

**Witnesses to War: Observations of the Russo-Ottoman War in 1877-78 by
Anglo-American Participants**

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Abstract

This study seeks to explore the events of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-1878 in the Balkans and Armenia using a narrative of the events leading up to the fall of Plevna in December of 1877 and beyond. This work focuses on a comparison of the makeup, organization and performance of both the Russian and Ottoman armies as seen through the reports and journals of a number of British and American soldiers, diplomats and journalists who were present during the events. The cultural and social perspectives offered on Russian and Ottoman soldiers and officers by these observers are used in conjunction with the more technical aspects of weapon development and army organization. By taking this approach, this study is able to combine operational, political and popular accounts of the war into a more personal examination of the way it was fought.

Preface: A Note on Spelling

Throughout this work I have used the spellings of personal and place names as well as titles as they were written by the contemporary witnesses and historians in their accounts and not the modern forms. Thus Plevna instead of Pleven and Czar instead of Tsar. In cases where more than one spelling was employed, I have endeavored to use the form most often found.

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Introduction: “The One Eyed and the Blind”

On the 24th of April, 1877, after months of diplomatic stalemate and failed calls for peace from the Great Powers of Europe, Czar Alexander II of Russia issued a manifesto to his people which declared; “Having exhausted our pacific efforts, we are compelled by the haughty obstinacy of the Porte to proceed to more decisive acts [...] In now invoking the blessing of God upon our valiant armies, we give the order to cross the Turkish frontier.”¹ Within hours of this promulgation the four Russian corps that had already been mobilized along the border with Romania (then nominally belonging to the Ottoman state) began moving south to begin the invasion of the Ottoman lands across the Danube. This invasion marked the beginning of what would come to be known as the Russo-Turkish War (though it would be more appropriate to call it the Russo-Ottoman War) of 1877-1878 and the tenth time a Russian army had set out to capture Constantinople.

The crisis that had precipitated the outbreak of war was the brutal suppression by irregular Ottoman troops of Bulgarian rebels during their uprising of April 1876. The massacre of Bulgarian men, women and children in the town of Batak inflamed Russian Pan-Slavs and the accounts relayed by Anglo-American newspapermen and missionaries on the scene horrified the British and American public back home. A massive groundswell of patriotic fervor to support their fellow Christian Slavs arose among all segments of Russian society. By June of 1876 Serbia had launched its own unsuccessful war with the Ottoman Empire, which only served to fan the flames of those in Russia calling for intervention against the “infidel”

1 Archibald Forbes, J.A. MacGahan, et. al., *The War Correspondence of the “Daily News”, 1877*, Vol.I (London: Macmillan and Co., 1878), pg.14.

Turk.

The Czar went so far as to mobilize troops in October 1876 in order to force Sultan Abdul Hamid II to grant peace terms to Serbia. Concerned that minor insurrections in the Balkans could lead to a major war between Russia and the Ottoman state led the European Powers (chief among them Great Britain) to seek a peaceful solution. With public opinion in much of Europe solidly set against the Sublime Porte for its actions in Bulgaria, the west European Powers, together with Russia, called on the Ottomans to reform their laws so as to protect the Christian minorities. The Sultan, refusing to be dictated to by European statesmen, stalled for time and even introduced a constitution for the Ottoman state guaranteeing freedom of religion and equality for all his subjects. When it was proposed that the Powers be allowed to intervene if the conditions of the constitution were deemed not to be met, the Sultan again refused. Abdul Hamid knew that the interests of Great Britain did not allow for Russia, with the mantle of protector of Balkan Christians, to become a strong presence in the eastern Mediterranean. After all, hadn't Britain and France fought the Crimean War some twenty years earlier on that very pretext? What the Sultan failed to realize was that the reports from Bulgaria had made support for the Ottoman Empire and its ruler unpopular in the streets of London. When satisfaction was not obtained from the Porte by Europe's diplomats and knowing that British public opinion would not allow a hand to be raised in defense of the Ottomans, Russia seized its chance in April 1877 and Czar Alexander II set out with his armies to extend Russian dominance over Balkan Christendom.

A quote attributed to Frederick II of Prussia on an earlier Russo-Ottoman conflict (1768-1774) ran that it had been “one eyed men [Russia] giving blind men [Turkey] a thorough

beating.”² The new conflict could be characterized in a similar manner though perhaps “courageous men led by the one eyed and the blind” would be more accurate. The war itself consisted of a series of battles and sieges on two far flung fronts. The crossing of the Danube, Shipka Pass and the three Russian assaults on the besieged town of Plevna in Bulgaria and the siege of Kars in Ottoman Armenia were the major engagements.

In Europe Russian troops encountered scant resistance upon crossing the Danube but their drive on Constantinople was halted at the little town of Plevna by an enterprising Ottoman marshal named Osman Pasha. Three major heroic Russian assaults on the fortified town were beaten back by equally heroic Turkish defenders with high casualties on both sides. On the eastern front the Ottoman fortress of Kars saw its own fall, taken by a daring Russian assault in November of 1877.

In December, after an ill fated breakout attempt by Osman Pasha's weakened defenders was beaten back, Plevna was forced to capitulate. It had held up the Russian advance in Europe and had depleted manpower and morale. By this time though Ottoman defenses in the Balkans had all but collapsed and with the failed attempt to regain the Shipka Pass in January of 1878, Ottoman statesmen began to ask for an armistice. Russian troops continued to advance and on January 31st, 1878, they agreed to a preliminary truce within sight of their goal.

This truce did not end the war however, as Russian troops continued to advance to the environs of Constantinople itself (though it would seem this was provided for in the armistice) while in Ottoman Armenia the town of Erzeroum was handed over to Russian troops in February. Great Britain, now alarmed that the Sultan might possibly allow the Russians into straits, moved up her fleet from the Aegean toward Constantinople. This move prompted the

2 Virginia Aksan, “The One-Eyed Fighting the Blind: Mobilization, Supply and Command in the Russo-Turkish War of 1768-1774” *The International History Review* Vol. XV. May 2, 1993 pp. 221-238.

exhausted Russians and their equally exhausted opponents to sign the treaty of San Stefano outside of Constantinople on March 3, 1878. The end of the war transformed the map of the Balkans. Romania, Serbia and Montenegro became independent and recognized states. A sprawling Bulgaria was created and given autonomy, despite Russia having, in an attempt to placate Austria-Hungary, agreed in 1876 to that no large Slavic state would be created in the Balkans that could threaten Hapsburg designs.³

Despite the fact that it had such dramatic effects on the European map, the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 has been largely ignored, especially in the English speaking world. Most of the general histories of the war that do exist were written soon after the war ended. Indeed an upcoming book due to be published in June of 2011 by Quintin Barry entitled *War in the East: A Military History of the Russo-Turkish War 1877-1878* is described as the first military history of the war in English for over a century. This is surprising considering the amount of sources available in English about the war. Military attaches, soldiers of fortune, correspondents and doctors from the British Empire and the United States of America witnessed the events and many of them have written memoirs and published reports about their experiences.

The main aim of this thesis will be to examine the war in a narrative style from a comparative perspective using exactly these Anglo-American witnesses experiences. In doing so I hope to show the war in its proper large military context with regard to strategy and tactics, to examine how these armies developed and performed and to view battles and soldiers from

3 In the event of the collapse of Ottoman power in the Balkans resulting from the Serbo-Montenegrin and Bulgarian uprisings or in the event a victorious Russian campaign against the Ottomans took place, Russia had agreed to allow Austria-Hungary to control the Ottoman provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina and to keep Serbia and Montenegro from uniting into one large Slav state so as not to threaten Austro-Hungarian. This was to be the price for the Dual Monarchy's neutrality, though the issue of what would happen to Bulgaria and what it would consist of was entirely agreed upon. See B. H. Sumner, *Russia and the Balkans 1870-1880*. (Oxford: At The Clarendon Press, 1937), pp. 273-289.

both Russian and Ottoman perspectives by using the personal experiences of Anglo American observers.

As I am interested in how the story of war can be told by using personal observations, the first chapter will examine the different approaches to writing military history. It describes how the art of writing military history has developed and the advantages and disadvantages to the styles of history from below. How the history of war written by professionals for professionals (Military attaches and official reports as studied at war colleges by officers) can be compared and used with a more populist approach of writing the history of war from “below” (using personal eyewitness accounts).

The rest of the work is divided by chapters highlighting a particular stage of the war. As far as possible the backgrounds and past military life and experiences (or lack thereof) of the observers and participants will be discussed to determine their credentials so to speak. The second chapter is based largely upon the reports and observations of the professional officers and diplomats who were assigned to particular armies or cities, as well as on secondary source material. It seeks to show how the Russian and Ottoman armies were organized on the eve of battle and how they came to be that way. Particular attention is paid to the equipment, specifically the weapons, of each army and to how the strategies of each army had been decided upon.

The third chapter will deal with the war in Ottoman Armenia, with particular attention paid to the events around Bayazid and Erzeroum and to scenes of war as witnessed by correspondents. Since this theater of the conflict is not as well researched, at least in English, as that of the war in the Balkans, the story will be told as a general military overview through the experiences of a few British journalists and diplomats.

The fourth chapter will examine the main theater of the war in Europe. It will again consist of a military overview and the personal experiences of those who witnessed the events and will have as its main focus the battles and siege of Plevna while the winter campaign and the resulting Treaty of San Stefano, as well as the revisions made by the 1878 Treaty of Berlin will be discussed in a brief epilogue. Correspondence, newspaper articles, and personal journals of a few of the more than 70 special correspondents assigned to the war will be used. Many British trained military men and Victorian adventurers served as officers with the Ottoman forces in this theater, both in the field and in the medical services and their views as supposed “neutrals” are discussed. English speakers holding commissions and serving with the Russian forces are rarer, at least in the field of memoirs available, so views on Russian soldiers will come from an American military attaché and a Prussian officer who served with the Russians and whose memoirs, though published in English, have scarcely been used by historians.

The winter campaign and the resulting Treaty of San Stefano, as well as the revisions made by the 1878 Treaty of Berlin will be discussed in a brief epilogue

This thesis should by no means be taken as a complete military history of the Russo-Turkish war. By assessing the experiences of only Anglo-American participants, I hope to shed light on this forgotten conflict in a way that shows not only how these foreign observers saw war themselves but also how on a personal level they described the actions of both the Russian and Ottoman armies and the soldiers, who like soldiers everywhere, fought, died and survived.

Chapter 1. The Nature of War: Approaches to Military History

Military history, that is the deliberate study of warfare in its own right, has stood on its own as a niche within the larger field of historical study since at least Thucydides and his study of the Peloponnesian War. The historiography of warfare though has undergone many significant changes since the late nineteenth century. Hans Delbruck, a German historian writing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, is considered by some to be one of the founders of the modern study of military history and was arguably the first modern historian to advocate for the complete and popular study of warfare. Delbruck believed that military history as a subject should not be confined to study by officers in military staff colleges but should be more open to allow for war to be placed in its wider and in his view, proper, context.⁴ The debate on what constitutes military history and for whom it should be written, as well as the methods used in dealing with problems associated with the academic study of such a broad topic, is ongoing. Due to the continuing nature of this debate it is necessary for the military historian to examine modern military historiography and the plethora of types it offers.

The professional approach to military history was what Delbruck found himself first rebelling against during the era of the Second Reich. This “top down” approach was rooted in the writings of a Prussian general and military theorist named Carl Philipp Gottlieb von Clausewitz. Clausewitz's major work, *On War*, was in the process of being revised when he died in 1831. The result of this, as Nikolas Gardner points out in an article in *Modern Military History*, is that *On War* provides a dialectic form of argument on the theory of war. Whereas his first thesis on war held that war was guaranteed to reach maximum intensity levels, this was later revised to include that the political situation within a society at war determined on the

4 Jeremy Black, *Rethinking Military History* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004) p.187.

intensity level of a conflict.⁵ Clausewitz, unlike other theorists before him, saw that war needed to be related to its social and political context and that it could not be studied or learned from as if it existed in a vacuum. For Clausewitz, war could only be understood if the citizens, armed forces, and political leadership of a society were analyzed together. The study of history was important in this because the experience of historical events could “test and validate” his theories.⁶ What Clausewitz offered in *On War* was a more useful way of theorizing war by emphasizing that planning and training were the best possible ways of dealing with the uncertainty of battle, the so called “fog of war.”

The emphasis on warfare's unpredictable nature and the need to plan accordingly were adopted by the war colleges of many nations. The study of military history became a prerogative of the professional military class in society who saw it as important in the formal education of future officers. Thus the theories set down by Clausewitz were analyzed along with accounts of particular battles from history, especially in the German General Staff, in the hopes of training its young cadres to become professional soldiers. This became the official study of military history and was written by military officers for the benefit of other military officers. Much is written in official military history about the role of leadership, strategy and logistics in past battles and the potential officer was asked to study how these concepts affected the outcome and how they could be used in a future conflict. Anything beyond the battlefield itself was largely left out. Little thought, if any, was given to the historical considerations of these battles and as historian John Keegan points out, this lack of proper context lead officers to study the battles of Cannae (216 B.C.) and Ramillies (1706 A.D.) as if they were one and the

5 Nikolas Gardner, “Military Thought from Machiavelli to Liddell Hart” pp. 61-83 in *Modern Military History* edited by Matthew Hughes and William J. Philpott (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp.70-71.

6 Peter Paret, *Understanding War: Essays on Clausewitz and the History of Military Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 131.

same as each involved the encirclement of one army by another.⁷ Keegan also criticized Clausewitz's theories as being too rooted in 18th century terms and that war could not merely be understood as only the “purely rational pursuit of political objectives.”⁸

What Keegan attempted to do in his *The Face of Battle* (first published in 1976) was to not imagine how battles had been fought but to let the ordinary soldiers, not just the commanders, speak for themselves. By giving voice to actual participants, he was able to focus his attention not necessarily on *what* was happening during a particular battle but on *why* it was happening. To this end he looked at the change in technologies that occurred over the course of the three battles surveyed (Agincourt, Waterloo and the Somme) as well as how new technology and ways of thinking about war were reflected on the battlefield. Though he criticized military history exclusively crafted on common soldier narratives,⁹ it was vital to his book to have them included. This was not the cases with official, Clausewitz type history which was related in a strategic, impersonal style in which personal accounts could have little value. Keegan's work showed that these experiences did hold potentially tremendous value to the study of war. Many of today's military history can be said to be influenced, at least in some way by Keegan's work. Alessandro Barbero's *The Battle: A New History of Waterloo* (published in 2006) gives a fresh look at the battle of Waterloo from all of the sides involved by making great use of personal memoirs and recollections as well as official studies and archival material. The great strength of this work lies in the “total picture” approach Barbero takes so that organization and makeup of even the smaller Dutch and Belgian contingents is recounted in

7 John Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (New York: Dorset Press, 1986), p.23.

8 Nikolas Gardner, 'Military Thought' p. 72.

9 He specifically singles out the American soldier and historian S.L.A. Marshall's works on personal small unit histories as being useful to a point but ultimately too simplistic. See *The Face of Battle*, p. 74.

detail.¹⁰

The critique of official military history demonstrated by Keegan was the continuation of Delbruck's middle class, civilian attack on the genre of official history.¹¹ According to Delbruck, officers were not the only people qualified to write about military history and indeed their narrow area of focused attention only served to limit the field. Modern military history as defined by Delbruck thus included four major components.¹² These components consisted of the placement of military history into its proper place as part and parcel of the wider universal history of society in general as well as the description and comparative analysis of the technical and theoretical dimensions of armies. It also placed military history firmly within a public sphere and away from the guarded classrooms of war colleges. Delbruck's method has been followed in the English speaking world by British historians Michael Howard (*The Franco-Prussian War: The German Invasion of France 1870-1871*, published in 1961) and Alistair Horne (*To Lose A Battle: France 1940*, published in 1969) and by American Fred Anderson in his monumental study of the French and Indian War (*Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766*, published in 2001).¹³

What then is the state of military history today? Associate Professor of History at Ohio State University Mark Grimsley remembers one of his mentors, the renowned American

10 One example of this inclusive perspective can be found when Barbero discusses the Brunswick soldiers in the Duke of Wellington's army. He was able to show through personal recollections of British officers that despite the Brunswickers "menacing black uniforms and the death's heads that adorned their shakos," they were actually made up and commanded by young men, which in that age was a rarity. See Alessandro Barbero, *The Battle. A New History of Waterloo* translated by John Cullen (New York: Walker and Company, 2006), p. 33.

11 Keegan himself in *The Face of Battle* pp.57-62, states that the continental European school of military history as exemplified by Delbruck and his disciples had little influence on English speaking military historians. British and Americans, he argues, were instead heavily influenced by Sir Edward Creasy's *Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World*, republished thirty eight times between 1851 and 1894. The battle as an event unto itself became important because it could and had decided events and English speaking historians tended to concentrate on single battles, rather than on the complete social-political context of war.

12 Hans Delbruck, *Delbruck's Modern Military History* edited and translated by Arden Bucholz (Lincoln, NE and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), pp.39-40.

13 Both Howard and Horne served in Britain's famed Coldstream Guards Regiment.

military historian Allan R. Millett delineating five different types of military history as alive in (and since) 1979.¹⁴ The first of these types centers upon the human, narrative aspect of war and is usually found in popular campaign histories and military biographies. An arguable example of this type of history would be the numerous works on the American Civil War by Bruce Catton. A second type defined by Millett would be the national military histories. These histories emphasize patriotic feeling and are used to help create national allegiance based on shared experiences and values. These works tend to focus on battle histories, similar to the work of Creasy but set firmly in a nationalistic field. Grimsley argues that *The Military Heritage of America* (1956) by R. Ernest Dupuy and Trevor N. Dupuy would fit nicely into this category.

A third category according to Millett is military history that Grimsley dismissively calls “hobby history.”¹⁵ This type is seemingly only interested in things such as weapons and uniforms used and worn by military forces. How and what these weapons were used for and where the uniforms were worn are seemingly not important in this type of military research. It is instead more focused on the details and workings of the weapons and uniforms themselves, with no larger context given.

The fourth and fifth types as defined by Millett are simply his categorization of the two main types of military history already discussed. Millett's “military utilitarianism” type is that of the old official history, dealing mainly with history of specific units or on the concepts of leadership and strategic and operational theory. This type is little seen or used by the public at large. The fifth type derives from the Delbruck school and is called by Millett “civilian utilitarianism” and is the major type as practiced today, allowing university students and the

14 Mark Grimsley, “The Types of Military History-Pt.1” article posted on *WarHistorian.org*, December 26, 2006.

15 Mark Grimsley, “The Types of Military History-Pt.2” article posted on *WarHistorian.org*, January 30, 2007.

educated public a way to study universal society through the prism of military conflict.

Despite the many ways of dealing with military history, the genre was largely marginalized within the larger academic historical community. Margaret Atwood even wrote a poem entitled “The Loneliness of the Military Historian,” whose first lines run “Confess: It's my profession that alarms you.”¹⁶ This attitude within academia seems to be changing as military history becomes more inclusive. Robert M. Citino, a professor of history at Eastern Michigan University, argues that the field of military history has spread its research out into broader segments of society and has produced a broader appeal. Citino narrows Millett's five types into three “big tent” scholarly areas of military history.¹⁷ These include the war and society or “new military historians” (akin to Millett's 5th type), operational historians (the official historians or Millett's 4th type). Citino includes a new group of historians whom he sees as relying heavily on memory and culture to study military affairs. It can be argued that Keegan would belong to this last group, as he attempted to blend cultural issues with the study of battle.

British historian Jeremy Black goes further still and reduces military history today into popular writing and academic writing. His book, *Rethinking Military History*, offers some critiques of military history and its approaches in the twenty-first century. Black points out several key problems that continue to plague historians of war to this day. The first of these would be a Euro-centric bias.¹⁸ The wars and battles that helped to shape modern Europe (especially Western) and North America are studied and written about to the detriment of equally relevant conflicts elsewhere. Black argues that when non-Western societies and armies appear in these military histories, it is merely act as the foil to European and American armies

16 Margaret Atwood, “The Loneliness of the Military Historian.” *Morning in the Burned House* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1995), pp. 49-53.

17 Robert M. Citino, “Military Histories Old and New: A Reintroduction,” *The American Historical Review* Vol.112, No. 4 (Oct. 2007), pp.1070-1090.

18 Black includes North America, specifically the United States, as belonging in this category.

who will inevitably triumph. Thus little or no serious research is done into the cultural and political background of armies from Asia or Africa.

Another major area of contention with modern military history according to Black is the overemphasis on technology in warfare. By overemphasis he means the tendency to focus on one weapon or technological advancement used by the military without regard to the total political, social, and cultural situation from which these advances come. In this discussion he includes a quote from R.J. Barendse's work on the Indian Ocean in the seventeenth century to illustrate how military history can be written in a more inclusive way:

“The armament of English ships was superior to that of Indian ships, and their naval stores in general...It seems that the use of the telescope and the compass, which were rarely used on Indian vessels, better maps, and cartographic techniques-like measurement by degrees-enabled English ships to sail new routes that were generally shunned by Indian vessels.”¹⁹

It would not be enough in the example above to simply say that English ships had better cannons and therefore could command the sea. Attention should be paid to the other factors such as engineering and navigation in order to present a balanced and comprehensive view of how technology truly affects military matters.

Redressing the problems of military history will take time but it seems clear that military history as a field will continue to grow. With an increasing emphasis on cultural and social perspectives coupled with the time honored histories of campaigns, battles and leaders, military history has become a more open and inclusive field in the twenty-first century. By employing an approach using sources comprised of personal memoirs, eyewitness accounts, and official reports this thesis will attempt to blend both official and cultural military history in what I hope will be an innovative attempt to shed new light on the neglected war of 1877-78.

¹⁹ R.J. Barendse, *The Arabian Seas. The Indian Ocean World of the Seventeenth Century* (New York: East Gate Book, 2002). pg. 454. Quoted in Jeremy Black, *Rethinking Military History*, p. 109.

Chapter 2. Opposing Armies

In war the issues are decided not by isolated acts of heroism but by the general training and spirit of the army.

-Field Marshal Albert Kesselring²⁰

Any study of warfare and battle, taken in its most basic form, presents a complex picture encompassing both the heights of human courage and endurance and the meanest forms of human savagery and brutality. In order to examine the course of the war between the Ottoman and Russian empires in 1877-78, it is first necessary to determine, as far as possible, the makeup of the opposing forces. How many troops were engaged, how they were organized, and with what armaments they fought are all essential questions that need to be answered and explored before examining the war's events. John Keegan, in an interview on C-SPAN2's *Book TV* in 2003 stated that he thought it extremely important in writing the history of any engagement to start by "getting the accounts straight,"²¹ by which he meant providing an order of battle for the armies involved. The order of battle, for Keegan, is a detailed accounting of the units involved, their total strength, their position in the theater of war or on the battlefield, and the commanders of each unit. All of these are vital starting points for revealing the story of a campaign.

The order of battle is just one of the building blocks one must examine in writing about war, however. Another important aspect is the strategy of the two armies and how they were developed. The Russo-Ottoman war which broke out in the spring of 1877 was fought between two empires who had clashed nine previous times, with the most recent flare up being the Crimean War of 1853-56. As a result of this prolonged historical animosity, both sides were

²⁰ Peter G. Tsouras, editor, *The Book of Military Quotations* (St. Paul, MN: Zenith Press, 2005), p. 448.

