 11 pages with introductory information about the French participation in the Crimean War (chronology of events, composition of the army in different phases of the war, the names of the officers who died, etc.) and 34 numbered plates, including 23 maps with the routes, locations and the fighting of the French army and 11 large images of battles and military camps during the war. The last plate depicts the parade of the French army before Emperor Napoleon III at the Place Vendôme in Paris.

The *Atlas of Napoleon III*, which until recently was unknown to Bulgarian historical science, enriches our knowledge about the course of the Crimean War, about the events that took place in the eastern Bulgarian territories in the late spring and summer of 1854, about the route of the French army in this region, about the exact deployment of the allied forces in the vicinity of Varna, about the location of the field hospitals and the countermeasures against cholera, about the maneuvers of the French army in Dobrudzha, etc. Four of the maps in the *Atlas* present in detail the course of the French army through the Bulgarian lands, along with numerous settlements, toponyms, historical sites in Strandzha Mountain, Burgas region, Eastern Balkan Mountains, Varna region and all of Dobrudzha, South and North. The *Atlas* contains one of the most detailed and artistic maps of Varna and the Varna Bay region from the middle of the 19th century.

There is no doubt that the *Atlas* has its undoubted contributions as a historical source. In addition to confirming and supplementing the information from the many other sources of the time (maps, travelogues, memoirs), its value increases with the data contained in its maps about specific historical and archaeological sites, less known, and some that are unknown, since for the first time we find data about them here.

What has been presented so far has a more general message. It is obvious that for entire periods and specific topics, the expansion of scientific knowledge about Bulgarian history must necessarily go through the attraction of new sources of information, yet unused though, including and above all through the study of foreign archival documents and literature. One of these periods was the time of the Crimean War (1853-1856) and after it, when, along with his presence in the eastern Bulgarian lands, the Western European rediscovered the Bulgarians and the local population, got to know their way of life and culture, described them in his memories of the war. And this is a new point of view for the modern researcher towards Bulgarian history - a point of view that helps us get to know ourselves better.

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