²¹ John Keegan. Interview with Brian Lamb. *Book TV*. C-SPAN2, Nov. 2, 2003.

aware (or thought they were aware) of the other's strengths and weaknesses. This perceived awareness would have a considerable effect upon the strategies both empires would seek to implement during the war. The strategies designed by both Russian and Ottoman planners were also heavily influenced by the political climate of the day. Russian military commanders knew that Ottoman soldiers, especially the ethnic Turks, were considered by many military observers to be among the best soldiers anywhere when it came to defensive warfare.²² Therefore the strategy they were to adopt was one which sought to avoid costly sieges and was designed to move with concentrated force to threaten the Ottoman capital itself. This plan was also designed with a cautious eye to any signs of intervention either by Great Britain, the Ottoman state's most ardent defender, or by Austria-Hungary, who had no desire to see Russia extend its influence in the Balkans, which would jeopardize that empire's own plans in the region.²³ A quick campaign, it was hoped, would result in *fait accompli* that would give Russia what it wanted without drawing in the other powers of Europe.

The Ottomans were, on the whole, not entirely prepared for war. Sultan Abdul Hamid II and his councilors, until seemingly the final days, were sure that Great Britain would intervene to check Russia's predatory advances. The Ottomans were unable to see that the massacres

22 This view was shared by Russia's ambassador in Constantinople, Count Ignatiev, who remarked after hostilities had begun "I have always said, long before the war broke out, that the Turkish infantry soldier on the defensive is the best in Europe." See Richard Graf von Pfeil-Burghausz, *Experiences of a Prussian Officer in the Russian Service During the Turkish War of 1877-78*. 4th edition trans. Col. C.W. Bowdler (London: Edward Stanford, 1893), p.22. The Russians also had firsthand experience with Ottoman stubbornness when fighting on the defensive. During the Crimean war it had taken a Russian army six months to capture the fortress of Kars in Ottoman Armenia.

23 Austria-Hungary, having lost the battle with Prussia and any claim of presiding over the German world, had turned its attention to the south after 1871. As Simeon Damionov explains "It [Austria-Hungary] sought not only to make up for its territorial losses in Italy and its loss of influence in Germany by seizing new Slavic lands but also to prevent any revolutionary unrest in the neighboring regions that might galvanize its dependent Slavic peoples." See Simeon Damionov, "European Diplomacy and the Eastern Crisis up to the Beginning of the Russo-Turkish War" in *War and Society in East Central Europe Vol. XVII: Insurrections, Wars, and the Eastern Crisis in the 1870's* edited by Bela K. Kiraly and Gale Stokes (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p.47. Because of this stance by the Hapsburgs, Russia was extremely reluctant to see other Balkan peoples, such as the Romanians and Serbs, join in its war against the Ottomans, lest it should result in general uprisings throughout the Balkans.

inflicted by their irregular cavalry in towns such as Batak during the Bulgarian uprising in 1876 had left British public opinion bitterly divided on continued patronage for the Porte. Liberals and conservatives in Britain engaged in heated debates in public and in private correspondence about whether or not the Ottomans should be given British military and diplomatic support. A letter to the London *Daily Telegraph*, a paper that was to take a very pro Ottoman stance during the war, echoed some conservative opinion that “no blow that falls upon Turkey cannot but strike at the Imperial Power of Her who is Queen of this realm and Empress of India.”²⁴ This opinion would seem to be the minority one in Britain as the war began because the liberals, who were aghast at Ottoman misdeeds, were joined by conservatives who felt that even if Russia conquered Constantinople it would have little bearing on Britain. The Marquis of Salisbury exemplified this position four days after the Czar's declaration of war in a letter to Lord Lytton. In it he stated:

Except in conflict with barbarous orientals, or the Poles, their [Russia's] military history has been one long record of defeat...Their naval history simply does not exist. Their people are unwarlike[sic]; their officials corrupt; their rulers only competent when borrowed from Germany. And yet we are asked to believe that their presence on the Black Sea or the Bosphorus would be a serious menace to England.²⁵

As a result of this partisan divide, the Conservative Prime Minister Disraeli and his cabinet were left with no clear position on the Ottoman state when the war began and the Ottomans were left to themselves to design a strategy that would attempt to halt or slow down the Russian advance until help (in the form of warships or diplomatic warnings) came from any of the European powers.

The orders of battle, as well as the diplomatic and political background for mapping out

²⁴ Letter signed by “Anglophil” in the April 27th, 1877 edition of the *Daily Telegraph* from WO 106/5.

²⁵ Quoted in Stephen Graham, *A Life of Alexander II, Tsar of Russia* (London: Ivor, Nicholson and Watson, 1935), pp.232-233.

military strategies are extremely important to understanding the course of this or any conflict. To truly understand the makeup of armies beyond the numbers involved and the ideal strategies of the planners, it is also necessary to survey how those armies came into being and how they functioned in reality rather than on paper. Both Russia and the Ottoman Empire had attempted to reform and modernize their armies in the eighteenth century only to have the Crimean War expose them to how far they had fallen behind their rivals in Europe. Their reactions to the changing social, economic and military requirements of the age would take different approaches but were ultimately rooted in the same basic cause of keeping the army, the mainstay of any dynasty, up to date.

2.1. The Russian Army on the Outbreak of War

A. Reform and Organization

The events of the Crimean War saw a courageous, untrained and poorly equipped Russian army meet defeat in the Crimea and suffer a virtual stalemate in the Caucasus against combined British, French, Ottoman, and Piedmont-Sardinian forces. The war brought painful lessons home to Russia's military planners. It was evident that Russia, as a near-feudal state, had fallen behind its rivals in the west in industrial (and therefore, military) development. Russian troops, largely illiterate peasants, had been sent to the Crimea with smooth bore muskets on which they hardly had any firing practice. The tactics used by the army at this time consisted of advancing on the enemy, firing directed volleys and then using the bayonet. As

Robert B. Edgerton points out the average Russian soldier of the time “learned nothing about skirmishing, taking cover, entrenching, defending themselves against cavalry, or any of the tactics than common in the war.”²⁶

Russia's defeat in the Crimea would prove to have a silver lining, at least for those seeking reform within the empire. Czar Alexander II was provided with an opening for reform because the “defeat itself [had] discredited the old rigid social and political system...”²⁷ The first step in modernizing the Russian empire and perhaps most importantly, the army, was taken by the Czar in March of 1861 with the issuance of the Emancipation Manifesto which freed serfs across Russia and allowed them some minimal property rights. On the heels of this act, Alexander appointed Count Dmitri Miliutin, a reform minded individual and a supporter of the emancipation, as Minister of War in 1862. Miliutin set about reorganizing the army starting with the updating of officer training and the attempted streamlining of staff work. By 1868, Miliutin had reduced the term of military service to ten years.²⁸

In 1874, Miliutin succeeded, against great opposition by conservatives in the Czar's court, in achieving his primary objective; a universal conscription law. No longer would the burden of service fall only on the lower strata of Russian society. Now, at least in theory, all estates in Russia would be eligible for military service in an attempt to catch up with the west and become a true nation in arms. It was hoped that, together with the implementation of the

26 Robert B. Edgerton, *Death or Glory: The Legacy of the Crimean War* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999), p. 59.

27 Alfred J. Rieber, “Alexander II: A Revisionist View.” *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 43, No.1 (March, 1971), pp.42-58, p. 45.

28 John Bushnell, “Miliutin and the Balkan War: Military Reform vs. Military Performance” in *Russia's Great Reforms, 1855-1881* edited by Ben Eklof, John Bushnell and Larissa Zakharova (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), p.147. Before this the term of service for a Russian soldier had been twenty five years, a length of enlistment that was looked on by many as a “death sentence.” See Robert B. Edgerton, *Death or Glory*, p.57. By the time war broke out in 1877, the term of service stood at fifteen years, with six years of active service followed by nine years on reserve duty. See F.V. Greene *Report on the Russian Army and its Campaigns in Turkey in 1877-1878*. (1879; Reprint, Nashville: The Battery Press Inc. 1996), p. 5.

Emancipation Manifesto, the conscription law would also stop the practice of large landowners and villages from sending troublemakers and their most superfluous serfs to meet the army's enlistment quotas.²⁹ It was hoped that the caliber of the Russian soldier could be raised to be on par with what was thought to be the more intelligent soldiers who made up British, French, and German armies and that the professionalization of this force would cut back on the cost of maintaining a large standing army.

The Balkan troubles that began in 1875 saw a somewhat reformed if not altogether fully trained and harmonized Russian army being readied for war. Miliutin had done much to upgrade Russia's military preparedness and is usually credited for the job he was able to do, though more conservative critics were aghast at what they felt was liberal meddling. Major Richard Graf von Pfeil-Burghausz, a Prussian who served as an infantry officer with the Russians, met with Miliutin while on his way to the front in 1877. He described Miliutin as being a "very able man" but thought that "the Russian military system [had] nothing much to thank him for."³⁰ The British military attaché to the court at St. Petersburg, Lieutenant Colonel Frederick A. Wellesley, thought more highly of the Russian war minister. In his memoirs Wellesley called Miliutin "the soldiers' friend" and gave him the credit for the performance of the Russian army during the war.³¹

Despite the criticism or praise leveled at Miliutin, the Russian army that began the

29 Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter, *From Serf to Russian Soldier* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990) p.9. Under the new conscription law the entire male population of the empire above the age of 15 was eligible for military service and exemptions by purchase or hiring a substitute were forbidden. See Greene, *Report on the Russian Army*, p. 4.

30 Richard Graf von Pfeil-Burghausz, *Experiences of a Prussian Officer*, p. 50. Burghausz believed that the Russian officers before Miliutin had much more unconditional loyalty to the Czar and a more professional bearing and that the officers he served with, though better scientifically trained, were also more liberally oriented toward what he termed "red Panslavism," which, in his conservative Prussian opinion, was the cause of the Russian officer corps' declining quality.

31 Frederick Arthur Wellesley, *With the Russians in Peace and War. Recollections of a Military Attaché* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1905), p. 285.

campaign against the Ottoman state in 1877 was much improved from its predecessor in 1853. Miliutin had ushered in a new era of Russian military organization and training, as well as a complete overhaul of military education for officers and officer candidates. Vast improvements had also been made in terms of transportation. New rail lines, along with a streamlined staff system had cut general mobilization time for the army to a respectable fifteen days.³² It was still not as modernized as the western European armies Miliutin hoped to model it on (specifically that of Prussia, whose defeat of France seven years earlier had military establishments across Europe scrambling to adopt the methods of Moltke). Though it had adopted new methods of warfare such as the skirmish line, the old guard of the Russian military still relied too heavily on the bayonet in offensive actions, so much so that the new assault formations adopted to accommodate the new more mobile warfare still placed “four-fifths emphasis on the cold steel and one-fifth on firepower.”³³ In terms of armament, the army still lagged behind even the armies of the Sultan. In short, the Russian army was better prepared for war than it had been in the Crimea, but it was still in what some historians have called a “transitional” period.³⁴

The army in 1877 was organized into components consisting of the Active, Reserve, and Irregular (Cossack) forces.³⁵ The Active forces were also divided by classification into field

32 Alfred J. Rieber, “Alexander II: A Revisionist View.” p. 51.

33 Bruce W. Menning, *Bayonets Before Bullets: The Imperial Russian Army, 1861-1914* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), 43.

34 Menning, p. 50. Miliutin himself had been opposed to war as he believed the army was not yet ready to take on a major campaign. In this he was supported by the Minister of Finance Mikhail Reutern. Reutern believed that Russia was in no position to fight a war. The gold reserve had been dwindling away and at the start of 1877 Russia was nearly bankrupt. The army would have to fight on credit and the economic situation made it appear extremely difficult that foreign loans could be repaid. See B. H. Sumner, *Russia and the Balkans 1870-1880*, p. 218, 230-31. Another motive of Reutern in trying to avert war was to avoid aiding the revolutionary elements in Russian society with the consequences that would result from raised taxes and economic hardships that a war would bring. See Virginia Cowles, *The Russian Dagger: Cold War in the Days of the Czars* (New York and Evanston IL: Harper and Row Publishers, 1969) p.96.

35 F.V. Greene *Report on the Russian Army*, p.19. The Cossack forces, though classified as irregular, had been entirely regimented and

forces and garrison forces. In the event of war, the Reserve would be partly called up to assist the Active forces and the Czar could also call up any and all local militia units for active duty if the need arose.³⁶ The army was divided by a Corps system whereby each Corps consisted, at least in theory, of two infantry divisions, a cavalry division and two brigades of artillery, totaling some 30,000 men and 108 guns. On the Czar's proclamation of war on April 24, 1877, the total strength of Russia's army (including Active, Reserve, Irregular, and non-combat forces) was estimated by Lieutenant Francis V. Greene, the United States' military attaché and witness to the events of the war in the European theater, as being approximately 2,250,500 men of all ranks.³⁷

B. Operational Deployment and Composition

A partial mobilization of the Russian army in Europe and a full mobilization of the forces in the Caucasus had begun by order of the Czar in November of 1876. By the following April the Russian army of the South, commanded by the Czar's brother Grand Duke Nicholas, was poised on both banks of the Dniester ready to cross the Pruth into Romania and advance to the Danube.³⁸ This army had its headquarters in Kishinev and consisted of four Corps: the VIII under Lieutenant General Radetzky, the IX under Lieutenant General Baron Krudener, the XI under Lieutenant General Prince Shakovsky and the XII under Lieutenant General Vannovsky.

36 The militia would be comprised of all males aged 20 to 40 who had not, for whatever reason, seen prior military service. See Greene, *Report on the Russian Army*, pp. 50- 51.

37 F.V. Greene *Report on the Russian Army*, p. 51.

38 Small detachments of Russians had crossed the Pruth two days before the declaration of war to secure vital bridges and railroad stations. See Alexander Jacob Schem, *The War in the East*. (St. Louis: N.D. Thompson & Co., c. 1878), p.221. Though Romania was nominally under Turkish suzerainty, its ruler Prince Charles of the House of Hohenzollern had reached a secret deal with Russia in early April of 1877 whereby Russian armies would be allowed to pass through Romanian territory unmolested and provisioned. See Sir Frederick Maurice, *The Russo-Turkish War, 1877; A Strategical Sketch*. (London: S. Sonnenschein & Co., Ltd., 1905). p.26.

In addition to these forces were two unattached rifle brigades, fifty four squadrons of Cossacks and a mixed light infantry and cavalry division commanded by Lieutenant General Skobeleff.³⁹ In all some 200,000 men stood ready to pour into Romania and received the order to do so on April 24th. A second army was formed under the command of Lieutenant General Semeka, headquartered in Odessa, consisting of the VII and X Corps which were tasked with defending Russia's Black Sea coasts.⁴⁰ This force totaled roughly 85,000 men.

The plan of campaign for Russia's army of the South had been developed by Nicholas's Chief of Staff, General Nepokoichitski, a highly regarded and learned staff officer who was known in Russian military circles as "Our Moltke."⁴¹ The ultimate Russian objective, despite assurance from the Czar to Europe's rulers that Russia's motives were merely altruistic ones, was to capture Constantinople and take control of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus. The easiest plan of advance (and one which had been hugely successful on a smaller scale during the 1828-29 war) to accomplish this objective would have been to cross the Danube and invade the Dobrudja region of Bulgaria and from there to capture the fortified port city of Varna.⁴² From Varna thence to Adrianople and then the ultimate prize glittering on the Bosphorus. Unfortunately this plan was only feasible if Russia was able to supply her land forces from the Black Sea. The Russian Black Sea fleet was still decimated from the Crimean War and the Ottoman fleet was unquestioned ruler of the waves, on both the Black Sea and the Danube.⁴³

39 Ian Drury, *The Russo-Turkish War 1877* (London: Osprey Publishing, 1994) p.6.

40 Alexander Jacob Schem, *The War in the East* p.218.

41 Sir Frederick Maurice, *The Russo-Turkish War, 1877* p. 25. Miliutin had suggested another officer for this position but was overruled by the Grand Duke, who as Commander in Chief, was to consistently appoint men of influence rather than of merit for high ranking positions. It was in this way that General Todleben, the renowned defender of Sebastopol who was personally disliked by the Grand Duke, was shunted off to organize the defense of Baltic fortresses at the beginning of the war. See Stephen Graham, *A Life of Alexander II, Tsar of Russia*, p.242.

42 The towns of Varna, Rustchuk, Silistra, and Shumla in eastern Bulgaria were known as the Quadrilateral and together constituted the fortified linchpin of Ottoman defenses in the Balkans.

43 The Treaty of Paris that ended the Crimean War in 1856 had reduced the Russian naval presence on the Black

Nepokoichitski, out of necessity, was forced to devise a new grand strategy which called for the Army of the South to force the Danube somewhere between Nikopolis and Rustchuk and then to divide into three forces. One force would be posted in the west to mask the Ottoman fortress at Widdin and another would be posted in the east on the Lom river line to protect against any movement from the quadrilateral forts.⁴⁴ These flanking forces would serve to part the Red Sea of Ottoman defenses, allowing the bulk of the army to race over the Balkan passes to Adrianople.

Though a bold and imaginative plan (a lightning campaign strategy 62 years before *blitzkrieg*), much depended on what form the Ottoman reaction would take. If Ottoman forces contested the crossing of the Danube and rushed reinforcements into Bulgaria, the Russians would be in for a bloody slogging match. Every indication pointed that this indeed was what the Ottomans would do. Valentine Baker (or Baker Pasha) an ex British soldier who would start the war as commander of the Ottoman gendarmerie had inquired about the lack of defenses in and around Constantinople to Redif Pasha, the Sultan's Minister of War. "We have the Danube as a frontier, and we shall never let the Russians pass that river,"⁴⁵ was all Baker was told, implying that there was no need for any new fortifications.

To tie down Ottoman forces and hopefully cause confusion, the Russian planners would open a secondary front in the Caucasus. Though deemed a necessary undertaking, the Caucasian campaign in Ottoman Armenia was in many respects more difficult an undertaking. First the extremely rugged terrain, the lack of quality roads, and the climate (with heavy snow

Sea to six small to mid-sized warships. Though the Czar had disavowed this portion of the treaty as early as 1871 no Russian warships had been built that could hope to counter the Ottoman fleet as the Sultan had been busily buying ironclads from England. See Ian Drury, *The Russo-Turkish War 1877* p. 5 and F.V. Greene *Report on the Russian Army*, p. 144.

44 F.V. Greene *Report on the Russian Army*, p. 145.

45 Valentine Baker, *War in Bulgaria: A Narrative of Personal Experiences*, Vol. II (London: S. Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1879) p. 296.

and a protracted spring) made extensive operations by large forces nearly impossible until late in the year. Added to these concerns was the very real threat of armed insurrection. Russia's possessions in the Caucasus had always been a source of concern as many of the regions Muslim inhabitants had no love for the Czar's rule. W.A.H. Hare, a lieutenant of Royal Engineers in the British Army, had prepared a report to Her Majesty's government on the outbreak of war detailing the possible problems Russia would face in Asia. In Hare's opinion much depended on how well the Russian army performed. If the Russian campaign went well the threat of retribution would be enough to quiet potential rebellions. "But," Hare cautioned "with an easily excitable, semi-barbarous people like the Caucasian mountaineers, the Moslems of the Terek and Daghestan, or the Tartar population towards Erivan [Yerevan], the working of secret emissaries and the declaration of holy war would not improbably lead to partial outbreaks..."⁴⁶

To deal with these possible uprisings a considerable portion (perhaps as much as two entire divisions) of the Russian forces in the Caucasus were detailed to garrison duty and a close watch was placed on Muslim troops in the Russian army itself.⁴⁷ Muslim troops were placed in garrisons with a heavy preponderance of Christians and six squadrons of Circassian cavalry in Russian service were sent back from the front for duty in Russia before the war started due to doubts about their loyalty.⁴⁸ Because of these concerns, the Russian campaign in Ottoman Armenia was to be a much smaller and more disorganized affair than its counterpart in the Balkans. Leading this campaign was another of the Czar's brothers, Grand Duke Michael,

46 W.A.H. Hare, Report on Russo-Turkish War in Asia in FO 881/3702. In May of 1877, shortly after the outbreak of war, the district of Tchechnia (Chechnya) saw a large scale rebellion break out and the district was declared in a state of siege until the rebellion was crushed in July.

47 The Russians were also concerned about a possible renewal of Polish insurrection and initially held the strategic reserve and the Guards regiments back within Russia itself.

48 W.A.H. Hare, Russo-Turkish War in Asia in FO 881/3702. These same concerns could be found in the Army of the South where Muslim Cossack units were to be used outside of Asia for the first time.

who had conveniently also been the Governor-General of the Caucasus since 1873. Though for reasons of state the Grand Duke, as a member of the royal family, was nominally in command, the actual planning and field operations were to be directed by the very capable Lieutenant General M. T. Loris-Melikoff. Loris-Melikoff was a member of the Armenian aristocracy and in addition to Russian spoke Armenian, Persian, and Turkish fluently and had served with distinction against the famous rebel chieftain Shamyl and in the Crimean War.⁴⁹

The Russian Army of the Caucasus faced a similar situation to the Army of the South in the Balkans. The Ottoman position in Asia, like in Bulgaria, rested on a series of four fortress strongholds. These being the towns of Batoum, Ardahan, Kars, and Bayazid which all defended the capital of Ottoman Armenia located at Erzeroum. It would seem that Russia had been preparing for an invasion into Ottoman Armenia as far back as December 1876. On December 22 of that year, the British consul in Erzeroum, James Zohrab, reported to Lord Derby that he had received reports that Russian villages a directly across the border had been given orders to hold all carts for use by the army and that the Russians had sent “forty officers” to the region who were thought to be intimately acquainted with the Ottoman frontier.⁵⁰ The Russian plan was very simple. The army was to be split into four columns, named from their locations, each with a different goal. The Rion Column under Lieutenant General Oklobjio was to guard the Black Sea coast and attempt to invest Batoum, the Akhaltysk Column under Lieutenant General Devel was to advance on Ardahan, the Erivan Column commanded by Lieutenant General

49 Alexander Jacob Schem, *The War in the East*, p. 528. The appointment of Loris-Melikoff was not entirely based on his military record. As an Armenian, it was hoped that he would be able to sway some of that ethnicity who were Ottoman subjects into supporting the Russian cause by showing how the Czar rewarded all his people. In this cause Loris-Melikoff proved wholly energetic and it was reported that he “lost no opportunity of publishing the fact that he was himself Armenian, both by birth and by religion, or of vaunting that the Czar had several Muhammedan, Circassian, and Tartar generals in his armies...” See Edmund Ollier, *Cassell's Illustrated History of the Russo-Turkish War*, Vol. I (London: Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co. 1877-1879) p. 164.

50 Letter of December 22, 1876 from James Zohrab to Lord Derby in WO 106/1.

Tergukassof was to advance against Bayazid and Loris-Melikoff with the Alexandropol Column would strike for Kars.⁵¹ In total this army began the campaign with around 50,000 infantry, 10,000 cavalry (almost entirely comprised of Caucasian Cossacks) and 210 field guns. This force was nowhere near large enough to enact four potential sieges and it seems that the entire campaign (in the beginning at any rate) was designed to invest as little as possible while keeping the Ottoman forces occupied. If they managed to capture a fortress or two, all the better, but it certainly doesn't seem that Russian military planners were seriously aiming for this accomplishment. Indeed the campaigns in the Caucasus and the Balkans were both largely characterized by Russian planners dismissing any notion of Ottoman initiative. Though in this they were largely proved right it ultimately speaks more to Ottoman weaknesses than to the brilliance of Russian strategic thinking.

C. Armament

A large part of Miliutin's military reforms had been addressed at better tactical training for the army as contemporary warfare had moved beyond the volley and bayonet system so beloved by the old guard of the military. New breech loading rifles had increased the rate of fire and new rifled barrels allowed the average infantryman (or dismounted cavalryman) to accurately engage at ranges from 500 to 1,000 paces.⁵² Despite the examples offered by 1866 Austro-Prussian War, where the smooth-bored equipped and volley firing Austrians had been cut to pieces by Prussian troops using new breech loading rifles and fighting in rapid fire

51 F.V. Greene, *Report on the Russian Army*, pp.379-380. Loris-Melikoff had fought around Kars during the Crimean War and had been made its Military Governor after its capture in 1855. The city was subsequently returned to Ottoman control by the Treaty of Paris.

52 Bruce W. Menning, *Bayonets Before Bullets*, p.40.

columns,⁵³ Miliutin's Committee on the Structure and Training of Troops refused to sanction an increase in range for marksmanship or to alter existing combat formations.⁵⁴

Though the introduction of new tactics for all branches was debated inconclusively in committees, there was little doubt that new weapons needed to be introduced to keep pace with the rest of Europe.⁵⁵ In 1867, an Austrian armorer named Krenk proposed a project to the Russian government whereby he would convert the model 1856 smooth-bore muskets then in service with the army into breech loading rifles using a metallic cartridge. This was immediately adopted and over a million guns were converted.⁵⁶ This Krenk .60 caliber rifle, though it had a velocity of 1,082 feet per second,⁵⁷ was out of date by 1877 yet it was the weapon that was to be used by all regular infantry regiments in Army of the South. A year later in 1868 the Czar's government ordered 30,000 small caliber (.42) breech loading rifles developed by the American Civil War hero General Hiram Berdan. This first Berdan incarnation would be used by the rifle brigades in Europe while the more effective 1870 Berdan (with a velocity of 1,450 feet per second) was used to equip the famed Guards Regiments as well as the entire Army of the Caucasus.⁵⁸ The cavalry, both regular and Cossack, carried shorter versions of the Berdan as well as a variety of sabers, lances and revolvers.⁵⁹

53 This same Prussian army would go on to defeat France in 1870-71. The Prussian's breech loading rifle, the 1865 model Dreyse needle gun, which had wreaked such havoc on the Austrians at Konnigraz four years before, was outperformed by the French 1867 model Chassepot rifle, showing that an army, no matter how well trained, would pay with blood on the battlefield for ignoring the technological advancements of weaponry.

54 Bruce W. Menning, *Bayonets Before Bullets* p.40. The change from a volley firing system to a rapid fire one was resisted because it would lead to an increase in ammunition expenditure.

55 Not to mention the Ottomans who, under Sultan Abdul Hamid II, would embark on an all out modernization with regard to updated weaponry.

56 F.V. Greene *Report on the Russian Army*, p.52.

57 Rupert Furneaux, *The Breakfast War* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1958) p. 33.

58 For the velocity of the Berdan see Rupert Furneaux, *The Breakfast War*, p. 33. F.V. Greene comments on what units were equipped with the Krenk and Berdan in his *Report on the Russian Army*, pp.52-53. Why the secondary Army of the Caucasus was equipped with better rifles than the Army of the South is not explained but it is most likely because the Russian army in Asia had been engaged with pacifying rebels and conquering new territory whereas the army in Europe had not been engaged in conflict since the Crimea.

59 The standard Russian issue revolver during the war was the Smith & Wesson , manufactured in the United

The field artillery pieces used by the Russians were divided into foot and horse batteries. The foot batteries contained a mixture of 9 pound and 4 pound guns and the horse batteries were made up of only the 4 pounders. These guns had a tabled range of 2,560 and 3,000 yards each.⁶⁰ The siege artillery was largely the same except for the addition of 24 pounder rifled cannon and 20 and 80 pounder siege mortars. These guns were in a variety of smooth-bore and rifled barrels but all (except for some of the 24 pound batteries) were made of bronze. Bronze artillery pieces were, like the Krenk rifle, largely outdated by 1877 as the new steel guns pioneered by Krupp permitted greater accuracy and longer distance. Bronze guns were prone to overheating and could burst if overused.⁶¹ Early in 1877 the Russian War Ministry had determined to change from bronze to steel guns but this change was to come too late to be of any use during the war and the artillery was acknowledged by many military observers as being the weakest arm of the Russian army.⁶²

2.2. The Ottoman Army on the Outbreak of War

A. Reform and Organization

The Ottoman army, though victorious in the Crimean War, was utterly exhausted at its conclusion. It had entered the war as the weakest member of the alliance and the army was

States.

60 Sir Frederick Maurice, *The Russo-Turkish War, 1877*, p. 14.

61 According to F.V. Greene, 60 out of 400 Russian guns used during the bombardment that preceded the third battle for Plevna were permanently ruined due to cracked barrels. See his *Report on the Russian Army*, p. 60.

62 Archibald Forbes, a correspondent for the London *Daily News* was impressed by the Cossack horse artillery he witnessed though he admitted it did not have the “dash or trim dexterity” of British horse artillery. See Archibald Forbes, J.A. MacGahan, et. al., *The War Correspondence of the “Daily News,”* Vol.I p.143. Events in Armenia would prove that the Russian artillery was more formidable than it might have appeared.

beset by poorly trained officers, underpaid and ill equipped soldiers and an almost complete lack of coordination on the field between infantry, cavalry and artillery.⁶³ Attempts at reform before the Crimea had started as far back as 1839 when, prompted by a genuine desire to strengthen the state from within and with the idea to secure support from European powers against rebels from Egypt led by Muhammad Ali, Sultan Abdulmecid I and men like Foreign Minister Mustafa Reshid Pasha, promulgated the Tanzimat Edict as a promise to treat equally all subjects in the empire regardless of religion and the “enactment of new laws to make the state more efficient, more modern, more European.”⁶⁴ Despite this promising start, the conception of the state by Ottoman rulers remained fundamentally “Islamic” in nature and there were serious doubts within the Sultan's inner circle and with ordinary Muslims across the empire regarding the effects of Western liberalism, perceived foreign influence, and even doubts about the survival of the dynasty itself.⁶⁵ The need for a more modern and inclusive army was driven home by the defeats suffered by Ottoman forces at the hands of Muhammad Ali's numerically inferior forces.

Starting in 1843 the Ottoman army was redesigned on an active and reserve basis. Recruits were conscripted from age 20-25 by a lottery system and those recruited had the option of sending a substitute.⁶⁶ Service was for six year active terms in the regular army (*Nizamiye*) followed by seven years of duty in the reserve (*Redif*), which was itself divided into

63 Candan Badem, *The Ottoman-Crimean War, 1853-1856* (Leiden and Boston: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2010), pp.51-52.

64 Frederick Anscombe, “Islam and the Age of Ottoman Reform” in *Past and Present*, No. 208 (August, 2010) p. 161.

65 For a discussion of these doubts see Carter V. Findley, “The Acid Test of Ottomanism: The Acceptance of Non-Muslims in the Late Ottoman Bureaucracy” in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire. The Functioning of a Plural Society. Vol. I Central Lands* edited by Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (New York and London: Holms and Meier Publishers Inc. 1982).

66 Candan Badem, *The Ottoman-Crimean War*, p.50.

four separate classes, with only the first two having any real training.⁶⁷ In times of war local defense groups or militias (*Mustahfiz*) and irregular cavalry units (*Bashi-Bazouks*), mainly drawn from Circassian, Kurdish and Arab tribesman, were also called up.⁶⁸ The Ottomans, unlike their Russian foes, stuck to a policy whereby only the empire's Muslim subjects were levied for military service, putting them at a distinct disadvantage when it came to calling on reserves of manpower. Non-Muslims were obliged to pay a poll tax (*cizye*) for the honor of not serving. The attitude of conservatives in the Sultan's court suggests that legal equality, at least on paper, was necessary to keep the Christian populations loyal to the Sultan but that only those sharing in the message of Islam could be relied upon to defend his domains.

By the end of the Crimean War in 1856, pressure on Abdulmecid I from his wartime allies prompted even more reforms. The issuance in February of 1856 of the Imperial Reform Edict, prompted by Britain and France after the Treaty of Paris as the price for guaranteeing Ottoman borders, promised complete equality, regardless of creed. Non-Muslims were now subject to conscription. As historian Candan Badem points out, this was not only a way to appease Christian and foreign sensibilities but a way to alleviate the “burden of war” from the Muslim population.⁶⁹ A census was thus duly carried out of those Christians and Jews who

67 Unfortunately there doesn't seem to be an agreement on the exact length of service for the Ottoman soldier or of the system itself. The figures above come from Candan Badem's *The Ottoman Crimean War*, p.50. James J. Reid gives the term of service as five years in the *Nizamiye* with an unspecified term in the *Redif* in his work *Crisis of the Ottoman Empire: Prelude to Collapse 1839-1878. Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte des ostlichen Europa* 57 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2000) p.77. Sir Frederick Maurice, *The Russo-Turkish War, 1877*, pp.14-15, gives an entirely different set of numbers and adds an extra division, the *Ithiat*. The *Ithiat*, in turn, is labeled as being the first reserve attached to *Nizamiye* units by Frederick William von Herbert, a young Anglo-German soldier who served with the Ottoman army at Plevna, in his memoir, *The Defence of Plevna, 1877: Written by One Who Took Part in It*. (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1895) p. 25.

68 Badem, pg. 50. It would seem that the military recruitment system and organization created under the Tanzimat was carried over into the Russo Turkish War and was still in effect at the beginning of the First Balkan War of 1912. See Kemal Soyupak and Huseyin Kabasakal “The Turkish Army in the First Balkan War” in *War and Society in East Central Europe Vol. XVIII ; East Central European Society and the Balkan Wars* edited by Bela K. Kiraly and Dimitrije Djordjevic (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987) p. 158.

69 Badem, p.338. Badem also hints that there may have been fears that the Muslim population was decreasing due to war service, whereas the non-Muslims were allowed to flourish and increase.

were eligible for military service. State officials and priests were used to draw up the lists of those to be conscripted.⁷⁰ It was agreed that the first 16,000 recruits to be levied would be staggered so that only 4,000 were taken at a time. In the end even this was not accomplished. The Reform Edict had abolished the *ciyze* but it had kept the principle of buying oneself out of military service. This new tax (*bedel-i askeri*) could be paid by both Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Christians took advantage of this system to great effect while Muslims, whose tax was much greater, could not.⁷¹

In 1876 the Ottoman state again came under pressure from the western Powers to reform on the heels of uprisings in Bosnia and Herzegovina, war with Serbia and Montenegro, and especially the brutal suppression of rebellion in Bulgaria. Reform on any issue within the Ottoman Empire was a slow affair. This is generally ascribed to resistance by traditionalists and religious leaders but it was also due in large part to the Ottoman bureaucracy itself as reforms were put through or held back depending on the ever changing “personal intrigues and petty interests”⁷² of the Sultan and his court. In 1876 the new Sultan, Abdul Hamid II, drew up a constitution and instituted a parliament, with the aim of appeasing the Powers and hopefully satisfying his increasingly rebellious Christian subjects throughout the Balkans. The issue of non-Muslim military participation was raised in the newly created parliament when it became clear that a new war with Russia was going to break out. Despite some pleas from Muslim deputies to distribute the war burden equally among peoples, nothing was done and the Ottoman army would take the field relying heavily on ethnic Turkish regular soldiers and

70 Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire 1856-1876* (New York: Gordian Press, 1973), p. 94.

71 Davison, p.94.

72 Candan Badem, *The Ottoman-Crimean War*, p.47. Ottoman military reforms were also constantly hampered by the failure of the state to separate military forces from internal security, or police forces. The regular and irregular units of the army were used to fight foreign enemies as well as quiet domestic disturbances. This dual role severely reduced efficiency and manpower availability. See Virginia Aksan, *Ottoman Wars 1700-1870: An Empire Besieged* (Harlow UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2007) p.479.

irregular and reserve troops drawn from the ethnic groups of the empire who practiced Islam.⁷³

The organization of the army resembled a Byzantine labyrinth in its complexity, with the main fighting unit being made of battalions (instead of the usual regiments) composed of 800 men each. These battalions were combined by threes to form a regiment for tactical purposes but were still subject to their respective original administrative groupings. The problems inherent in this unnecessarily complicated organizational structure are summed up by Frederick William von Herbert who complained that “Sometimes the three battalions of a (tactical) regiment would belong administratively to three different corps.”⁷⁴ Like the Russians, Ottoman fighting units were never at full strength and it is more probable that during the war Turkish battalions numbered somewhere between 500 and 600 men.⁷⁵ The total strength the Ottoman army could muster to meet Russia was officially estimated by British observers as being 1,325,312 men of all ranks.⁷⁶

Of these the regular troops, the Anatolian, Bosnian, and Albanian *Redif* soldiers and the Sudanese were the most reliable. Russia outnumbered the Ottomans in cavalry forces by four to

73 The Ottoman army also counted on troops from Egypt, whose ruler the Khedive Ismail Pasha, was still obliged to provide troops for the Sultan. 12,000 Sudanese troops were duly assembled in May of 1877 under the command of Ismail's son Prince Hassan. See Report from the London *Morning Post* in WO 106/5. These troops would reach the Balkans in July, disembarking at Varna. See F.V. Greene *Report on the Russian Army*, p. 140. Though Ottoman Christians were seemingly unwelcome in the service, the Ottomans had no qualms about hiring soldiers from Christian European countries to fight on their behalf. This recruitment was not reserved for the odd individual soldier of fortune but was also directed at those peoples who had reason to hate the Porte's enemies. Britain's *Morning Post* would report on May 3, 1877 that the Polish newspaper *Dziennik Poznanski* had published a notice from the Sultan on his desire to raise a Polish Legion to fight against Russia. Two days later the same *Morning Post* ran an article from the Krakow based *Czas* that declared the Christian Pole to have nothing in common with the “infidel Turks,” not even hatred of Russia. See *Morning Post* editions of May 3rd and 5th, 1877 in WO 106/5.

74 Frederick William von Herbert, *The Defence of Plevna, 1877*, p.28. One can only imagine the headache it would have caused a regimental commander in trying to order supplies from the right administrative corps for the right battalion.

75 Sir Frederick Maurice believed that *Nizamiye* battalions, fresh off of wars with Serbia and Montenegro, were hard pressed to muster even 500 men. See his *The Russo-Turkish War, 1877*, p.16. This is consistent with Frederick William von Herbert's assessment, which puts the average strength at 600. See his *The Defence of Plevna, 1877*, p. 28.

76 British War Office Report in WO 106/1. This same report gives the official French estimate of Ottoman forces at 1,347,508 officers and men.

one according to Valentine Baker and the cavalry the Ottomans did possess was made up largely of irregular and unruly Circassians, who had been driven out of their homelands by Russia years earlier and Kurds, who even many of the Ottomans disliked.⁷⁷ *Redif* and *Mustahfiz* units from more remote areas were almost universally criticized by foreign observers as being not suited for war. Before the war began the Sultan had issued orders for the mobilization of reserves and W. Kirby Green, the British consul at Scutari in Albania wrote Lord Derby, then Foreign Secretary, noting that the condition of both officers and men called to the colors in Albania was “deplorable” and that scurvy was increasing daily within their ranks.⁷⁸ Reporting from Ottoman Armenia, another British observer and unofficial military attaché, Captain E.C.H. Clarke, a Deputy Assistant Quartermaster General, described the Kurdish troops he saw as being “ludicrous in the extreme.”⁷⁹

B. Operational Deployment and Composition

The Ottoman military was divided into six Army Groups that each had a responsibility for a specific region within the empire. Only two of these Army Groups were located in Europe, the rest were scattered in Asia and the Middle East. The First Army was headquartered,

77 For Russian cavalry superiority see Valentine Baker, *War in Bulgaria*, Vol.II, p.336. It was these same Circassian horsemen who had been largely used in curtailing the Bulgarian insurrection or the “Bulgarian Horrors” of 1876 and in the opinion of correspondent Archibald Forbes (writing to a British audience) these “fiends it was whose ferocities practised [sic] on the Christian subjects of Turkey were the real origin of the Russo Turkish war...” See Archibald Forbes, *Czar and Sultan; The Adventures of A British Lad in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78*. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1894) p.2. The Ottomans relied heavily on local tribesmen to supplement their cavalry forces as their regular cavalry did not have sufficient quality mounts. Often times this meant allying with people the state considered “bandits” in times of peace, such as Tulu Moussa or “Hairy Moses,” a notorious tribal chieftain whose services were employed in the Caucasus. See Archibald Forbes, J.A. MacGahan, et. al., *The War Correspondence of the “Daily News,”* Vol.I p. 115.

78 Letter of March 27, 1877 by W. Kirby Green to Lord Derby, WO 106/1. These troops were most likely *Mustahfiz* as the Albanian *Redif* troops were considered, at least by Valentine Baker, as some of the best soldiers in the Ottoman army. See James J. Reid, *Crisis of the Ottoman Empire*, p.86.

79 Report by E.C.H. Clarke in WO 33/31.

naturally enough, in Constantinople, while the Third Army, in charge of the Balkans, had its base in Manastir. The Second Army controlled western Anatolia from Uskudar while the Fourth commanded eastern Anatolia from Harput. The Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Armies were stationed in the Arab provinces of Syria, Iraq and Yemen respectively.⁸⁰ The advantage enjoyed by the Ottomans was that due to the recent uprisings in their Balkan territories, the vast majority of troops located there had already been mobilized and if not exactly battle hardened veterans, had more recent experience of war than the Russians they would face.

The Sultan and his special Council of War, led by War Minister Redif Pasha, had placed the aged Marshal Abdul Kerim Pasha in charge of all troops in Europe. The 71 year old had developed a reputation as master of warfare which seems to have chiefly been ascribed to the fact that he had studied in Vienna as a young man.⁸¹ Complicating matters was that although Abdul Kerim Pasha was nominal commander in chief, there were actually three separate field armies each under Osman Pasha, Suleiman Pasha and Mehemet Ali Pasha. Due to this lack of organizational coherence the forces at Abdul Kerim Pasha's disposal can only be approximated and consisted chiefly of the field units of the First and Third Armies as well as the garrisons of the quadrilateral and other forts in the Balkans. These included some 50,000-60,000 men under Marshal Osman Pasha at Widdin on the upper Danube, 15,000 scattered along the Danube and the Dobrudja, 40,000 south of the Balkans, 85,000 in the west from Bosnia to Thessaly (the largest contingent of this force, some 50,000 men under Suleiman Pasha, was extinguishing the last of the uprisings in Montenegro), and another 50,000 to 60,000 stationed in the quadrilateral fortresses of Rustchuk, Silistra, Varna and Shumla. Of these roughly 250,000 men, more than

80 These dispositions taken from James J. Reid, *Crisis of the Ottoman Empire*, p.78 and Ian Drury, *The Russo-Turkish War 1877*, p.35. There was also a separate garrison of some 10,000 men on Crete.

81 Sir Frederick Maurice, *The Russo-Turkish War, 1877*, p. 36.

half were available for immediate action in Bulgaria.⁸²

The plan to meet the Russian invasion in Europe, if there was one, was not communicated by Abdul Kerim Pasha to his subordinates. The Ottoman forces, scattered as they were, could have surprised the Russians by a bold move from Widdin into Romania.⁸³ At the very least the Danube should have been reinforced. Abdul Kerim Pasha seems not to have realized that with 25 armored and unarmored war vessels on the Danube, the Ottomans controlled any crossing point or if he did realize it, did not seem overly interested in coordinating a defense with the navy.⁸⁴ Instead almost no effort was put into protecting the Danube and the Ottoman forces were to adopt a more or less passive defense strategy, surrendering any initiative they had to the Russians before a shot was fired. Abdul Kerim's plan, called "simply stupid,"⁸⁵ was to draw the Russians into the quadrilateral and then pounce on them while they were busy besieging one of the forts. The Russians, though had no intention of being drawn into the quadrilateral, as their entire strategy was based on bypassing the forts to race for Constantinople itself.⁸⁶

Ottoman forces in Asia were less prepared than their compatriots in Europe. The

82 No two sources agree on the size of the Ottoman army, either in Europe or Asia. It was said that the Sultan himself relied on the British Ambassador in Constantinople, Austen Layard, for an accurate accounting of his armies. See Ian Drury, *The Russo-Turkish War 1877*, p.7. I have used figures estimated by F.V. Greene from *Report on the Russian Army*, p. 140 and from Thilo von Trotha, *Tactical Studies on the Battles Around Plevna*, trans. Lt. Carl Reichmann (Kansas City, MO: Hudson-Kimberly Publishing Company, 1896) pp.10-11. These numbers include both infantry and cavalry units.

83 This move had been suggested by Osman Pasha but it was turned down by Abdul Kerim Pasha. See Rupert Furneaux, *The Breakfast War*, p.38.

84 Throughout the war in Europe there was a serious lack of communication between the Ottoman army and navy. Ottoman commanders were notorious for their jealousies and intrigues and it is not improbable that some of this friction was due in part to the admiral in charge of the Ottoman fleet being an Englishman, Augustus Charles Hobart-Hampden or Hobart Pasha. The rivalry between Generals Mehmet Ali and Suleiman Pasha, with its disastrous results, will be detailed later.

85 This observation was made by Wentworth Huyshe, an Englishman working as a correspondent with the *New York Herald*, who was present with Turkish forces along the Danube before the Russian crossing. See Wentworth Huyshe, *Liberation of Bulgaria; War Notes in 1877*. (London: Bliss, Sands and Foster, 1894) p.140.

86 Just how the scattered Ottoman troops were supposed to have come together to inflict a blow on the besieging Russians was best left to Abdul Kerim Pasha's imagination.

Armenia quadrilateral forts, except for Kars, had not been provisioned or strengthened.⁸⁷ Erzeroum, which consul Zohrab had reported in November 1876 as being in a position unfavorable to defense, was still unfavorable.⁸⁸ The commander of the Fourth Army, who would lead Ottoman forces in Armenia was the capable, if somewhat melancholic, Marshal Moukhtar Pasha. In March 1877, a month before hostilities broke out, he was not even in Armenia, but in Constantinople, advising the Sultan on what Charles Williams, the English correspondent of *The Standard*, called “trivial questions of Montenegrin boundaries.”⁸⁹ When he finally did arrive to inspect Kars towards the end of April, it was almost too late to define any real defense plans.

Moukhtar Pasha's forces numbered some 70,000 men and 108 field guns with fully 20,000 of these troops assigned to the garrison of Batoum. Of these 70,000 fewer than 1000 were organized cavalry.⁹⁰ Ottoman officers lamented to the correspondent of the *Daily News* that the army was almost completely lacking in transport and that the absence of cavalry had led Moukhtar Pasha to employ the services of a “notorious brigand chief” in order to keep track of Russian movements.⁹¹ Moukhtar Pasha's plan was not to seek an open battle (he believed the Russians stronger than they really were) but to fall back, leaving a strong garrison in Kars, to a defense line in front of Erzeroum, all but abandoning Ardahan and its garrison of nearly 8,000 men to fend for themselves.

87 Charles Williams, *The Armenian Campaign: A Diary of the Campaign of 1877, in Armenia and Koordistan*. (London: C.K. Paul & Co., 1878) p. 1.

88 Letter of November 1876 from James Zohrab to Lord Derby in WO 106/1.

89 Charles Williams, *The Armenian Campaign*, p. 1.

90 I have relied again on F.V. Greene, *Report on the Russian Army*, pp. 380-381 for these estimates.

91 Archibald Forbes, J.A. MacGahan, et. al., *The War Correspondence of the “Daily News”, 1877*, Vol. I , p.103.

C. Armament

If there was anything Ottoman troops in the field did not lack, it was the most up to date weaponry the Sultan could buy. Western influences were generally mistrusted but new military ideas and equipment had begun to be imported with great zeal by Sultan Abdul Aziz. After a state visit to various cities in Europe in 1867, in which Abdul Aziz had been greatly impressed by British naval exercises and Prussian infantry drills, he sought to bring the Ottoman military into the modern era.⁹² This policy of adopting western arms, if not tactics, was followed by his successors. Abdul Hamid upon becoming Sultan in 1876 recognized that widespread rebellions that threatened his empire could only be defeated if his army was properly equipped. The Ottoman empire had been in a state of bankruptcy since 1875 and even in the Crimean War had relied on loans from banks in Britain and France to finance its war effort but this did not stop the Sultan from buying, on credit, every modern piece of equipment for his army and navy in the years before war broke out.⁹³ Though officers and men were largely devoid of proper training, at least in offensive tactics, and supply of foodstuffs, medical services and payment was sporadic at best, the Ottoman army was far better equipped weapon-wise than the Russians.⁹⁴ Thanks to Abdul Hamid's foresight and willingness to look for any edge he might have over the Porte's rivals, the Ottoman army had ordered 600,000 Peabody-Martini breech

92 Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, p.237-238.

93 Jonathan Grant, "The Sword of the Sultan: Ottoman Arms Imports, 1854-1914" in *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 66, No. 1 (January, 2002) pp.9-36, p.12. As much as one third of Ottoman government income before the war went toward paying foreign debts. There was also great concern that the supply of grain, particularly in the Balkans, was not sufficient to provide for the armies and garrisons in the event of a war. See letter of December 31, 1876 from Sir Henry Elliot to Lord Derby in FO 65/1021.

94 Though Sultan Abdul Hamid was more energetic than some of his predecessors, the money to finance and train a modern, offensive minded mobile military was not to be had so the strategy seems to have been to invest in modern weapons and then place them in the hands of troops who were acknowledged masters of defensive warfare. One shining light in the otherwise lackluster Ottoman supply service was that, unlike their Russian foes, they managed to have a steady ammunition reserve available. See Sir Frederick Maurice, *The Russo-Turkish War, 1877*, p. 17.

loading rifles from the Providence Tool Company of Rhode Island U.S.A. This .45 caliber weapon had an initial velocity of 1,349 feet per second and was far easier to handle than the Russian Krenk.⁹⁵ Already in February 1877, Britain's military attaché in Constantinople, Lieutenant Colonel William Lennox of the Royal Engineers would report to Lord Derby that 280,000 of these rifles had been delivered along with ten million rounds of ammunition.⁹⁶ Most Ottoman infantrymen were armed with this weapon which had an effective range of 700 yards and could fire 17 shots per minute.⁹⁷ Those not armed with the Peabody-Martini were armed with the English produced, American designed Snider-Enfield .58 caliber rifle. This too was slightly superior to the Krenk. The Sudanese contingent was equipped with American Remington rifles that were also superior to Russian arms.⁹⁸ Thus, the Ottoman infantry, though not trained in offensive maneuver and fire, could easily hold their own in any defensive position.

Some Ottoman artillery consisted of 8 and 9 cm caliber steel breech loading guns. These surpassed the bronze guns of the Russians in quality, range and accuracy.⁹⁹ They were not all steel guns however and some Ottoman artillery pieces were bronze breech loaders based on the Krupp pattern, similar to Russian guns.¹⁰⁰ Ottoman artillerymen were not properly trained on their weapons and a shortage of horses made it difficult to maneuver. Also the Ottomans used smaller charges on their guns which limited their effectiveness. Lieutenant Colonel E. Maitland

95 Rupert Furneaux, *The Breakfast War*, p.33.

96 Report of February 13, 1877 from Lt. Col. Lennox to Lord Derby in WO 106/2. In his report Lennox refers to these as Martini-Henry rifles but this is an honest mistake (committed also by Valentine Baker in his memoirs) as that was the version then in use by the British army.

97 Richard T. Trenk, Sr., "The Plevna Delay: Winchester and Peabody-Martini in the Russo-Turkish War," *Man at Arms Magazine* Vol. 19, No.4. (August, 1997).

98 Sir Frederick Maurice, *The Russo-Turkish War, 1877*, p. 17.

99 F.V. Greene, *Report on the Russian Army*, p. 141.

100 Greene states that all Russian artillery were steel Krupp types but this cannot conclusively be confirmed. The British Legation in Brussels reported in August of 1877 that Krupp representatives had been heard claiming that they had made 2800 of the finest steel guns for the Ottoman army and navy but it was not clear how many of those had been delivered. See Report of August 11, 1877 from British Legation in Brussels to Lord Derby, WO 106/2. All Ottoman artillery, whether steel or bronze, appear to be of the breech loading variety.

of the Royal Engineers, observing Ottoman troops in Ochranie during the war wrote that of the 18 field pieces he inspected, all used charges so small that they “could not have the power of modern artillery.”¹⁰¹

The cavalry, by far the weakest trained and disciplined of the Ottoman forces, was also its weakest armed. In addition to the various swords, lances, and pistols carried by regular and irregular troops alike, the Ottoman cavalry was also armed with the .44 caliber model 1866 American made Winchester carbine. The first order of 5,000 had been placed in 1870-71 and it would seem that it had become standard cavalry issue by 1877.¹⁰² The Winchester, though a repeating rifle, had a small range and was inferior to the Russian Berdan. According to Frederick William von Herbert there were “frequent complaints” heard about this carbine throughout the war.¹⁰³

2.3. Russia's Allies

A. Romania and Its Army

Though Russia would use Romania as a staging area and had begun the war ostensibly to free the Bulgarian Slavs from the Ottoman yoke, there was a curious lack of trust and an extreme caution used when dealing with these allies. Romania, on paper, still belonged to the Ottomans but it had become clear once Russia had concluded the pact with Prince Charles in early April of 1877 that Romania was hoping to declare independence when Russian troops

101 Report of October 29, 1877 from Lt. Col Maitland to Lord Derby, WO 106/2.

102 Richard T. Trenk, Sr., “The Plevna Delay: Winchesters and Peabody-Martins in the Russo-Turkish War.”

103 Frederick William von Herbert, *The Defence of Plevna, 1877*, p.25.

were securely on its soil. Official Russian circles were divided on what role, if any, the Romanian army should play in the conflict. Russian diplomats, wary of antagonizing Europe did not want to be seen as actively birthing the Romanian nation. There was also mistrust of the Romanian government stemming from the events of the Serbian war against the Ottomans the previous year.¹⁰⁴ Military officials, however, chief among them Grand Duke Nicholas, were actively seeking cooperation from the Romanian army.¹⁰⁵ Romanians too were initially divided on what they wanted their role to be.¹⁰⁶ Prince Charles and Romania's Prime Minister Ion Bratianu had active talks with the Grand Duke and generally were in favor of Romanian military participation. The Romanian Foreign Minister, Mihail Kogalniceanu, was initially reluctant as he was sure any military action on the part of Romania would cause a "prompt Austrian intervention."¹⁰⁷

The fast moving events that followed the Czar's declaration of war seemed to help change Kogalniceanu's mind. On May 8th the Ottoman state declared war on its rebellious subjects and Romania responded in kind a day later, despite Russia's reluctance to have the Romanians join the conflict. On May 21, 1877 Romania would declare itself an independent state, unrecognized by any of the major powers.¹⁰⁸ Kogalniceanu now believed, rightly, that the only hope of safeguarding independent Romania and showing other powers that it would fight to keep its freedom was for the Romanian army to enter the war "to demonstrate the

104 Russian volunteers, along with war and medical supplies, had been allowed to pass through Romania en route to join the Serb cause. Russia's Foreign Ministry believed the Romanians interfered with the quick delivery of ammunition and medicine and was wary of any cooperation between the two governments in the future. See B. H. Sumner, *Russia and the Balkans 1870-1880*, p.292.

105 Sumner, p. 300.

106 Radu Rosetti gives the three main options that were then debated in Romanian society as being to declare neutrality, to make an alliance with Russia but to remain out of any fighting, or to actively participate in war. See R. Rosetti, "Roumania's Share in the War of 1877," *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol.8. No.24 (March, 1930)p. 550.

107 Sumner, p.300.

108 Sumner, p. 301.

impossibility of a return to the status quo ante bellum.”¹⁰⁹

With what did Romania have to fight a war with? In February 1877, Lieutenant Colonel Mansfield, the British military attaché in Bucharest had reported that there had been a plan in place to reduce Romania's military strength to 10,000 men.¹¹⁰ This plan had been interrupted by the impending war. Romania's army on the eve of war consisted of the standing army, consisting of infantry, cavalry and artillery units, territorial units of infantry and cavalry, and inactive militia units that could be called upon if needed.¹¹¹ A British War Office estimate of the strength of Romania's army in 1877 gives the strength of the whole of the Romanian military as 110,310 men and 108 guns.¹¹² The standing army units were equipped mostly with an 1868 model of the Peabody-Martini breech loader. Some regular troops as well as most of the territorial units were equipped with the Russian Krenk, while the militia was given the older 1862 model Prussian Dreyse carbines.¹¹³ The artillery was outfitted with a variety of Krupp steel and bronze guns, with militia artillery having French designed bronze pieces.¹¹⁴ The Romanian engineers, though small in numbers were well trained and the British Major Gonne of the 17th Lancers who observed Romanian troops believed the Romanians had “every right to assume a proud bearing when side by side with the Czar's soldiers.”¹¹⁵ Despite the Romanians

109 Quoted in Florin Constantiniu, “Military and Political Factors in Romania's War of Independence,” in *War and Society in East Central Europe Vol. XVII: Insurrections, Wars, and the Eastern Crisis in the 1870's*, p.202.

110 Report of February 19, 1877 from Lt. Col. Mansfield to War Office in WO 106/1.

111 Ilie Ceausescu, “The Romanian Army in the War of Independence: Organization, Command, Strategy” in *War and Society in East Central Europe Vol. XVII: Insurrections, Wars, and the Eastern Crisis in the 1870's*, p.215.

112 War Office Report in WO 106/1. The complete breakdown is as follows: the standing army had 29,012 infantry and 6,356 cavalry while the territorial and militia units added another 74,942 men in all branches.

113 Mihail E. Ionescu, “The Equipment, Logistics, and the Performance of the Romanian Army in the War of Independence, 1877-78,” in *War and Society in East Central Europe Vol. XVII: Insurrections, Wars, and the Eastern Crisis in the 1870's*, p. 230.

114 Ionescu, p.230.

115 Report of October 23, 1877 from Maj. Gonne to the War Office in WO 106/1. This view was not shared by the correspondent of the *Standard*, Frederick Boyle, who found the Romanian army no better than militia and believed the thought of them pursuing any independent action “absurd.” See July 2, 1877 edition of the

readiness they were untested in warfare and it was ultimately left to the Czar and Grand Duke Nicholas, as well as the unfolding events of the war, as to if and when this army would be used.

B. The Bulgarian Legion

The liberation of Bulgaria after the cruelties committed on some of her Christian population by irregular troops in the Ottoman service had been the goal set by the Pan-Slav element within Russia and was ultimately one of the major causes of the war. Despite this, there was reluctance by the Russian political and military leaders to take the Bulgarians into service. This was partly because the Russians were never quite sure what to do with Bulgaria and her people after it had been liberated. Was it to become an independent kingdom or a republic? Who would lead it and would they be amenable to Russian interest? Would problems would an independent Bulgaria cause for Russia within Europe? The Bulgarians had demonstrated that they bore no love for the Ottoman Sultan but it was not clear if they would welcome the Czar in his place. Valentine Baker even went as far as to suggest that had Christian Bulgarians been allowed to serve in the Ottoman ranks they would have fought “faithfully” against the Russians!¹¹⁶ Some foreign observers believed the Bulgarians the last people who would want any sort of upheaval to occur in their land. Colonel James Baker (not to be confused with Baker Pasha) had been sent by the British government to report on Bulgaria's situation as early as 1874. He found “smiling fields, well filled schools, an orderly and laborious population,

Standard in 106/6.

¹¹⁶ Valentine Baker, *War in Bulgaria: A Narrative of Personal Experiences*, Vol. II., p. 327. This claim may at first seem absurd but a similar sentiment was expressed by the Prussian Pfeil-Burghausz who, while serving with the Russian army, noted that the Bulgarians had no great love for the Russians and if the latter had been beaten he believed many Bulgarians would have joined with the Ottomans (out of opportunism perhaps) in driving out their supposed liberators. See Richard Graf von Pfeil-Burghausz, *Experiences of a Prussian Officer*, p. 79.

general industrial activity, and very friendly relations between Moslem and Christian.”¹¹⁷ Though the Ottomans might worry about rebellion elsewhere, Baker found no reason to believe that “a few crack-brained young Christians”¹¹⁸ would be able to raise the population in Bulgaria against the Sultan.

Despite Baker's assessment, a revolutionary movement among Bulgaria's Christian population had been growing in influence since the 1860's. The aim of this movement was ultimately to see an independent Bulgaria created by a revolution of the middle class.¹¹⁹ From this movement sprang the unsuccessful uprisings in 1875 and 1876 against Ottoman rule. When it became clear that Russia would wage war against the Ottomans, Bulgarian revolutionary leaders suggested the formation of an independent volunteer military unit of Bulgarians to fight alongside the Russians would help raise the country in revolution. This was precisely what the Czar did not want. Alexander could not be seen to be actively encouraging a revolutionary movement of Slavs because it might help to strengthen the cause of like minded groups within Russia itself. Likewise a revolutionary movement supported by a great power might be viewed with hostility by other European states.¹²⁰

These concerns did not stop the creation of a Bulgarian Legion to serve with the Russian army but they did severely limit the size and role played by it. The first volunteers accepted were those who had been exiled in Romania and Russia, making them less likely to be members of revolutionary movement inside Bulgaria itself.¹²¹ These men, known as the

117 Report of Col. James Baker from 1874 republished in the May 8, 1877 edition of the *Globe*. WO 106/5.

118 Report of Col. James Baker,. WO 106/5.

119 Doyno Doinov, “The Participation of the Bulgarian Volunteer Force in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78,” in *War and Society in East Central Europe Vol. XVII: Insurrections, Wars, and the Eastern Crisis in the 1870's*, p.172.

120 There was also a possibility that any encouragement by Russia toward a particular movement in Bulgaria would give ideas to revolutionary groups in Poland about finding a European sponsor for their goals.

121 Doyno Doinov, “The Participation of the Bulgarian Volunteer Force in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78,” p.175

opalchensti (volunteers) were assembled in Samara, Russia. They were formed into six rifle battalions, issued with the Berdan rifle and began training in Romania.¹²² The Bulgarians were not permitted to have their own officers and all officers were Russians seconded from the regular army.¹²³ The formation of this unit was completed by early May, 1877 and it was able to join the Army of the South before the crossing of the Danube.¹²⁴

These then were the armies, political considerations and military strategies that were to meet in late April of 1877. For Russia the chance to liberate fellow Slavs and to achieve the great goal of three centuries of Russian dreaming, the conquest of Constantinople. For the Ottomans, a last chance to defend their Balkan possessions and to deny an old enemy the spoils of war. For Romanians and Bulgarians, a chance for complete independence, though the British journalist and war correspondent Francis Stanley found it hard to believe either people worth fighting for. "Europe ," he wrote, "is about to plunge into a war- some one hundred million of beings are to have their interests jeopardised [sic]- in order to settle the limits of four millions of degenerate yellow skinned people..."¹²⁵ The powder keg of the Balkans was set to go off and embroil two empires in conflict, not only in Europe but also in Asia, a conflict whose events would be witnessed and recorded by a number of men who would spread the events around the world.

122 Ian Drury, *The Russo-Turkish War 1877*, p.47. The total strength of this force is officially given as 7,440 men by Doyno Doinov in "The Participation of the Bulgarian Volunteer Force in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78," pp. 174-176.

123 Drury, p.47. The Bulgarians had petitioned the Czar to serve under their own officers but this was refused by Alexander because he did not want to create anything that resembled an independent Bulgarian army.

124 Sir Frederick Maurice, *The Russo-Turkish War, 1877*, p. 25. The Russians originally intended for the Bulgarians to be used for security activities and not for front line duty. See Doyno Doinov, "The Participation of the Bulgarian Volunteer Force in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78," p. 173.

125 Francis Stanley, *St. Petersburg to Plevna* (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1878) p. 131. Stanley would witness the opening of the war and the battles around Plevna from the Russian side as special correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian* and the Russian *Goloss*.

Chapter 3. Observations on the Campaign in Asia

Arm and prepare to acquit yourselves like men, for the time of your ordeal is at hand.

-Field Marshal Earl Roberts¹²⁶

The campaign in Ottoman Armenia, though secondary in the plans of Ottoman and Russian strategists alike, was the first to begin. While Russia's army in the Balkans was held back from crossing the Danube into Bulgaria for nearly two months,¹²⁷ all four columns of Grand Duke Michael's army crossed the frontier into Ottoman territory the very day the Czar released his declaration of war.¹²⁸ Unlike in the Balkans, where a multitude of foreign correspondents and officials from a variety of nations reported from both sides, the campaign in Armenia was largely written about and commented on by British subjects who were either serving as consular offices in the larger cities or were military observers and war correspondents with Ottoman troops.

It is important to know something of these men (as it will be with those observing in the Balkans) before an examination of their observations on the campaign can be commenced. The most informative accounts of the war in Ottoman Armenia come from the journals of two British correspondents (many of the correspondents working for British publications in the Balkans were in fact Americans, though this was not the case in Armenia) and from the reports of the British consul at Erzeroum, as well as from reports of the "special" British military attaches assigned to the campaign.¹²⁹ The most partisan of these accounts comes from Charles Williams, a special correspondent for the *Standard* who was attached to Moukhtar Pasha's

126 Peter G. Tsouras, editor, *The Book of Military Quotations*, p.263.

127 The reasons for this will be explored in the next chapter of this work.

128 April 24, 1877.

129 The official British military attaché to the Ottoman empire was Lt. Col. William Lennox, but as he spent the war in Constantinople, other British officers were detailed to act as attaches with the main Ottoman armies in the Balkans and Armenia. Reports from the Armenian based correspondents of the *Daily News* are also vital for this study though I was unable to identify either by name.

headquarters and so was present on the front lines for much of the campaign. Williams states openly in the introduction to his published diary of the war that he makes no pretense “at an impartiality,”¹³⁰ and though not personally hostile to the Russians was sympathetic to the Ottoman cause.¹³¹ His views at times disagreed with those of his colleague, Charles Boswell (C.B.) Norman, who as the special correspondent for *The Times* witnessed or had access to reports of many of the same events. Norman came to Armenia, as had Williams, with the idea that “Turkish misrule and Turkish mal-administration[sic] had been greatly exaggerated.”¹³² His mind was soon changed however by what he witnessed and though he found Russian aggression “indefensible on every ground,” believed that if a Russian victory resulted in a collapse of the Ottoman government the Czar would “deserve as much credit for the invasion of Turkey as for the emancipation of the serf.”¹³³ In the works and opinions of these two correspondents one is tempted to see a microcosm of the debate then occurring in British society, with Williams representing the conservative side and Norman the liberal, Gladstonian view.

James Zohrab,¹³⁴ British consul in Erzeroum, sent detailed reports throughout the campaigns later days to the Foreign Office in London. Zohrab, though most probably in

130 Charles Williams, *The Armenian Campaign*, p. viii. The *Standard* was known to be pro-Ottoman in its sympathies. See Rupert Furneaux, *The Breakfast War*, p. 16.

131 His sympathies had more to do with his having been in the field with Ottoman soldiers and of having been endeared previously to, in his words “that portion [of the Ottoman state] that has entered upon the path to culture” than to any real love for the Ottoman government. See Charles Williams, *The Armenian Campaign*, p.ix.

132 C. B. Norman, *Armenia and the Campaign of 1877*, 2nd edition (London, Paris and New York: Cassell, Petter and Galpin, 1878) p. vii. It is not clear if Norman means Ottoman misrule specifically in Armenia or in general.

133 Norman, p. ix. Williams believed that the Russian invasion was merely postponing much needed reforms within the Ottoman system. See Charles Williams, *The Armenian Campaign*, p.ix.

134 His surname and a description from Dr. Charles Ryan, a British medical officer serving with the Ottomans, that “he was to all intents and purposes an Englishman, and had an English wife...,” suggest that Zohrab might have not been of pure English stock. See Sir Charles Snodgrass Ryan, *Under the Red Crescent; Adventures of an English Surgeon with the Turkish Army at Plevna and Erzeroum 1877-1878*. (London: J. Murray, 1897), p.326.

personal sympathy with the Ottomans, kept his correspondence professional. He was intimately acquainted with the region and had been present at the siege of Kars in 1855 by Russian forces during the Crimean War.¹³⁵ Throughout the Russo-Turkish war his reports took the form of hand written and signed letters addressed to Lord Derby. This was because he was not permitted to send telegraphs to Constantinople (presumably to the British Ambassador, Austen Layard) that contained any war news.¹³⁶

Also in Armenia was British military hero, General Sir Arnold Kemball, a thirty year veteran of the Indian army who was acting as Her Majesty's Official Commissioner with the Ottoman army and his official reports were used extensively by Norman. Though Britain had not officially come to the aid of the Sultan, it was clear by the amount of British officers and officials in close proximity to Ottoman forces that the British government, in particular the Queen, wanted to be kept fully and accurately up to date with events of the war.¹³⁷ Kemball had been the British Consul General in Baghdad for thirteen years previously and was fluent in Persian, Arabic, and Turkish.¹³⁸ With Kemball were his aide, Lieutenant Maitland Dougall of the Royal Navy and three other officers with official positions, Captain Harry Trotter of the

135 Mentioned in a December 22, 1876 report from Zohrab to Lord Derby , WO 106/1. In that same report Zohrab offers his opinion that if a new war were to break out, Kars would be “useless” for the Russians to conquer as they could just as easily mask it and advance into the province.

136 This was by order of Moukhtar Pasha and it even included news about Ottoman victories. Report of November 10, 1877 from Zohrab to Lord Derby, WO 106/2.

137 Queen Victoria was so upset by the initial inaction of her parliament in the face of what she felt was naked Russian aggression that she threatened to “lay down her crown” if Russia was allowed to have its way against the Ottomans. Quoted in Virginia Cowles, *The Russian Dagger*, p. 101.

138 C. B. Norman, *Armenia and the Campaign of 1877*, p. 148. Norman states that though no one could have been more qualified to advise the Ottomans, Kemball did not because he was there only to watch and report. Though he might have been officially a “neutral” observer it hardly seems credible that he would not have offered advice if sought out by Ottoman commanders. His very presence seemed to be an unnerving provocation to the Russians and both Norman and Williams speak of sources that informed them the Russians had offered rewards for any Englishmen taken with the Ottomans. Norman heard the sum of 2,000 rubles would be paid for a dead British officer while Williams was informed that the bounty was for the capture of any Englishmen, be they an officer or correspondent. These were reported as rumors, albeit from a variety of different sources, which led both men to believe there might have been some truth in them. See C. B. Norman, p.149 and Charles Williams, *The Armenian Campaign*, p.85.

Royal Engineers, who was one of the extra military attaches and Captain E.C.H. Clarke and W.A.H. Hare (a lieutenant), there to assemble preliminary reports for the British cabinet.¹³⁹

3.1 View of the Soldiers

The descriptions of the soldiers who fought the campaign, both Ottoman and Russian, left by these observers give a glimpse into the more personal, social aspect of the war. Ottoman soldiers in Armenia were described by Williams as not being able to keep any sort of formation while marching and of being “dirty almost to man,”¹⁴⁰ in addition to having no real uniformity of clothing except for the fez. Furthermore because of the complex organizational system, the men of one battalion in a regiment were often times armed with a completely different rifle than the other battalions. This caused even more strain on the wholly inadequate supply system employed by the Ottoman army in the Caucasus.¹⁴¹ Williams recalled a conversation with an Ottoman non-commissioned officer (N.C.O.) and his men who were escorting a wagon of Snider ammunition to the front. The N.C.O. and his men, however, were themselves armed with the Peabody-Martini and told Williams that they did not have a single Martini cartridge among them.¹⁴²

Medical services were appalling and as late as September 1877 there was not a single Ottoman hospital or doctor in Ismail Pasha's army near Bayazid.¹⁴³ Ottoman wounded were

139 It is clear that both Britain and the United States were hoping to learn some of the same things from this war as a majority of the official military attaches and observers from both countries were officers of engineers.

140 Charles Williams, *The Armenian Campaign*, p.14.

141 A correspondent from the *Daily News* gave the description of the main Ottoman field army's entire supply network as “A few mules and shaky carts of the locality [which] convey to the front the commissariat and ammunition stores, and are miserably inadequate to the demands upon them.” See Archibald Forbes, J.A. MacGahan, et. al., *The War Correspondence of the “Daily News,”* Vol.I. p.103.

142 Charles Williams, *The Armenian Campaign*, p.16.

143 C. B. Norman, *Armenia and the Campaign of 1877*, p.323.

sent all the way back to Erzeroum where they were sometimes still ignored.¹⁴⁴ There were not enough regimental officers with experience of commanding troops and those that were available were often uneducated in tactical affairs while the majority of staff officers were described as “ignorant” by Norman.¹⁴⁵ The irregular Circassian and Kurdish troops, both officers and men, were almost universally condemned as being almost without battlefield value. The *Daily News* correspondent believed them a “lawless set of men, who deem the property of friend or foe equally welcome booty.”¹⁴⁶ There was also a “Polish Legion” serving with Ottoman forces which consisted of approximately 40 men, though “no pay, short rations of bread and meat, and total abstinence from all spirits,” seemed to have dampened their ardor for the Ottoman cause.¹⁴⁷

The Russians beginning the campaign were generally assumed to have better training, better supplies, better officers and better morale.¹⁴⁸ Most of the infantry were made up of young peasants from Russian ethnic stock, as all non-Cossack units of the Caucasian army were recruited from Russia proper.¹⁴⁹ Though they were much more disciplined on the march than the Ottoman soldiers, there was little enthusiasm among the rank and file for the war. The

144 Norman relates the tale of two English doctors in Erzeroum, Casson and Featherstonhaugh who, in company with Consul Zohrab, toured an Ottoman military hospital to find men whose wounds had not been treated for weeks and many who had developed gangrene due to lack of care. When the doctors approached the chief Ottoman medical officer for permission to operate (amputate) on eight of the worst cases before the men succumbed and died, the doctors were told “Better that they should die than that they should become burdens on the Sultan as pensioners.” The doctors, outraged, threatened to leave and it was only when Consul Zohrab threatened to report the medical officer through official channels that the British surgeons were allowed to operate. See C. B. Norman, *Armenia and the Campaign of 1877*, p. 324. Stories of Ottoman officialdom's seeming ineptitude and callousness towards its own people were what helped to turn Norman against the Ottoman government.

145 Norman, p.viii.

146 Archibald Forbes, J.A. MacGahan, et. al., *The War Correspondence of the “Daily News,”* Vol.I. p.105.

147 C. B. Norman, *Armenia and the Campaign of 1877*, p.238. It is unclear if these men were ever actually used in battle.

148 C. B. Norman, *Armenia and the Campaign of 1877*, p. x.

149 Report by E.C.H. Clarke in WO 33/31.

infantry were “encouraged” (i.e. ordered) to enter towns singing songs.¹⁵⁰ Though the Russian medical and commissariat were, as a rule, more efficient than their Ottoman counterparts, the supply of ammunition and the condition of Russian infantry weapons was surprisingly bad. Despite being issued with the Berdan, it seems that many Russian soldiers were inexperienced or untrained in maintaining their weapons, and a young Russian prisoner examined by Williams had a weapon that “carried several defects,” and was missing the back firing sight.¹⁵¹

The Cossacks and regular cavalry, of which there were both Muslim and Christian, were judged by Norman to be only an even match with the Ottoman irregular cavalry while he believed Britain's Indian irregulars would have been able to “walk round them,” at any time.¹⁵² The *Daily Telegraph*, so pro Ottoman that it had been nicknamed the “Daily Turkophil,”¹⁵³ ran an editorial on May 14th, declaring Ottoman Circassian horsemen to be “far wilder, far bolder, far better than the Cossacks of the Don.”¹⁵⁴ The Russians would hold a huge superiority of cavalry over the Ottomans throughout the campaign and their inability to capitalize on this reflects poorly on Russian leadership. Norman held the Russian army's performance and quality in the lowest regard. After having observed the better part of the campaign and writing as a tried and true Englishman, he believed that all previous reports about Russian military capability had been “exaggerated” and that if a war were to break out between the Czar's forces and Britain, Russia would “emerge a crippled and third-rate Power.”¹⁵⁵

150 W.A.H. Hare, Report on Russo-Turkish War in Asia in FO 881/3702.

151 Charles Williams, *The Armenian Campaign*, p.87. This prisoner also informed his Ottoman captors that many of his fellow soldiers were carrying worn out guns of an old pattern that were not of much use.

152 C. B. Norman, *Armenia and the Campaign of 1877*, p.

153 Rupert Furneaux, *The Breakfast War*, p. 146.

154 Daily Telegraph edition of May 14th 1877 in WO 106/5.

155 Norman, pp. x-xi.

3.2. Phase I: April 24, 1877-July 10, 1877¹⁵⁶

The quick thrust campaign and disorganized Ottoman defense that Russian planners had hoped for in the Balkans instead occurred, at least initially, in Armenia. Before any of the correspondents had reached even Trebizond on the Black Sea,¹⁵⁷ the Russian army achieved its first real success. As per the invasion plans, all four Russian columns crossed the border immediately the Czar's declaration was announced. Finding little resistance, the men of Lt. General Tergukassof's column had pushed toward their objective of Bayazid to arrive outside its walls by April 30th. It was supposed that this column had passed through Persian territory to arrive so quickly and almost undetected but it must be remembered that Moukhtar Pasha's lack of cavalry had left him almost completely blind as to Russian movements.¹⁵⁸

However he had gotten there, Tergukassof, perhaps out of some chivalric notion, sent a flag of truce into the town and offered to let the garrison march out unmolested if they turned the city over to him immediately. If this was not done he would storm the place and his troops would show no quarter.¹⁵⁹ The Ottoman commander, whose garrison consisted of some 1,700 men, readily agreed and marched out on May 1, 1877 retiring toward Vans. Tergukassof left a small garrison inside Bayazid and turned west with his main force, hoping to link up with the

156 F.V. Greene breaks the war down into "three distinct portions" covering the 45 week period from the Czar's declaration of war to the Treaty of San Stefano. Though his division is used for the war in the Balkans, I have found it prudent to divide the campaign in Armenia along similar divisions into two phases. See F.V. Greene, *Report on the Russian Army*, p.145.

157 Norman did not even leave London until April 30th. See C. B. Norman, *Armenia and the Campaign of 1877*, p.1.

158 Norman suggests the use of a Persian route in *Armenia and the Campaign of 1877*, p.62. Norman, not in Armenia at the time, was influenced no doubt by reports that Persia had been buying Russian arms and was supposedly under Russian influence. See W.A.H. Hare's Report on Russo-Turkish War in Asia in FO 881/3702.

159 Report from General Sir A. Kemball related in C.B. Norman, *Armenia and the Campaign of 1877*, p. 63. It seems to have been the policy of the Russian armies in Asia to only take as prisoners men of the *Nizamiye*. Troops of the local *Redif* or other militia units were "immediately released and allowed to return to their homes" according to the correspondent of the *Daily News*. See Archibald Forbes, J.A. MacGahan, et. al., *The War Correspondence of the "Daily News,"* Vol.I. p. 100.

Russian column marching on Kars.

Meanwhile, Lt. General Loris-Melikoff's column had scattered the few Ottoman pickets it had encountered and had established itself some ten miles from the fortress of Kars by April 28th. Moukhtar Pasha, supposing the Russian column advancing on Kars to be their main army, fell back that same day with his main army, leaving a garrison of 17,000 men under Hussein Pasha inside Kars's citadel.¹⁶⁰ While this was happening Lt. General Devel's Akhaltysk Column had arrived at its objective of Ardahan and settled in for a siege. On the 8th of May a Cossack patrol captured an Ottoman messenger from Ardahan outside of Kars. The messenger carried information about the weak state of Ardahan's defenses.¹⁶¹ Loris-Melikoff, seeing a chance to capture another of the Ottoman fortresses, detailed a detachment of his force under Lt. General Heimann to join Devel's column outside Ardahan. Loris-Melikoff himself arrived to take command of the assault on Ardahan. A terrific artillery bombardment throughout May 16 and 17th culminated in the storming of the town by Russian infantry on the latter date.¹⁶² With Ardahan thus taken, Loris Melikoff garrisoned the town and joined by Devel's forces made his way back to see to the siege of Kars.

The Rion detachment, under Lt. General Oklobjio, was the only column that met with no success. The defenses of Batoum were found to be too strong to assault. The Ottoman navy and army, working in tandem,¹⁶³ sailed a force of four ironclads and four transport ships with 10,000 men to make landing in Russian Abkhazia. This force also carried some 50,000 rifles to

160 Moukhtar Pasha's strategic retreat was taken as cowardice by the women of Kars, a delegation of whom had urged him to take the field and defeat the Russian army outside the town. See Charles Williams, *The Armenian Campaign*, p.6.

161 F. V. Greene, *Report on the Russian Army*, p. 381.

162 Charles Williams, *The Armenian Campaign*, p.8. The Pasha in command of Ardahan, Hassan Sabri, was said to be utterly corrupt and if Williams is to be believed, also a traitor.

163 A much better relationship seems to have existed between the two in the eastern Black Sea than on the western and the Danube.

distribute to the local Muslim population in hopes of raising them in revolt.¹⁶⁴ This is precisely what happened and the Black Sea coast saw armed rebellion break out. Oklobjio was forced give up any idea of taking Batoum and retreated back into Russia to deal with the insurrections.¹⁶⁵ This task would take him and his column the better part of the war and once they were ready to advance on Batoum again, winter had begun. The Ottomans had succeeded in knocking one Russian column effectively out of the war as Greene points out that the Rion column “had no influence whatever on the campaign.”¹⁶⁶

Loris-Melikoff's enlarged army had settled in to besiege Kars by May 25th. Russian frontal assaults against the town were repulsed in May and June while other Russian forces captured the town of Olti between Ardahan and the provincial capital at Erzeroum. Moukhtar Pasha continued to give ground, though he was busy in assembling as many troops as he could from the local population. His army was ill supplied and had insufficient food,¹⁶⁷ and Moukhtar's strategy of withdrawal had demoralized the men. Norman, having arrived in Erzeroum on May 19th reported that upwards of 1200 men had deserted from the army in one week.¹⁶⁸ The Ottoman rank and file, disgusted by what they saw as the cowardice of their officers were often in states of open mutiny and in one documented case a soldier attacked a high ranking officer with a bayonet out of the “frustration” of not being able to fight the Russians.¹⁶⁹ By the 16th of June the Russians had seemingly succeeded in fortifying the pass of Deli-Baba, which would give them an open road to march on Erzeroum but Moukhtar Pasha

164 James J. Reid, *Crisis of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 343.

165 Batoum's commander Dervish Pasha was a Bulgarian Christian by birth that had converted to Islam and had served as War Minister for a time. See Alexander Jacob Schem, *The War in the East*, p. 541.

166 F. V. Greene, *Report on the Russian Army*, p. 387.

167 A correspondent with the Pall Mall Gazette pointed out that even the army's maps had to be copied from Russian ones as the officers were not issued with any from Constantinople. See *Pall Mall Gazette* edition from August 30, 1877 in WO 106/6.

168 C.B. Norman, *Armenia and the Campaign of 1877*, p. 72.

169 Report by E.C.H. Clarke in WO 33/31

launched a successful attack to drive them off.

The success of Moukhtar Pasha could not however, overshadow events which had occurred at Bayazid. The Russian garrison left behind in May at Bayazid, some 2,000 men including 1,200 Cossacks, had been surrounded on June 13th by 10,000 Ottoman troops and thousands of hastily recruited Kurdish irregulars.¹⁷⁰ The regular Russian infantry had retreated into the fortress while the Cossacks were left in the town. The Cossacks, seeing that resistance would have been futile, offered to surrender. This offer was accepted by the Ottoman commander, Faik Pasha. A flag of truce was then sent to the Russian troops in the fortress, who asked for time to decide.. What followed was a massacre perpetrated by the Kurdish irregulars on their Cossack prisoners:

While their [Ottoman] messenger was away the irregular Kurds came up and commenced vilifying some Mahomedans who were among the prisoners. One of these answered sharply, and was immediately cut down. The sight of blood and of unarmed and defenceless [sic] men was sufficient for these scoundrels, who immediately fell on their hapless prisoners, and deliberately massacred three-fourths of them in cold blood;”¹⁷¹

Though Moukhtar Pasha and most regular Ottoman officers were shocked at what happened, it was clear that the lack of discipline among the irregulars was doing more harm to the Ottoman cause abroad than military defeats could.¹⁷² Williams noted with some satisfaction that Moukhtar Pasha had “ordered the ringleaders in the Bayazid affair to be hung.”¹⁷³ Irregular units, undisciplined as they were could not be dispensed with as they provided the “eyes and

170 It seems that Tergukassof's act of chivalry had allowed the former Ottoman garrison to regroup and reinforce beyond Van as well as to recruit Kurds. It was this force that had advanced and encircled the Russians at Bayazid. As for Kurdish numbers, Greene gives them as over 20,000 but Norman's account puts them at 8,000. See F.V. Greene, *Report on the Russian Army*, p. 385 and C.B. Norman, *Armenia and the Campaign of 1877*, p. 220.

171 C.B. Norman, *Armenia and the Campaign of 1877*, p.221. The Kurds also slaughtered most of the Christian inhabitants of the town who they accused of welcoming the Russian invasion. See Archibald Forbes, J.A. MacGahan, et. al., *The War Correspondence of the "Daily News,"* Vol.I., p.335.

172 The Sultan was no doubt aware that the eyes of Europe and the world would be watching the conduct of his soldiers after the massacres in Bulgaria and had issued “the strongest orders of which language was capable” to his armies to prevent any excess behavior. See Archibald Forbes, J.A. MacGahan, et. al., *The War Correspondence of the "Daily News,"* Vol.I., p.277.

173 Charles Williams, *The Armenian Campaign*, p.130.

ears” as it were for Moukhtar Pasha's campaign. This in itself also caused morale problems as it seems the regular troops “hate[d] the Circassians and the Koords[sic], and are equally disliked by them, while the two irregular cavalry forces simply loathe one another.”¹⁷⁴ That this unruly, mutiny prone army was held together at all is great testament to Moukhtar Pasha's organizational, if not battlefield, skills.

The massacre of the Cossacks in the town made the Russians in the Bayazid fortress more determined to hold out and using their cannon to great effect, succeeded in turning back Ottoman assaults until Tergukassof, who had been forced to halt at Deli Baba, could relieve them on July 10th. Tergukassof, his ranks swelled by many fleeing Christian refugees and caught between the former besieging forces and a new force of Ottomans led by Ismail Pasha (who had been dispatched by Moukhtar Pasha with a force of some 11,500 men and was himself a Kurd),¹⁷⁵ abandoned Bayazid and withdrew toward the Russian frontier.

Moukhtar Pasha had established his main army at Zevin, blocking the road from Kars to Bayazid. Loris Melikoff, who had been ineffective in besieging Kars since the end of May, attacked Moukhtar's positions on June 25th.¹⁷⁶ His troops, initially hoping to surprise Ottoman defenses, instead advanced into a well prepared defense line where a “perfect storm of shot and shell” from Ottoman Peabody-Martinis and Krupp cannon met them, causing nearly 2,000 casualties.¹⁷⁷ Loris-Melikoff, left now with insufficient forces and with no hope of a link up with Tergukassof, was forced to lift the siege of Kars and retire towards Alexandropol where he

174 Williams, 130. Williams believed the animosity of Circassians and Kurds to run so deep that when the war was over he would “not be surprised or ill pleased to find a system of mutual extermination in progress; and if the last trace of either race should be the cap of a Tcherkess [Circassian] stuck upon the spear of a Koord [sic], a future Darwin or Owen might be puzzled, but the world in general and Turkey in particular would be all the better for the disappearance.”

175 Archibald Forbes, J.A. MacGahan, et. al., *The War Correspondence of the “Daily News,”* Vol.I p. 336.

176 F.V. Greene, *Report on the Russian Army*, p. 387.

177 L.P. Brockett and Porter C. Bliss, *The Conquest of Turkey: or The Decline and Fall of the Ottoman Empire 1877-8* (Philadelphia: Hubbard Bros. Publishers, 1878). p. 432.

had begun the campaign. By early July, the Russian advance had come to a halt. The skillful withdrawal and movements of Moukhtar Pasha and the revolts in Abkhazia had overextended the Russian lines, and except for holding Ardahan, their position in early July was near exact to what it had been when the war started. News of the Russian retreat had reached the Czar in Bulgaria and he immediately ordered two divisions mobilized for Armenia and two for service with Oklobjio in stamping out any and all revolts in the Black Sea region.¹⁷⁸ On the advice of Miliutin, he also sent General N.N. Obruchev, former head of the Russian Staff Academy, to help in planning the new offensive.¹⁷⁹ Moukhtar Pasha turned down regular reinforcements offered by the Sultan's War Council from the armies in Iraq, believing them more needed in Europe, so that his main reinforcements consisted of "motley squadrons" of irregular cavalry.¹⁸⁰

3.3. Phase II: July 11, 1877-January 31, 1878

From July 11th until mid September, the lines of the two armies had stabilized. As James J. Reid explains Russian and Ottoman forces during this time "played a chess game of cavalry encounters and skirmishes with very little but minor battles being fought."¹⁸¹ The only battle of note in this period was at the plateau of Kizil Tepe, where Ottoman troops succeeded in keeping the Russians from the heights. This battle was witnessed from the Russian side by the correspondent of the *Daily News* who recounted how the war had seemingly become a holy one for both sides. The religious element was most pronounced among the Ottoman soldiers who

178 Greene, p. 387.

179 Bruce W. Menning, *Bayonets Before Bullets*, p. 79.

180 Archibald Forbes, J.A. MacGahan, et. al., *The War Correspondence of the "Daily News,"* Vol.I p.335.

181 James J. Reid, *Crisis of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 346.

were often found alone or in groups observing their prayer rituals.¹⁸² At the battle of Kizil Tepe, the *Daily News* man distinctly saw an imam in flowing robes encouraging advancing Ottoman soldiers and when a Russian artillery shell hit Ottoman ammunition stores, sending carriages and the limbs of horses and men up into the air he saw “joy and satisfaction” on the faces of Russian officers, one of whom made an exultant sign of the cross.¹⁸³

By the end of September the Russian reinforcements dispatched by the Czar had been brought to the front, the rebellions in Abkhazia were slowly dying and Grand Duke Michael arrived from Tiflis to take personal command. While Tergukassof with 22,000 men was left facing Ismail Pasha's 20,000 men north of Bayazid, the main Russian army northeast of Kars now had 50,000 men with which to operate.¹⁸⁴ Opposing them Moukhtar Pasha had some 36,000 men, including the garrison at Kars.¹⁸⁵ Moukhtar Pasha, who had started the campaign with few cavalry and had been forced to take in large amounts of irregular horsemen, now began to see these forces desert *en masse*. The reason for this was due to the notoriously inept supply system and lack of funds that affected all Ottoman armies throughout the war but seemed to be especially felt in the Caucasus. As a Circassian officer explained to C.B. Norman:

We get no pay, we get no rations, we get no grain for our horses, we get no warm clothing for ourselves. How can we fight under these circumstances? We have constantly applied to Mukhtar [Moukhtar] Pasha for some of the arrears of pay due to us, for great-coats, and for blankets for our horses, and to all our appeals we received the answer that it is quite sufficient for a Mahomedan to fight for the Sultan with the hope of receiving a reward in the future world.¹⁸⁶

182 Archibald Forbes, J.A. MacGahan, et. al., *The War Correspondence of the “Daily News,”* Vol.I p. 536.

183 Archibald Forbes, J.A. MacGahan, et. al., p. 342. The Russian artillery, and their accurate use of shrapnel, was given credit for much of the success Russian arms were to have in Armenia by almost all of the correspondents mentioned as well as by Russian and Ottoman commanders themselves. See F.V. Greene, *Report on the Russian Army*, p. 394.

184 Bruce W. Menning, *Bayonets Before Bullets*, p. 79.

185 F.V. Greene, *Report on the Russian Army*, p. 390. This included the garrison of Kars.

186 C.B. Norman, *Armenia and the Campaign of 1877*, p.352. By contrast Williams had conversations with officers and men in some *Nizamiye* units who likewise had not been paid but who were still eager to drive out the invaders. Some of the higher ranking officers, according to Williams, had not been paid in 47 months! See Charles Williams, *The Armenian Campaign*, p. 137.

Faced with a renewed Russian force, this was a most inopportune time for Moukhtar Pasha to start losing men and may account for the lack of movement on behalf of the Ottoman armies in September for not only did Moukhtar not advance, his subordinate, Ismail Pasha made no moves to dislodge Tergukassof apart from some daily skirmishing.¹⁸⁷ Tergukassof, in his turn it must be said, did very little to dislodge Ismail. It is probable that Tergukassof was simply trying to hold Ismail Pasha's force where it was, lest it attempt to join with main Ottoman army around Kars.

The new plan devised by Obruchev was to seek out and destroy the bulk of the Ottoman army in the field, which would enable Kars to be completely cut off and easier to subdue. This new Russian advance began in late September, the army moving forward by night to help cover their movements. By October 2nd Russian troops under Lt. Generals Roop and Heimann had made contact with Moukhtar's main force and were fought to a standstill throughout the next two days. It was after these battles that Moukhtar made a strategical blunder that would lead to the destruction of his army as a viable field force.

The Armenian landscape is dominated by high mountains and low valleys and harsh winters were known to occur that could potentially wreak havoc with even the best laid plans of armies. Snow had already begun to fall by October 5th,¹⁸⁸ and Moukhtar Pasha took this as a sign that winter was setting in and that the Russian attacks on the first days of October were the end of the campaign season. To shorten his lines he withdrew his army from the heights of Great Yahni, Kizil Tepe, and Uch Tepe throughout October 8 and 9th and fell back to fortified

187 Norman disdained Ismail Pasha as a commander saying that he seemed to be "of opinion that a knowledge of strategy is valueless to a general who has the Koran at his fingers' ends..." See C.B. Norman, *Armenia and the Campaign of 1877*, p. 355. Williams too found the lack of movement by Ismail Pasha puzzling as he believed there "was really no excuse [...] for not making a stroke at Erivan." See Charles Williams, *The Armenian Campaign*, p. 280.

188 Williams was complaining about "bitterly cold weather" already on August 22 and noted that the mountains were "beginning to receive their winter coatings of snow." See Charles Williams, *The Armenian Campaign*, p. 228.

positions around the heights of Aladja Dagħ. He also sent orders to Ismail Pasha to bring his army to join him.¹⁸⁹

Moukhtar had underestimated the Russians. Grand Duke Michael and Loris-Melikoff had no intention of ending for the winter. Russian armies were tied up in front of Plevna in the Balkans and the army desperately needed a victory. Aware that Ismail Pasha was making ready to march to join Moukhtar's army, Obruchev designed a plan for the main Russian force to demonstrate against the heights of Aladja Dagħ and to send a 15,000 strong force of infantry under Lieutenant-General Lazareff completely around the Ottoman right flank to come upon Moukhtar's army from the rear. In the event, Lazareff's column ended up making a complete circuit of the Ottoman army, scattering a belated effort by Moukhtar Pasha to slow its advance, so that it had found itself in the early hours of October 15th "*in rear of the left flank of the Turks.*"¹⁹⁰

After informing the Grand Duke of his new position through the telegraph wires he had had his men lay behind his column, Lazareff was told that the Russian assault would take place later that same morning. The assault duly commenced after a fearful Russian artillery barrage the Russian assaulted with infantry and were beaten back with great gallantry time and time again. Lazareff's column began advancing against the Ottoman rear around 2:30 in the afternoon.¹⁹¹ This caused confusion at Moukhtar Pasha's headquarters and while trying to assemble a force to hold off Lazareff, he learned that the Russians had taken the vital hill of Olya Tepe. The battalions sent to relieve the Ottoman defenders on the hill were instead faced with a hail of fire from the Russian troops coming up from the other side and "were seized

189 F.V. Greene, *Report on the Russian Army*, p. 391.

190 Greene, p. 393. Italics in original.

191 James J. Reid, *Crisis of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 348.

with a sudden panic,”¹⁹² which sent them fleeing back down the hill. The sight of the Russians on Olya Tepe caused the main Ottoman force on Aladja Dagħ (who had been under continuous artillery bombardment) to lose heart and they turned into a disorganized mob whose only goal seems to have been to get to the relative safety of Kars. Moukhtar Pasha tried in vain to stop this route and only succeed in rallying a few men with whom he made an orderly withdrawal to Kars.

The fighting had been terrible and the correspondent of the *Daily News* saw the carnage inflicted from Russian artillery and rifle fire on Ottoman defenders:

The dead were almost all shot through the head, because the remaining parts of their bodies had been sheltered by the parapets. Here they lay as they fell, on their backs or faces, side by side, or one above the other. A negro with grinning teeth hung across a white soldier, and his long arms stretched out over the rocky abyss. Some preserved the ferocious expression which they had borne when still alive, and lay with clenched fists and distorted limbs; others, calm and quiet looked like stone.¹⁹³

Moukhtar Pasha's army had been decimated and of his original 35,000 men, 4-5,000 had been killed or wounded, 7,000 made prisoner and 1-2,000 had fled and remained separated from the force that had managed to fall back on Kars.¹⁹⁴ The Russians, with a loss of just over 2,000 killed and wounded had managed to completely rout the main Ottoman force and capture much of its guns, ammunition and what little supplies it had left.

Moukhtar Pasha managed to rally around 13,000 men and leaving 10,000 of them to defend Kars, he retreated to defend Erzeroum from the Russian advance. A Russian force was sent in the direction of Erzeroum under General Heimann. This force was able to scatter Moukhtar Pasha's hastily assembled army and was building redoubts outside its walls by November 7th.¹⁹⁵ Consul Zohrab wrote to his government the following day that the garrison in

192 C.B. Norman, *Armenia and the Campaign of 1877*, p.386.

193 Archibald Forbes, J.A. MacGahan, et. al., *The War Correspondence of the "Daily News,"* Vol.I p. 550.

194 These are the Ottoman's own estimates as quoted in F.V. Greene, *Report on the Russian Army*, p.396.

195 James J. Reid, *Crisis of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 351.

Erzeroum had only about 10,000 men “that [could] be depended upon to face the enemy” and that harsh measures were being used to deal with desertions.¹⁹⁶ Despite this the Russians seemed to be in no hurry to attack. The main assault on the Erzeroum forts on November 11th saw Russian forces actually infiltrate some of the defenses before being beaten back. A Captain Mehmet Pasha informed Zohrab that the Russians had managed to surprise the garrison by wearing the fez and not the usual Russian cap but Zohrab could find no evidence of fezzes on any of the Russian prisoners he saw.¹⁹⁷

Bad weather now hampered any further Russian efforts around Erzeroum. The town itself had enough wheat to withstand a prolonged siege but most of the mills lay outside the town, where according to Zohrab, the Muslim population was kindly treated by the encamped Russians and in many cases drove a “brisk trade” with Russian soldiers in bread, barley and hay.¹⁹⁸ The Russians contented themselves with constructing siege works around the town as the outcome seemed no longer in doubt. The superiority of Russian men and guns would see the city fall. The three feet of snow that fell on November 25th put an end to all Russian plans and gave a respite to the defenders of Erzeroum.¹⁹⁹ The city would remain in Ottoman hands under a state of more or less inactive siege until the armistice of January 31, 1878.

The main Russian attention during November was concentrated on the taking of Kars. Loris-Melikoff knew that Kars's defenses were formidable at that an assault by daylight on any of the forts would result in enormous losses.²⁰⁰ An “iron ring” was placed around the city by the first of November and the Russians stopped anyone trying to make it in or out of the city.²⁰¹ It

196 Report of November 8, 1877 from Zohrab to Lord Derby, WO 106/2.

197 Report of November 11, 1877 from Zohrab to Lord Derby, WO 106/2.

198 Report of November 16, 1877 from Zohrab to Lord Derby, WO 106/2.

199 Charles Williams, *The Armenian Campaign*, p. 353.

200 F.V. Greene, *Report on the Russian Army*, p. 404.

201 Archibald Forbes, J.A. MacGahan, et. al., *The War Correspondence of the “Daily News,”* Vol.I p.622.

was therefore decided to assault Kars at night when the moon would be “all night above the horizon” so there would be less danger of Russian troops making a mistake.²⁰² The attack was slated for the night of the 17th of November and was kept secret until the very last minute. Not even the customary artillery bombardment was used so as not to alert the Ottomans of possible Russian movements. The Russian assault columns carried the five forts ringing the city while diversionary attacks were made against the city's southwest side. The shock of the Russian attack took the Ottomans by almost complete surprise and the city and forts were all carried in open assault.²⁰³ The Grand Duke made a triumphal entry into the city on November 19th and inspected the victorious men of his army who had been drawn up in parade for the occasion.²⁰⁴ The Russians had lost just over 2,000 men while inflicting some 7,000 casualties on the Ottomans, taking 17,000 prisoners, as well as “an immense quantity of provisions and material of all kinds.”²⁰⁵

With the taking of Kars and the investment of Erzeroum, the war in Asia would assume a stagnant state for the next two months. With winter fully set in and Erzeroum and Batoum still in Ottoman hands, both armies were content to wait for spring, though the Russians hoped to influence the Armenians in Erzeroum to fling open the gates for them,²⁰⁶ The war in Europe continued to seesaw back and forth. The Russian breakthrough at Plevna in December changed the complexion of the war and the when the two sides agreed to an armistice to discuss peace

202 From Grand Duke Michael's own report quoted in F.V. Greene, *Report on the Russian Army*, p. 404.

203 It is suggested by Norman that the treachery of an Ottoman officer named Hassan Bey may have been responsible for the extent of how much the defenses were caught off guard, though the evidence is circumstantial at best. See C. B. Norman, *Armenia and the Campaign of 1877*, pp. 418-421.

204 Archibald Forbes, J.A. MacGahan, et. al., *The War Correspondence of the “Daily News,”* Vol.I p. 624.

205 F.V. Greene, *Report on the Russian Army*, p. 415.

206 James J. Reid, *Crisis of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 351. Moukhtar Pasha was recalled to Constantinople in late December to raise a new army to relieve Erzeroum when spring came, which showed that the Ottomans believed the city capable of holding out. See Archibald Forbes, J.A. MacGahan, et. al., *The War Correspondence of the “Daily News,”* Vol.II. p. 432.

in early January, 1878,²⁰⁷ the situation in Armenia remained the same as it had been the previous November.

207 There would be a final late January effort by Oklobjio to move against Batoum which failed.

Chapter 4. Observations on the Campaign in Europe to the Fall of Plevna

Wars happen because the ones who start them think they can win.
 -Margaret Atwood²⁰⁸

The campaign in Europe was destined to be the most crucial component of the war for both Russia and the Ottoman Empire. That it should be so is not hard to see why. Russian rulers had long dreamed of controlling the opening to the Black Sea and of making themselves masters of Constantinople. The added opportunity of liberating fellow Slavs in the Balkans from Ottoman tyranny gave impetus to the entire war effort. For the Ottomans it was perhaps their last gasp of holding on to their lands in Europe and for Sultan Abdul Hamid II, his throne. Defeat in Bulgaria could lead to more uprisings in other lands under Ottoman control and could lead to palace revolt.

That the Balkan theater was of the utmost importance for not only the belligerents, but for Europe is attested to by the amount of coverage the war received, particularly in the English press. The potential geopolitical implications of the war made sure that its events would be headline news. The majority of foreign, especially English speaking correspondents, government officials and even volunteer soldiers, found themselves participants in the great clash of arms in southeastern Europe.

Both Great Britain and the United States had official military attaches with the Russian forces for most of the campaign. For Britain, it was Colonel Hon. Frederick Arthur Wellesley, an officer in the Coldstream Guards who had been the military attaché in St. Petersburg since 1871.²⁰⁹ Wellesley admired the Russian soldier and was on good terms with Czar Alexander but his reports to his government about Russian inadequacies would earn him the mistrust of Grand

208 Margaret Atwood, "The Loneliness of the Military Historian." *Morning in the Burned House* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1995) pp. 49-53.

209 Soon after his appointment to that position he would marry the daughter of the British Ambassador to Russia, Lord Augustus Loftus. See B.H. Sumner, *Russia and the Balkans 1870-1880*, p. 34.

Duke Nicholas. The American attaché was Lieutenant Francis Vinton Greene, a graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point and had been trained as an engineer.²¹⁰ The United States did not have a military attaché attached to its legation in Russia prior to the war, but it was deemed necessary to send a professional observer so as “to seek for military and scientific facts that may be useful or valuable to the United States Government.”²¹¹ Greene would not arrive in the theater of war until August 1877 where he would join Wellesley and other attaches from around the world.²¹² The British also had an official military attaché in Constantinople, Lt. Colonel William Lennox, also an engineer. Although he would not personally spend much time at the front, he was privy to information from the Sultan and his War Council.

Though both Russian and Ottoman armies allowed foreign correspondents to travel and report from their front lines, the Russians initially welcomed them with open arms. Because the press had played so crucial a role in disseminating the events of the massacres in Bulgaria and some of those same newsmen were now applying to observe the war, it is very probable that the Russian authorities hoped that any lingering feelings about Ottoman conduct in the minds of those reporters would carry over into favorable attitudes toward the Russian war effort. If a man represented a “reputable journal,” he would be asked to sign a set of rules and to follow a few guidelines which were “to give his word of honor not to report the numbers of troops, the intended movements of the army, or any other information that might compromise its

210 Neither Wellesley nor Greene had any personal experience with warfare as they were too young to take part in the Crimean War and American Civil War respectively.

211 F.V. Greene *Report on the Russian Army*, p. iv.

212 This included officers from Austro-Hungary, France, Prussia and even Japan. The Japanese officer “could speak no language but his own, and did not attempt to learn another,” and was apparently none too interested in the fighting for at the last battle of Plevna he was observed to take shelter behind a tree and drift off to sleep. See Richard Graf von Pfeil-Burghausz, *Experiences of a Prussian Officer*, p. 58. It is tempting to speculate what, if anything, this officer learned that would help his own country defeat Russia in 1905.

success.”²¹³ If this was given, the correspondent was given an authorization pass and required to wear a band around his arm at all times which spelled out “correspondent” in Russian.²¹⁴

The most detailed accounts of the war in Europe from the Russian side come from the two men who wrote for the *Daily News*. Archibald Forbes, a Scotsman, and Januarius MacGahan, an American from Ohio, had each previously covered the Franco-Prussian and Spanish Carlist wars, though for different papers. MacGahan had also been instrumental in reporting to the world the outrages he saw in Bulgaria in 1876. Both men could speak Russian and Turkish as well as Bulgarian.²¹⁵ Both were also clearly sympathetic to the Russian cause. Joining Forbes and MacGahan were Frank Millet, an American with the *New York Herald*, E.M. Grant, a former U.S. Army officer reporting for the *London Times*, and Frederick Villiers an Englishman who worked as a war artist for the *London Weekly Graphic*. All told there were more than 70 correspondents at one time or another with the Russian army. Most did not stay for the entire campaign and many of them went back and forth from Bucharest to the front lines.²¹⁶

The Ottomans were much less trusting of the foreign press and only, at least in the European theater, allowed correspondents of newspapers known to be sympathetic to them accompany their armies. Of the English papers the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Standard* and the *Pall*

213 F.V. Greene, *Sketches of Army Life in Russia* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1880), p. 163. What constituted that information was entirely up to Russian authorities and would result in the expelling of Frederick Boyle, correspondent of the *Standard*, before the fall of Plevna.

214 Greene, p. 163.

215 B.H. Sumner, *Russia and the Balkans 1870-1880*, pp. 680 and 686. Forbes's book, *Czar and Sultan; The Adventures of a British Lad in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1894), though it revolves around the fictionalized character of John Carnegie is drawn on the factual reporting done by himself and his correspondent colleagues.

216 Only four would stay with the army through the winter campaign (MacGahan, Villiers, Grant and Millet) and arrive with it in San Stefano. See F.V. Greene, *Sketches of Army Life in Russia*, p. 166. It is curious that Britain, who believed it had some stake in the war would only have one correspondent (Villiers) see the campaign through, the other three men being American.

Mall Gazette were all allowed access.²¹⁷ Wentworth Huyshe, an English journalist sympathetic to the Ottomans, would also be allowed to report on the war, though he was employed by the *New York Herald*.

If the foreign press was suspect in Ottoman eyes, the same could not be said for foreigners seeking employment in their army, especially if they happened to be British.²¹⁸ Valentine Baker, a former British cavalry officer,²¹⁹ was employed at the start of the war commanding the Ottoman gendarmerie. To aid him in this task he brought along several other former British officers, including a “fire-eating, devil-may-care Irishman named Briscoe.”²²⁰ Other men with no previous experience were also accepted. An eighteen year old German of paternal English ancestry, Frederick William von Herbert, tired of his life as a clerk in Berlin,²²¹ desired to see more of the world. After befriending some Englishmen in Berlin who were partial to the Ottoman cause, he took it upon himself to learn Turkish, accomplishing this task with the help of a retired Prussian officer who had served time in Constantinople in six months time.²²² Because of his Christian religion, he had difficulties in joining the army but his “excellent credentials, influential introductions, and high class references did their work” and he was able to temporarily enlist in the infantry after performing an oath of allegiance to the Sultan, “in the Christian form.”²²³ Sultan In March of 1877 he was permitted to enter the Ottoman War Academy and upon the completion of his training as an infantry officer was sent

217 Rupert Furneaux, *The Breakfast War*, p. 16.

218 The *Times* would report that Ottoman officers were even sent to the United States to enlist soldiers, though this was denied by the Ottoman representative in Washington D.C. See May 21, 1877 edition of the *Times* in WO 106/6.

219 Baker had resigned his commission in the 10th Hussars when allegations of ‘indecent’ advances toward a young woman on a train ruined his military career. See Ian Drury, *The Russo-Turkish War 1877*, p. 48.

220 Sir Charles Snodgrass Ryan, *Under the Red Crescent*, p. 308.

221 He worked in merchant house run by “Messrs. Rosenkranz and Schneidersteifel,” who he seems to have held in the utmost contempt chiefly for being Jews. See Frederick William von Herbert, *The Defence of Plevna, 1877*, p.8.

222 Herbert, pp.9-10.

223 Herbert, p. 17.

to with his battalion at Widdin.²²⁴

Though there were some foreign soldiers serving in the Russian army, not much is known or written about them. One man who served as an officer with the 33 Elets Infantry Regiment and the first Foot Guards (the famous Preobrazhensky Regiment) was the Prussian Richard Graf von Pfeil-Burghausz. He had served in his native army in both the Austro-Prussian and Franco Prussian wars as an infantry officer and used his connections with the Prussian military attaché in St. Petersburg, Lieutenant-General von Werder, to receive a commission with the Russian forces in the Balkans.²²⁵

4.1. View of the Soldiers

The descriptions left by all of these participants of the fighting men that made up the armies in Europe are all subject to the personal opinions and prejudices of the author. With that in mind it is still useful to examine these descriptions as they offer a portrait of the late 19th century soldier in the Balkans. The Ottoman army in the Balkans, like its sister force in Armenia, was heavily composed of infantry. The average infantryman was generally described as being dependable and solid though the correspondents of the *Daily News* believed that their courage had its limits and was “often exaggerated.”²²⁶ Baker believed them to be the “*beau-ideal*” of soldiers and that they possessed every military virtue, which in his opinion was that they were patient, of a strong physique and submissive to discipline.²²⁷ This opinion was

224 Herbert, pp. 19, 28-35. Herbert believed the Ottoman army to suffer greatly from a need for junior grade officers and gives this as a reason for the ready acceptance of his services.

225 Pfeil-Burghausz, unlike Herbert, did not participate in the war's opening months and was only able to assume his position in the middle of October 1877. Like Herbert he was required to swear allegiance though he was given a choice of taking an oath of Russian nationality or a professional soldier's oath. He readily agreed to the latter. See Richard Graf von Pfeil-Burghausz, *Experiences of a Prussian Officer*, p. 101.

226 Archibald Forbes, J.A. MacGahan, et. al., *The War Correspondence of the "Daily News,"* Vol.I. p.91

227 Valentine Baker, *War in Bulgaria*, Vol. II. ,p. 332. Baker also believed Ottoman infantry to be good marchers, though he seems to be alone in that opinion. He did concede that Ottoman officers however had no

confirmed by Herbert who found the men under his command “ Cheerful and obedient under circumstances which would have demoralised [sic] others...”²²⁸ The modern form of warfare that had developed with the precision, range and rapidity of new weapons was most suited to soldiers who could think for themselves and for Baker this is what the Ottoman soldier could do, as he found them more intelligent than the average Russian soldier.²²⁹

That the Ottoman soldiers were often forced to make decisions by themselves reflects on the all too frequent poor quality of Ottoman officers. Most junior officers were promoted from the ranks and the higher ranks were often appointed through political connections and not through merit.²³⁰ The Ottoman Staff College, according to Baker, “ promoted officers who had no knowledge of troops or small organizational details.”²³¹ Herbert found the majority of his fellow officers to be energetic and useful, if not educated.²³² To account for this discrepancy of opinion it is worthwhile to note that Herbert belonged to a *Nizamiye* battalion while Baker would find himself in charge of mostly *Redif* and *Mustahfiz* troops.

The average Russian soldier was drawn from the peasantry and Forbes had Carnegie describe them as being mostly “burly square-set fellows, broad in the shoulders, deep in the

concept of organizing proper marches, p. 202. Baker also found the Circassian irregular cavalry “worse than useless.” See Vol. II, p. 119

228 Frederick William von Herbert, *The Defence of Plevna, 1877*, p. 79. Perhaps the most colorful and opinionated description of Ottoman soldiers comes from one of the correspondents for the *Times*, who described the makeup of an army camp as having “Circassians, with honest looking blue eyes (they are the greatest thieves in existence); Arabs, looking exactly what they, blackguards, impure and simple...” and regular Turkish troops “with their bright scarlet facings and fezzes.” This same correspondent believed the Ottoman strength was in its sobriety which could not be said of Russian soldiers. See June 11, 1877 edition of the *Times* WO 106/6.

229 Valentine Baker, *War in Bulgaria*, Vol. II., p. 335.

230 Achmet Eyoub Pasha, who would begin the war as commander at Shumla, be dismissed for his actions (or inactions) and later reappointed to a command position offers the perfect example of this phenomenon. Sir Austen Layard, British Ambassador in Constantinople, described Achmet Eyoub Pasha as “slow, incompetent, and obstinate” and could not believe he had been given a new command. He wrote to Lord Derby suggesting that some “intrigue” in Constantinople had been the cause of it. See Report of November 27, 1877 from Layard to Lord Derby in WO 106/2.

231 Valentine Baker, *War in Bulgaria*, Vol. II., p. 347.

232 Frederick William von Herbert, *The Defence of Plevna, 1877*, pp. 74-76.

chest, and clean in the flanks.”²³³ Baker's assessment of the lack of quick thinking shown by the Russian soldier, which could have been dismissed as a partisan opinion is instead borne out by Greene's description of the typical soldier of the Czar:

He instinctively looks for orders, and obeys them with a blind instinct, without stopping to question their merit; left to his own resources, he is almost helpless, and will often get killed from sheer stupidity in standing still and waiting for an order when every one is dead who has the right to give one.²³⁴

Despite the tendency of Russian soldiers without their officers to turn into a “degenerate, inert mass,”²³⁵ Greene nevertheless praised the average infantryman as having boundless patience and determination and an almost childlike faith in the Czar which allowed him to continue under hardship after hardship.²³⁶

Of the Cossacks Forbes recounted that those of the Don were so like one another “that they might all have been cast in the same mould [sic], and that in case of accidents heads, arms and legs were interchangeable.”²³⁷ In the event they were always ready for service except for that which required “close and hard fighting.”²³⁸ Greene found the men of the Caucasian Muslim Cossack regiments to be “amiable barbarians” who were quite adept and self reliant.²³⁹

Like the Ottoman army, Russia suffered from want of competent officers. Russian line officers were found by MacGahan and Forbes of the *Daily News* to be “cultured and

233 Archibald Forbes, *Czar and Sultan*, p. 6.

234 F.V. Greene, *Sketches of Army Life in Russia*, p.26.

235 Greene, p. 26.

236 That the Czar was looked upon by the common soldiers as their friend and benefactor is capably explained by Greene when he writes “When his battles result in defeats, when his biscuits are full of maggots, when his clothing is made of shoddy, when his boots drop to pieces, he reasons it out slowly, and can only come to the conclusion, so pathetic in its simple faith 'Ah! If the Tsar only knew!' ” See F.V. Greene, *Sketches of Army Life in Russia*, p.26.

237 Archibald Forbes, *Czar and Sultan*, p. 7. Frederick Boyle for the *Standard* agreed observing that “The greater number have fair hair, and the moustache [sic] of nearly all is bleached white by the sun.” See Frederick Boyle, *The Narrative of an Expelled Correspondent* (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1877), p. 5.

238 Forbes, p. 8.

239 F.V. Greene, *Sketches of Army Life in Russia*, p.97.

intelligent,”²⁴⁰ while Greene believed the refinement to be no more than a facade.²⁴¹ Instead he found most Russian officers shared many of the stubborn qualities of the common soldier but lacked initiative and the energy to deal with complications that arose in battlefield situations.²⁴² Pfeil-Burghausz explained that unlike Ottoman officers, most Russian officers had not risen from the ranks and were products of military educational establishments. He also noticed a lack of ambition among the officers he served with as well as what he deemed an “utter want of interest in and understanding about other countries and conditions.”²⁴³ Since the junior officers he served with had only received a military education, they did not often speak other languages, forcing Pfeil-Burghausz (who it seems himself could not speak but little Russian) to communicate “principally by signs, somewhat after the manner of the deaf and dumb...”²⁴⁴

4.2. Phase I. April 24, 1877-July 3, 1877

The beginning phase of the war in the Balkans was determined as much by nature as by the movements of armies. The Russian crossing of the Pruth into Romania was accomplished smoothly and without resistance. The four army corps of the initial Russian advance moved to fortify and make ready that portion of the lower Danube that had been chosen for the crossing into Bulgaria. This was accomplished by the 24th of May. The Russians established artillery

240 Archibald Forbes, J.A. MacGahan, et. al., *The War Correspondence of the “Daily News,”* Vol.I., 506.

241 F.V. Greene, *Sketches of Army Life in Russia*, p.27.

242 Greene, pp.27-28.

243 See Richard Graf von Pfeil-Burghausz, *Experiences of a Prussian Officer*, p.90. As an example of the lack of worldly knowledge among Russian officers, Pfeil-Burghausz relates that it was common belief among many officers that Kaiser Wilhelm had sent several German regiments to help at the siege of Plevna, disguised in Russian uniforms.

244 Pfeil-Burghausz, p.88.

batteries at the Romanian towns of Galatz and Braila and opposite the Bulgarian towns of Silistra, Rustchuk, and Nikopolis.²⁴⁵ They also had brought a number of steam launches overland and launched them into the Danube to lay torpedoes (mines) in order to block off the Ottoman Danube flotilla. This flotilla, which should have been able to control the Danube at any point and impede the Russian crossing wherever it might come was instead almost completely useless. There seemed to have been no plans made for even the navy to contest the Russian invasion and its monitors only began trading fire with the Russian army after that force had established its shore batteries. The single great naval achievement of the war was accomplished by Lieutenants Dubassoff and Shestakoff of the Russian navy who on May 25th with four small steam launches and 44 men managed to sink a large Ottoman gunboat without the loss of a single man.²⁴⁶ Throughout June, Russian naval launches set torpedoes into the Danube, isolating the Ottoman naval forces in Nikopolis and Rustchuk so that not one vessel left the shelter of these towns after June 24th. The ineffectiveness of the Ottoman navy allowed the Russians the ability to keep secret the place of their crossing and to assure that their pontoon bridges over the Danube would not be molested.²⁴⁷

With the potential bugbear of the Ottoman navy neutralized, the Russians could only wait throughout the end of May and most of June, for the spring rains had flooded much of the land around the Danube.²⁴⁸ The railroads also caused problems and troop movements from Bucharest toward the Danube staging areas were slowed due to the differences in Russian and

245 F.V. Greene, *Report on the Russian Army*, p.151.

246 Greene, p. 153. Every man of this operation received the Cross of St. George for their actions. See Archibald Forbes, *Czar and Sultan*, p.13.

247 The Ottoman flotilla on the Danube, for all its superiority in armament and numbers, only managed to wound a handful of Russian sailors during the entire Balkan campaign and was “from first to last a complete failure.” F.V. Greene, *Report on the Russian Army*, p.154. Sir Frederick Maurice blamed the disastrous showing on “mutual jealousy between the services, and want of understanding by each of the needs and capabilities of the other....” See his *The Russo-Turkish War, 1877*, p. 66.

248 On the 1st of June the Danube at Galatz was 15 feet above ordinary levels.

Romanian rail gauges. The Russians did not waste this time however, as they managed to bring up three additional corps from Russia (the IV, XIII, and XIV) as well as the men of the Bulgarian Legion. Matters were complicated in early June when Czar Alexander arrived in Romania with Miliutin, creating what was essentially a dual headquarters with his brother the Grand Duke.²⁴⁹

The pressure on the Grand Duke of having his brother and sovereign observing his every move and the efforts of Russian and British diplomats to find terms acceptable so that war could be averted caused an agitated Nicholas to angrily accuse Wellesley, the nearest Englishman he could find, of deliberately sending false reports of Russian inefficiency to London. In front of his assembled staff he proceeded to dress down Wellesley, telling him he needed to show himself “worthy of the honour [sic] of being permitted to accompany the troops,” and that he had a duty to “report honestly and correctly” all he witnessed.²⁵⁰ Though the matter was soon smoothed over (with Wellesley being attached to the Czar's headquarters instead of the Grand Duke's) the entire episode helped to further poison Anglo-Russian attempts at reconciliation.²⁵¹ When it became clear that peace efforts were going to fail, life in Russian headquarters returned to a mundane normalcy waiting for the river to fall and the invasion to begin. Wellesley reported that the most anxious talks were held on whether or not the white uniforms and forage caps that had been adopted as the Russian summer uniforms would be provide too good a target for Ottoman guns.²⁵²

The Ottomans, who could have used this delay to strengthen their defenses along the

249 B.H. Sumner, *Russia and the Balkans 1870-1880*, p. 307.

250 June 12, 1877 report from Wellesley to Lord Derby in FO 65/985. For his part, Wellesley wrote that his conscience was “perfectly clear” regarding the reports he had sent back.

251 See B.H. Sumner, *Russia and the Balkans 1870-1880*, p.317 for more on the diplomatic fallout of this episode. In his memoirs Wellesley states that the Ottomans would have done well if they had accepted the peace terms discussed in London during this incident. See Frederick Arthur Wellesley, *With the Russians in Peace and War: Recollections of a Military Attaché* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1905), pp. 204-205.

252 June 22, 1877 report from Wellesley to Lord Derby in FO 65/985.

Danube, instead did next to nothing other than to exchange fire across the Danube.²⁵³ Wentworth Huyshe, who was given permission to observe the Ottoman lines at Rustchuk, noticed that there was little urgency among the soldiers or civilians. A conversation with an elderly Turk revealed to Huyshe that the complacency he saw around him came from a feeling of being fated to endure whatever was coming. The old man told him “The Danube is with us, the Muscov [sic] cannot come,” and when Huyshe asked if the Russians would come if the river fell, the man replied “If Allah wills it.”²⁵⁴

The lack of Ottoman action led to serious doubts in Constantinople about what chance the Ottomans had of repulsing the Russians when they did eventually cross the river. Lt. Colonel Lennox wrote to Lord Derby on June 5th explaining the doubts he had of the Ottomans being able to defend any of their fortresses:

But the defence [sic] of all fortified places depends chiefly upon the energy displayed by the defenders; and though I should be wrong if I said I had not met Turkish officers with some energy, yet one cannot but feel that the stubborn defences [sic] the Turks made in the last war [Crimean] was due to the energy and thought of the Englishmen in a very great measure; and I begin to doubt whether Turkish leaders of the class they once possessed still exist.²⁵⁵

Lennox's doubts would prove worthwhile as the Danube finally began to fall and the first Russian troops under General Dragomiroff of Radetzky's VIII Corps on the left wing of the army crossed three miles south of Sistova in the early hours of June 26th.²⁵⁶ Ottoman batteries along the shore managed to sink five Russian pontoon boats but as more and more Russians were ferried over, the defenders abandoned their positions and ceded the river bank. By July 3rd the entire Corps had crossed into Bulgaria while the Ottoman troops of the Danube fortresses

253 A curious artillery duel seems to have broken out between Russian and Ottoman gunners at Rustchuk where the Ottomans were convinced that the Russians were deliberately aiming at mosques and so requested permission to return fire on the Romanian churches in the town opposite. See Wentworth Huyshe, *Liberation of Bulgaria*, p. 53.

254 Huyshe, p.25.

255 June 5, 1877 report from LT. Col. Lennox to Lord Derby in WO 106/2.

256 F.V. Greene, *Report on the Russian Army*, p.158.

spent the days “parading every evening.”²⁵⁷

4.3. Phase II. July 4, 1877-September 12, 1877

By July 10th the Russian right wing under Krudener had succeeded in crossing the Danube and the army, now combined, was split into three columns. The right column under Krudener advanced on Nikopolis, while the left masked the fortress of Rustchuk. The third, a flying column of 10,000 men (comprised of half infantry and half cavalry) under Lieutenant-General Count Gourko, was dispatched from the left wing, was detailed toward Tirnova, which it captured on July 7th.²⁵⁸ Five days later the Grand Duke made his entrance into the city where he was welcomed by the Christian inhabitants of the town with “deafening cheers and extravagant joy.”²⁵⁹ The Muslim inhabitants of the region had begun to stream south soon after the Russians crossed the river and were in large part left to their own, though Ambassador Layard in Constantinople was informed by the Sultan that he had received reports of “shocking outrages” committed by Russian troops and Bulgarian civilians on Muslims.²⁶⁰ This report would cause no small controversy and both Ottomans and Russians would level accusations of atrocities against one another throughout the war. Wellesley was asked to speak to the Czar personally on the matter, where he was treated to a somewhat rambling speech on why the war

257 Wentworth Huyshe, *Liberation of Bulgaria*, pp. 81-82.

258 The Czar joked to Wellesley that a young soldier had told him of killing six Turks during the crossing, “one of whom was English.” See Frederick Arthur Wellesley, *With the Russians in Peace and War*, p. 233.

259 Archibald Forbes, J.A. MacGahan, et. al., *The War Correspondence of the “Daily News,”* Vol.I. p. 241.

260 July 10, 1877 report from Layard to Lord Derby in FO 881/3244. This same report stated that the Sultan had been informed (how is not clear) that the Russians would make peace under three conditions: autonomy for Bulgaria, freedom of navigation through the Dardanelle, and the surrender of Batoum. Layard reported these terms unacceptable to Abdul Hamid.

was being fought.²⁶¹ Pfeil-Burghausz blamed the “barbarous character” of the war entirely on the irregular Ottoman cavalry, whose actions were “unknown among civilized nations.”²⁶² Despite Pfeil-Burghausz's assertions there is evidence that both sides did commit atrocities in the war, and though most instances were perpetrated by irregular troops, regular soldiers undoubtedly took part in a few cases.²⁶³

Gourko meanwhile had been ordered to make for the Balkan passes with a new force of Cossacks, dragoons and the men of the Bulgarian Legion, who were going to be allowed to fight. He was to secure the passes before the Ottomans could fortify them.²⁶⁴ MacGahan decided to accompany Gourko's column and left Forbes to cover the operations of the column under Krudener where he witnessed the fall of Nikopolis on July 16th. Its embittered commander Hassan Hairi remarked to his captors that “It is a stupid war into which England has led Turkey.”²⁶⁵

The column under Gourko had passed over the Balkans the same day, securing the southern approaches at Kezanlik. Some Bulgarian Christians in the town, aided by Cossacks, proceeded to loot and pillage the homes of the Muslim inhabitants before Gourko was able to

261 The Czar told him he desired peace and that Russia sought no territorial gains, except what she had lost in 1856. See July 29, 1877 report from Wellesley to Lord Derby in FO 65/985. In another report he related how the accusations of the atrocities had caused great resentment in the Russian army and for his own part he stated “firmly and honestly” his belief that the stories had been fabricated. See August 6, 1877 report from Wellesley to Lord Derby in FO 65/985.

262 Richard Graf von Pfeil-Burghausz, *Experiences of a Prussian Officer*, p. 274.

263 James J. Reid relates the story of the ransack of the town of Biela by a combined Russian and Bulgarian force in his *Crisis of the Ottoman Empire*, pp. 319-320. Wentworth Huyshe, who saw mutilated and headless bodies of Russians left on the battlefield was told by an Ottoman soldier that “Heaven smiles at the desecration of the carcasses of infidel dogs.” See Wentworth Huyshe, *Liberation of Bulgaria*, p. 86.

264 Osman Pasha, watching the invasion unfold from Widdin and having nothing to do but exchange fire across the river with Romanian batteries, had pleaded with the Abdul Kerim Pasha to allow him and Hassan Hairi, commander at Nikopolis, to link up and cut across the Russians at Tirnova. He was turned down and appealed directly to the Sultan. The Sultan approved the plan but it came too late as Tirnova had already fallen and Nikopolis was surrounded. See Rupert Furneaux, *The Breakfast War*, p. 38.

265 Wentworth Huyshe, *Liberation of Bulgaria*, p. 97. Anger against Britain and its reluctance to help the Ottomans was manifested in the wane of influence of the British officials at Constantinople as admitted in an August 14, 1877 confidential memo from Lord Derby to Wellesley in FO 65/985.

stop it. MacGahan admitted that the occupation of Kezanlik was not properly handled but added:

But to those people who may wish to prove by what occurred here that the Bulgarians are just as bad as the Turks-as I have no doubt there are people who will-I should like to observe that there were no houses burnt here, that there were no Turks murdered, that no Turkish women were outraged, that no Turk was roasted alive, and that no Turkish children were spitted on bayonets and carried about the streets. Let it further be remembered that many of the Turks living here now were engaged in the massacres of last year, and we have the measure of the difference between the Turk and the Bulgarian.²⁶⁶

It was not until July 19th that he was able to secure the Shipka Pass after two days of fighting with Ottoman defenders on what would be named St. Nicholas Hill. When the Ottomans were dislodged from the hill, the Russians found a mound of twenty heads, cut from the bodies of Russian dead and left beside the road near the hill.²⁶⁷

The grisly discovery of the heads and the excesses of looting at Kezanlik did not overshadow the fact that Gourko had succeeded in securing the Balkans, “one of the most formidable bulwarks ever raised by nature for the defence [sic] of a country,” as MacGahan described them, with minimal losses.²⁶⁸ On hearing the news Forbes, called the event “scarcely second to any occurrence of the century.”²⁶⁹ The news of Gourko's accomplishment resounded throughout Europe. The British government made ready to send the fleet to the Dardanelles and Abdul Hamid relieved the old war horse Abdul Kerim Pasha from his command and replaced him with Mehemet Ali Pasha, who had been energetically defending the line of the Lom against the Russian advance.²⁷⁰

266 Archibald Forbes, J.A. MacGahan, et. al., *The War Correspondence of the “Daily News,”* Vol.I. p. 271.

267 F.V. Greene, *Report on the Russian Army*, p.174.

268 Archibald Forbes, J.A. MacGahan, et. al., *The War Correspondence of the “Daily News,”* Vol.I. p.269.

269 Quoted in Dale L. Walker, *Januarius MacGahan: The Life and Campaigns of an American War Correspondent* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1988), p. 222.

270 Mehemet Ali Pasha was born Jules Detroit in Magdeburg, Germany and was of Huguenot ancestry. He converted to Islam and by all accounts was sincere in his new faith, though his status as a foreigner was held against him by Suleiman Pasha, who felt that he should have been given the command. See Alexander Jacob Schem, *The War in the East*, p. 531.

While Gourko was securing the Balkan passes for Russia, Osman Pasha,²⁷¹ tired of inaction, was determined to attempt try and join Suleiman Pasha's army which was moving northeast into Bulgaria. To do this he planned to personally lead a number of his garrison at Widdin, including Herbert, on forced marches to the town of Plevna. Plevna was an ordinary town which had not even been fortified but had importance because it straddled the main road from Sofia to eastern Bulgaria.²⁷² Osman detailed 12,000 men from the 50,000-60,000 men of his force at Widdin, all of them *Nizamiye* and set out on July 13th to secure Plevna before the Russians arrived there in force. Herbert remembers being given a week's worth of biscuit rations and starting out under a scorching sun.²⁷³ Osman pushed his men and it was on the march that he was informed of Gourko's rush for the Shipka Pass and of Nikopolis's fall.²⁷⁴ Allowing the men little rest, Osman drove his force on, reaching Plevna with his main force on July 19th, having covered 110 miles in 6 days.²⁷⁵

The Russians under General Krudener begun to move south after capturing Nikopolis, though not in any hurry. On July 17th Grand Duke Nicholas was informed that a large Ottoman force was seen moving west of Plevna.²⁷⁶ It was not until the next day that the Grand Duke belatedly ordered Krudener to occupy Plevna. Krudener detailed 6,500 men under General Schilder-Schuldner, who inexplicably placed his cavalry force at the rear of his column, leaving him blind as to enemy movements. On the 20th of July, Schilder-Schuldner blundered into

271 Osman Pasha was destined to become the most known name of the war in the English world. He was a brave and energetic commander who had fought in Crete and against the Serbian uprising. He had a what Herbert describes as a "violent dislike of foreigners" and was "taciturn and grave" in manner. See Frederick William von Herbert, *The Defence of Plevna*, 1877, pp.80-81.

272 This would become vital once Gourko had secured Shipka because the road was the only way, unless Shipka was recaptured, of linking the armies left in the quadrilateral with those of Widdin and Suleiman Pasha's army to the southwest.

273 Frederick William von Herbert, *The Defence of Plevna*, 1877, p. 121.

274 Herbert, pp. 123-124.

275 Ian Drury, *The Russo-Turkish War 1877*, p. 8.

276 Rupert Furneaux, *The Breakfast War*, p. 44.

Osman Pasha's forces that had been busy fortifying the outskirts of Plevna. Though the Russians succeeded in scattering the Ottoman defenders outside the town, Osman Pasha rallied his forces inside Plevna and struck at the exposed Russian center, driving them back in full retreat. "The Russians," noted Herbert "made a brief stand when they gained the Nikopol road. Their officers, whose superhuman efforts were apparent to me, succeeded in restoring something like order in the ranks [...] soon they continued the retreat, in slightly better order, leaving scores of dead behind."²⁷⁷ The attack was a disaster as half of Schilder-Schuldner's force was killed or wounded.²⁷⁸

Krudener was immediately ordered to proceed with the rest of his IX Corps from Nikopolis to Plevna and was given two extra divisions under Prince Shakovsky to take Plevna. Osman Pasha, knowing he could expect to be attacked at any moment, had set his men feverishly to work on securing the town and the completing the redoubts,²⁷⁹ the strongest being the Grivitza, which overlooked the town.²⁸⁰ Krudener's force, numbering some 30,000 men and 170 guns, was in position outside the town by July 25th but waited another five days to make its assault. His plan was for a combined infantry assault (led by himself and Prince Shakovsky) on the Grivitza redoubt and the town itself, supported by the Cossack brigade of General Skobelev.

On the morning of the June 30th the assault began. Shakovsky impatiently sent his men forward while Krudener's were still marching to their assault positions. Shakovsky's men

277 Frederick William von Herbert, *The Defence of Plevna, 1877*, p. 156

278 F.V. Greene, *Report on the Russian Army*, p. 192.

279 Pfeil-Burghausz states that the Bulgarians were made to work on the fortifications, even under fire and any that tried to run were bayoneted. If this is true Herbert does not mention it, only saying that the Bulgarians were employed in burying the dead. See Richard Graf von Pfeil-Burghausz, *Experiences of a Prussian Officer*, p.64 and Frederick William von Herbert, *The Defence of Plevna, 1877*, p. 204.

280 Richard L. DiNardo, "Russian Military Operations in 1877-78," in *War and Society in East Central Europe Vol. XVII: Insurrections, Wars, and the Eastern Crisis in the 1870's* edited by Bela K. Kiraly and Gale Stokes (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985): pp. 125-142.

managed to capture some of the Ottoman defense works but, owing to no support from Krudener, who was sending his regiments piecemeal into the face of Ottoman fire, were nearly cut off. Krudener and Shakovsky both sent their men into the attack in column formation which limited their firing ability. Both commanders seemed to believe that Russian bayonets would be enough to clear Plevna of Ottoman soldiers. Instead the Russians were met with hails of gunfire and vicious hand to hand fighting would break out all along the line. Herbert, wounded in the battle by a Russian saber, wrote that the fighting was so chaotic that “commands became useless” as the Russian shouts of *Hurrah!* were answered by fervent shouts of *Allah! Allah!* and that it was over as quickly as it had begun.²⁸¹ It was only due to the actions of Skobelev’s cavalry, who prevented Ottoman reserves from overwhelming Shakovsky’s exposed flank, that his force was not annihilated.²⁸²

The defeat was total. Krudener and Shakovsky, who both angrily blamed one another for the disaster,²⁸³ had lost over 7,000 men killed or wounded in what Forbes called with exaggeration “the bloodiest battle of the century.”²⁸⁴ With this second repulse, the Russian advance was halted and panic gripped the army.²⁸⁵ Troops on the Danube were convinced that the Ottomans were going to descend on them and wipe them out. “It was enough,” the Russian artist and soldier Alexander Verestchagin remembered “to cry ‘The Turks are coming’ for transport to stampede, and the wounded, with the doctors and nurses, to be abandoned.”²⁸⁶ The Russians, who had been doing their best to keep the Romanians out of the war, now faced with

281 Frederick William von Herbert, *The Defence of Plevna, 1877*, pp. 197-199.

282 Rupert Furneaux, *The Breakfast War*, p. 66. Skobelev was the unabashed favorite of the Anglo-American correspondents. He was personal friends with MacGahan and could often be found in his company.

283 F.V. Greene, *Report on the Russian Army*, p.201.

284 Rupert Furneaux, *The Breakfast War*, p. 68.

285 Herbert described the Russian reaction to this second defeat as “that of a man who had gone up to one lying on the ground, presuming him to be dying, with the intent of depriving him of some of his belongings, and had received from him two kicks so vigorous, well directed and painful as to remember them until the end of his days.” See Frederick William von Herbert, *The Defence of Plevna, 1877*, p. 208.

286 Quoted in Stephen Graham, *A Life of Alexander II, Tsar of Russia*, p. 247.

the possible route of their army, urgently requested the Romanian army to take the field. Grand Duke Nicholas sent a panicked telegram to Prince Charles saying “Come to our aid. Cross the Danube where you like, how you like, under what conditions you like, but come quickly to our aid. The Turks are annihilating us. The Christian cause is lost.”²⁸⁷

Prince Charles duly answered, and a Romanian army of 37,000 men and 84 guns with the Prince in command set out for Plevna in early August from Nikopolis.²⁸⁸ It was now evident that the initial Russian force of 250,000 men which had begun the campaign was simply not enough and that more were needed. The Czar, who had already ordered up reserves and the mobilization of 188,000 militia to take over garrison duty in Russia, now ordered seven more divisions, some 120,000 men, to the front.²⁸⁹ Included in this were the men of the Guards Corps, the elite of the Russian army, who had not even been used in the Crimean War. It would take time for these troops to assemble and reach the front and so the Russian army around Plevna waited to renew the assault throughout the month of August. Osman Pasha did not attempt to take the offensive and calmly reorganized and re-strengthened his defensive works. He was also sent reinforcements so that his total garrison numbered some 50,000 men by mid August.

While August was relatively quiet around Plevna and Danube fortresses,²⁹⁰ the advance of Suleiman Pasha on the Shipka Pass in late July was to herald some of the war's fiercest fighting. Gourko's force of Russians and Bulgarians had been driven out of the towns of Yeni Zagra and Eskri Zagra by July 31st with the Bulgarian Legion suffering severe casualties in its

287 Quoted in Frederick William von Herbert, *The Defence of Plevna, 1877*, p. 209.

288 F.V. Greene, *Report on the Russian Army*, p.205.

289 F.V. Greene, *Report on the Russian Army*, p.204.

290 *The Globe's* correspondent did report that troops of General Zimmerman had come down with dysentery from supplementing their rations with unripe fruit. See August 16, 1877 edition of *The Globe* in WO 106/6.

attempt to fight its way back to Shipka.²⁹¹ Among the Balkan ranges the fighting began to carry with it an excess of hatred and violence on both sides. Christian villages were burned by the Ottomans and Muslim towns were looted by Russians. One correspondent reported having seen an Ottoman soldier carrying the head of a Bulgarian peasant who he said had shot at him and of witnessing the hanging of supposed Bulgarian “insurgents” by Ottoman officials.²⁹² He was also shown the body of a Muslim which had been “split in halves, and otherwise mutilated in the most frightful manner,” by Cossacks.²⁹³

With the Russians driven out of Yeni Zagra and Eskri Zagra, Suleiman Pasha with his 30,000 men, could have bottled up Gourko in the Shipka Pass and marched over the eastern passes to join with Mehemet Ali Pasha, whose army was attempting to relieve Plevna by attacking the Russians still masking the quadrilateral forts. Suleiman Pasha despised Mehemet Ali Pasha, and instead of joining him, made ready to assault the Russian positions on the heights around Shipka Pass.²⁹⁴ The assault began on August 21st and for the next three days the beleaguered Russo-Bulgarians on the hills of Shipka beat back Suleiman's vastly superior force. Instead of trying some sort of flanking movement, Suleiman Pasha, echoing the Russians at Plevna, simply launched battalion after battalion up the slopes of the St. Nicholas Hill and its surrounding peaks. The Russo-Bulgarians had little food and relied on young Bulgarian peasants to act as water bearers as they fought under a blazing sun.²⁹⁵ The defenders on St.

291 Of the of 1600 men of the Bulgarian Legion who had advanced to Eskra Zagra, no more than 500 managed to reach Shipka. See Archibald Forbes, J.A. MacGahan, et. al., *The War Correspondence of the “Daily News,”* Vol.I. p. 275.

292 Archibald Forbes, J.A. MacGahan, et. al., Vol.I. p. 279.

293 Archibald Forbes, J.A. MacGahan, et. al., Vol.I. p. 279. The body was sent by Suleiman Pasha to the foreign Consuls at Adrianople as proof of Russian atrocities.

294 Baker states that this decision was direct disobedience of his orders. See Valentine Baker, *War in Bulgaria*, Vol. I. p. 326. James J. Reid has labeled the rivalries and failures of cooperation among Ottoman generals as one of the main factors in the ultimate collapse of the Ottoman Empire. See his *Crisis of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 335.

295 Archibald Forbes, J.A. MacGahan, et. al., *The War Correspondence of the “Daily News,”* Vol.I., p. 415.

Nicholas Hill, which included a battery of seven captured Ottoman guns,²⁹⁶ ran out of ammunition during one of the assaults and were reduced to hurling boulders upon the Ottomans as they came up the slope.²⁹⁷ Russian reinforcements under Radetzky began to arrive on August 23 and by the 26th Suleiman Pasha had begun to withdraw toward Kezanlik., his troops exhausted. His only accomplishment was making a third of his attacking force casualties .

With the Shipka safely defended and Mehemet Ali Pasha's campaign stalled, the combined Russian-Romanian army at Plevna made ready for what it hoped would be the final assault. General Skobelev had been able to secure the town of Lovtcha which protected the right flank of Plevna by September 4th after a four day battle that saw considerable fighting. The main redoubt at Lovtcha was defended to the last man among the Ottomans and at the close of fighting "the bodies of the dead and wounded Russians and Turks together lay piled up in a mass six feet deep around the gorge of the work."²⁹⁸

With the fall of Lovtcha, the final preparations were made for the assault on Plevna which was to take place on the Czar's name day, September 11th. The command of the operation had been given to Prince Charles of Romania,²⁹⁹ whose troops were to be assigned to take the Grivitza redoubt. Four days prior to the assault, the Russians opened up with a terrific artillery bombardment from 400 guns. The barrage caught the Ottomans literally napping. Forbes, watching the Grivitza redoubt, had not seen a single Ottoman on the parapets, not even a sentry. When the Russian artillery commenced, a few Ottoman soldiers could be seen emerging to look around and Forbes reported distinctly seeing one man yawn.³⁰⁰

The Russo-Romanian army was confident of success, though MacGahan believed the

296 Report on the Russo-Turkish War in Europe in FO 881/3701.

297 Ian Drury, *The Russo-Turkish War 1877*, p. 10.

298 F.V. Greene, *Report on the Russian Army*, p. 231.

299 His Chief of Staff was the Russian General Zotoff.

300 Archibald Forbes, *Czar and Sultan*, p. 154.

Russians had not absorbed the lessons from their previous defeat. The bombardment he believed to be a waste of time as the “Turkish defenses [were] exclusively earthwork” and he knew from the American Civil War that solid mounds of earth could mute artillery damage.³⁰¹

If Forbes can be believed MacGahan made a prediction that was to be remarkably accurate:

The Russians will be whipped before Plevna this time as before; then they will realise [sic] that they cannot scoop Osman out of it by dint of hard blows, and they will do with him as the Germans did with Bazaine in Metz -compel him to surrender by the argument of starvation.³⁰²

The Russians had not learned the lessons and their plan was simply a more ambitious version of Krudener's attack in July. This time three assaults against the Ottoman positions were to take place simultaneously on the afternoon of the 11th. The assault commenced as planned on the appointed date under rainy conditions. The Romanians managed to enter and hold parts of the Grivitza redoubt for a time, but were forced to retire after heavy losses had made their position untenable. The attack on the center of Plevna's defenses, conducted by General Krylov, was made in columns shoulder to shoulder and the result was that two divisions, the 16th and 39th were almost completely “cut to pieces.”³⁰³ Skobelev's attacking troops managed to take and hold some of the redoubts protecting the south of Plevna. Osman Pasha sent fifteen battalions, including Herbert's, to dislodge this threat to his position. Skobelev, who was not given adequate reinforcements was forced to retire the following afternoon, leaving some of his wounded behind, who Herbert had to save from being killed by victorious Ottoman soldiers.³⁰⁴ All told the combined Russo-Romanian army had lost between 15-18,000 men. E.M. Grant for the *Times* described the result of the third battle at Plevna as a “holocaust of mangled humanity [that] was offered up to the inefficient helplessness of the General Staff Department of the

301 Quoted in Dale L. Walker, *Januarius MacGahan*, p. 166. Herbert called the cannonade a “ridiculous failure.” See Frederick William von Herbert, *The Defence of Plevna, 1877*, p.240.

302 Story of Archibald Forbes quoted in Dale L. Walker, *Januarius MacGahan*, p. 166.

303 Bruce W. Menning, *Bayonets Before Bullets*, p. 70.

304 Frederick William von Herbert, *The Defence of Plevna, 1877*, p. 268.

Russian Army.”³⁰⁵

This third repulse at the gates of Plevna, though not as panic inducing as its predecessor, sunk Russian morale to new lows. Russia found itself lampooned in the English press and its stock collapsed on international exchanges.³⁰⁶ Osman Pasha had captivated the British public and his stubborn and gallant defense of Plevna, written about by all the correspondents, no matter which army they were attached to, had succeeded in swaying British public opinion in favor of the Ottoman cause. Herbert wrote that for weeks after this third battle letters of congratulation poured into Plevna, most of them from Austrian or British admirers.³⁰⁷

4.4. September 13, 1877-December 15, 1877

Despite the failed “Grand Assault,” and the low morale of the soldiers, the Russian commanders at the Czar’s Headquarters in Gorni-Studen showed “not the slightest sign of hesitation, nor the weakening of determination to fight it out.”³⁰⁸ More assaults on Plevna would not take place. It was determined that town would have to be starved out and so the Russo-Romanian forces settled in to besiege it. General Todleben, the defender of Sebastopol and Russia’s expert on siege warfare was ordered to Plevna from the Baltic. In the south, Suleiman Pasha again threw his newly reinforced army against the Shipka Pass positions. A night attack by 3,000 men succeeded in gaining St. Nicholas Hill on September 17th but Russian reinforcements and the failure of Ottoman supporting attacks caused it to be lost again at the point of Russian bayonets. Mehemet Ali, prodded by Constantinople to do something to

305 Quoted in Rupert Furneaux, *The Breakfast War*, p. 138.

306 Ian Drury, *The Russo-Turkish War 1877*, p. 11.

307 Frederick William von Herbert, *The Defence of Plevna, 1877*, p. 273.

308 Archibald Forbes, J.A. MacGahan, et. al., *The War Correspondence of the “Daily News,”* Vol.I., p. 490.

relieve Plevna, privately confided to Valentine Baker, who by now had been given a field command, that it was hopeless on trying to breakthrough to Plevna and the government was trying to discredit him.³⁰⁹ On orders from Constantinople he launched an attack on the Russian positions at Cairkoi, guarding the Russian line of communication to the Balkans on Sept 21st that was beaten off with the loss of 3,000 men. Mehemet Ali Pasha, defeated, withdrew across the Lom three days later.³¹⁰ On October 2nd he was relieved of his command and sent to Sofia and his army was placed under Suleiman Pasha's control.³¹¹

By the end of September the Romanians, who unlike their Russian allies had equipped all of their infantry with entrenching tools, had succeeded in constructing trenches within 80 yards of the Grivitza Redoubt. The Russians, until the arrival of Todleben, “were completely at sea” when it came to siege warfare and had not constructed anything in their portion of the line.³¹² Todleben arrived at the Czar's headquarters on September 27th and insisted that Plevna would only fall through a gradual investment, and that any more assaults would be folly.

Throughout October the investment was carried out. Osman Pasha was able to receive 17,000 reinforcements and rations via the road south to Sofia in the first half of October. General Gourko, who was given command of the Guards Corps, managed to cut this road on October 24-25th at Gorni-Dubnik, and the proper siege of an encircled Plevna commenced.

With Gourko's victory at Gorni-Dubnik, Plevna was surrounded on all sides by a Russo-Romanian army comprised of 160,000 men and 650 guns.³¹³ Mehemet Ali Pasha, now at Sofia,

309 Valentine Baker, *War in Bulgaria*, Vol. II., pp.43-45.

310 Archibald Forbes, J.A. MacGahan, et. al., *The War Correspondence of the “Daily News,”* Vol.I., p. 500.

311 One English correspondent with the Ottomans remarked that Mehemet Ali Pasha was only relieved “because he refused to break his neck against a stone wall.” See Archibald Forbes, J.A. MacGahan, et. al., *The War Correspondence of the “Daily News,”* Vol.I., p. 500. According to Baker morale in the quadrilateral collapsed upon Suleiman's appointment. See the description of these events in James J. Reid, *Crisis of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 338.

312 Archibald Forbes, J.A. MacGahan, et. al. p. 496.

313 F.V. Greene, *Report on the Russian Army*, p.290.

was ordered to put together a force that might break through to Plevna. The troops he was able to assemble were officially 87 battalions (25,000 men), but these were mostly untrained *Mustahfiz* and most of the battalions were severely under strength.³¹⁴ Baker noted that Ottoman generals tended to guard their best troops and that if ordered to send a brigade to a certain location, the commander would not send the brigade as it stood but would “make one up from all his worst battalions” and send that amalgamation instead.³¹⁵ These were exactly the type of units with which Mehemet Ali was supposed to fight.³¹⁶

The Russians, learning of Mehemet Ali Pasha's presence at Sofia, determined to preclude any attack from that direction by launching one of their own. On November 15th Gourko, with 35,000 men, mostly of the Guard, moved south. All along his march he was successful in routing the Ottoman defenders, capturing nearly all the supplies gathered at Orhanie for the relief of Plevna by November 28th.³¹⁷ Mehemet Ali Pasha's army became a refugee one, whose only goal was to retreat and survive. A day before this Sultan's War Council had been dissolved and its complete ineffectiveness was remarked upon by one of its own members who remarked to Ambassador Layard that it had done “more harm than good.”³¹⁸

Osman Pasha and his troops were not aware of the failed breakthrough attempt and were expecting to be relieved. Herbert wrote that he hoped daily for the relief force “with a longing and a heartache which is difficult to describe.”³¹⁹ The men in Plevna were on reduced rations and were subjected to daily bombardment. The medicine had all but run out and fatigue had set

314 James J. Reid, *Crisis of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 339.

315 Valentine Baker, *War in Bulgaria*, Vol. II., p. 91.

316 W. Kirby Green, British Consul at Scutari even reported that Orthodox Christians in Albania were being pressed into service as *bashi-bazouks*. See November 17, 1877 report from W. Kirby Green to Lord Derby in WO 106/2.

317 These included 3,000,000 rounds of ammunition, 2,000,000 rations of biscuits, rice and bread, and clothing. See F.V. Greene, *Report on the Russian Army*, p. 296.

318 November 27, 1877 report from Layard to Lord Derby in WO 106/2.

319 Frederick William von Herbert, *The Defence of Plevna, 1877*, p. 323.

in. The forward Romanian trenches near Grivitza were now as close as 25 yards and Herbert reported that conversations occurred between the sentries , as some of the Romanians could understand Turkish.³²⁰

On November 19th came news of the Kars capitulation, which further disheartened the defenders. There was great celebration in the Russian camp and at night they erected illuminated signs in Turkish and French telling of the surrender so the Ottomans in Plevna could read them.³²¹ The news of Kars's surrender could not have come at a better time for the Russians. The troops had been demoralized and there was great resentment against the Bulgarians. Many of the men felt they had been deceived into fighting for a people that were better off than most of their families in Russia.³²² As early as October a general with the Czar's staff had told Wellesley that the army was no longer fighting for any notions of Slavic brotherhood but for “the reestablishment of her military honour [sic].”³²³ The capture of Kars, however, sent men in the various armies scattered throughout the Balkans into wild celebration. Pfeil-Burghausz, serving with his regiment south of Plevna, attended a celebratory banquet in which an N.C.O., disguised as a bear, was led around by a soldier dressed as a Turk until the “bear” slipped his shackles and pretended to strangle the false Turk to the delight of all present.³²⁴

By December the position of the Plevna defenders had become almost untenable. Osman Pasha had rejected a surrender demand from the Czar on November 12th but it was now clear that relief, if it was coming, might come too late. He therefore resolved to attempt a

320 Herbert, p. 331.

321 Herbert, p. 335.

322 Wellesley found this attitude completely unsurprising as he found the Bulgarians a “despicable population that would rather see a Russian die of hunger before parting with some bread.” November 24, 1877 report from Wellesley to Lord Derby in FO 65/985.

323 October 29, 1877 report from Wellesley to Lord Derby in FO 65/985.

324 Richard Graf von Pfeil-Burghausz, *Experiences of a Prussian Officer*, p. 125. Pfeil-Burghausz was greatly amused by this and notes the performance was repeated several times.

breakout that he himself conceded had an “infinitesimal” chance of success.³²⁵ As the attempt was scheduled for the morning of December 10th, Herbert used the night before to have a last look at the town he had defended for four and a half months. He found it “Desolate, dead, [and] Godforsaken” and twice stumbled on corpses that had been left to rot in the street.³²⁶ At dawn the next day, Herbert and the rest of Osman's troops launched an all out attack west of Plevna. The initial attack broke through two lines of surprised Russian entrenchments, though Osman was wounded in the foot. The Russian soldiers counterattacked and the resulting fight broke the spirit of Osman's troops. They fell back to their defense positions in disarray. Herbert was carried along in “mad stream of men, horses, and vehicles.”³²⁷

Osman Pasha, his army defeated and his defensive positions largely abandoned in the breakout attempt, asked for terms and consented to unconditional surrender. He was treated with great pomp by his Russian adversaries and the Grand Duke, upon meeting him said “I compliment you on your defence [sic] of Plevna. It is one of the most splendid military feats in history.”³²⁸ While Osman was sent off to relative comfort as a celebrated prisoner, his army of some 43,000 men was kept in the cold at Plevna for two weeks with little food and no medical treatment, before being moved to more permanent camps. During those two weeks more than 3,000 died from their lack of treatment,³²⁹ and only 12,000 were to return home after the war.³³⁰

The Czar, having witnessed at last the fall of Plevna and tired of war, returned to Russia

325 Rupert Furneaux, *The Breakfast War*, p.

326 Frederick William von Herbert, *The Defence of Plevna*, 1877, p. 375.

327 Herbert, p. 391.

328 Quoted in Archibald Forbes, J.A. MacGahan, et. al., *The War Correspondence of the “Daily News,”* Vol.II. p. 153.

329 Rupert Furneaux, *The Breakfast War*, p. 213.

330 Virginia Cowles, *The Russian Dagger*, p. 113. One of those 12,000 was Herbert, who spent his captivity first in Bucharest and then in Kharkov, where as an officer he was given parole to ensure his relative freedom within the city until he was repatriated in March, 1878. He seems to have had quite a comfortable term of captivity claiming to “have done more love-making in those three months” than in the rest of his life. See Frederick William von Herbert, *The Defence of Plevna*, 1877, p. 411.

three days after Osman Pasha's surrender. 130,000 Russian troops were now free to advance into the Balkans and bolster the troops of Gourko. Serbia, sensing a probable Russian victory joined the war in mid December.³³¹ Though the Ottomans still had a considerable amount of troops available in the region, many were untrained and the complete lack of interaction between the individual commanders made coordinated resistance difficult. The war would continue for another month but it was largely an effort of delaying the inevitable. As for Plevna, its stout defense was, for Greene, the only event in the entire war that “relieved it from a charge of complete incompetence.”³³²

331 This despite the Serbian army's lack of readiness as observed by the British Vice Consul there who described the Serbs as being “badly equipped, badly armed, badly officered,” See December 7, 1877 report from Vice Consul Marshal to Lord Derby in WO 106/2.

332 F.V. Greene, *Report on the Russian Army*, p. 312.

Epilogue: To Berlin

The Russian winter campaign in Bulgaria began on December 23rd as Gourko, now reinforced to 70,000 men, set out in conditions that saw snowdrifts as high as 10 feet deep,³³³ toward Sofia. The move was a surprise to the Ottoman garrison and it fell back, leaving Gourko to take the city on January 4th. From there he advanced toward Adrianople where he was confronted with Suleiman Pasha's army of 60,000 which that general had moved south from the quadrilateral. A series of battles near Philippopolis beginning on the 15th of January destroyed Suleiman Pasha's rearguard and the remainder of his army made its way to the Aegean coast near Enos. There at the end of January these 40,000 men were picked up by transport ships of the Ottoman navy and brought to Constantinople.³³⁴

Gourko's victory at Philippopolis was largely due to General Radetzky's successful attack against the Ottoman army still quartered around the Shipka Pass. Fighting in bitter cold, Radetzky launched an attack from St. Nicholas Hill while Prince Mirsky and Skobeleff made to encircle the Ottomans from the east and west. Fighting raged over the 8th and 9th of January, and Pfeil-Burghausz, with Prince Mirsky, recalled hearing the "fanatical shouts of Allah! Allah!" from the Ottoman soldiers as they closed to attack.³³⁵ The Russians managed to cut any escape routes and the entire Ottoman army of upwards of 30,000 men was taken prisoner.

With the defeat of the two main forces left to the Ottomans, the Russians took Adrianople on January 20th, a day after the Sultan's two plenipotentiaries arrived at the Grand

333 Richard L. DiNardo, "Russian Military Operations in 1877-78," p. 133.

334 F.V. Greene, *Report on the Russian Army*, p. 347. Suleiman Pasha was brought before court-martial and sentenced to fifteen years imprisonment.

335 Richard Graf von Pfeil-Burghausz, *Experiences of a Prussian Officer*, p. 201.

Duke's new headquarters at Kezanlik to seek terms of an armistice.³³⁶ The British concerned now that Russia would occupy the Constantinople, ordered their fleet to move toward the Dardanelles, though it was ordered back almost immediately when word was received from Ambassador Layard that any question of the straits would be discussed by the Czar and a European Congress.³³⁷

While the Czar was urged by Count Ignatiev to move on Constantinople before the British made up their mind to act, Grand Duke Nicholas signed an armistice in Adrianople with the Sultan's representatives on January 31, 1878. The army was exhausted and supplies were low and the increasing hostility from Britain convinced the Grand Duke that the war needed to end. As part of the armistice agreement, the Ottomans surrendered the fortresses of Erzeroum and Rustchuk, but Ignatiev, the Czar's peace negotiator, wanted the Grand Duke to occupy Constantinople. As it was the British finally deemed it necessary to send the fleet to the Dardanelles, where it arrived on February 13th.

The Grand Duke occupied San Stefano, a town six miles from Constantinople on February 23 and informed his brother that he was in a "suburb" of the Golden City.³³⁸ The Ottomans consented to Russian conditions and the Treaty of San Stefano was signed on March 3, 1878.³³⁹ The treaty's twenty nine articles contained many issues that were of no consequence to any but Russia and the Ottoman Empire such as Article 12, which stated that all Danube fortresses were to be razed and Article 17, which extended a full amnesty to any Ottoman subject who had been "compromised in recent events."³⁴⁰

336 Archibald Forbes, J.A. MacGahan, et. al., *The War Correspondence of the "Daily News,"* Vol.II. p. xv.

337 Virginia Cowles, *The Russian Dagger*, p. 115.

338 Cowles, p. 116.

339 Pfeil-Burghausz points out that the date was symbolic for the Russians as it was the anniversary of the Czar's accession and the freeing of the serfs. See Richard Graf von Pfeil-Burghausz, *Experiences of a Prussian Officer*, p. 296.

340 English copy of the Treaty of San Stefano in Alexander Jacob Schem, *The War in the East*, pp. 686-692.

Various European powers did see consequences for themselves in other parts of the treaty as it redrew the map of the Balkans. Under the treaty, Serbia and Montenegro would be enlarged and recognized as independent states. Romania would also become independent, though it was forced to cede Bessarabia to Russia.³⁴¹ Russia was to receive 1,410,000,000 rubles in war indemnity,³⁴² though the Porte was allowed room to turn over the all cities of the Armenian quadrilateral to Russia instead of paying the majority of the sum. Bulgaria would become an autonomous principality with an elected ruler and it was to encompass “virtually all the territory between the Danube in the north, the Black Sea in the east, the Aegean in the south, and Lake Orhid and beyond in the west.”³⁴³

This large Bulgaria made no one in Europe happy except for the Bulgarians. The Austrians argued that it had violated their pre-war agreements with Russia. Britain feared that Bulgaria would simply become a satellite of the Czar. Smaller powers were also indignant that Bulgaria was to be given so much territory.³⁴⁴

All of the concerns expressed by Europe were directed at Russia's government which was required to submit the treaty to a Congress of Powers as some of its acquisitions were in contradiction to earlier treaties Russia had signed.³⁴⁵ Negotiations throughout April and May and the possibility of a new conflict with Britain and Austria-Hungary led Russia to consent first to a redrawing of Bulgarian borders and then to a congress in June of 1878 in Berlin, under the auspices of the “honest broker” Otto von Bismarck.

Russia's representative, the aged Count Gortchakov, was better treated than the three

341 As compensation, Romania was to receive part of the Dobrudja.

342 Articles 8 and 9 in English copy of the Treaty of San Stefano in Alexander Jacob Schem, *The War in the East*, pp. 686-692.

343 L.S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans Since 1453* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), p. 409.

344 The two most vocal of these being Serbia and Greece. See Stavrianos, p. 409.

345 Specifically that of the Treaty of Paris in 1856. See Virginia Cowles, *The Russian Dagger*, p. 120.

Ottoman representatives who were largely ignored.³⁴⁶ In the end, the Treaty of Berlin signed on July 13, 1878,³⁴⁷ assured that Russia had at most achieved a Pyrrhic victory. Romania, Serbia and Montenegro were all confirmed as independent states. The Bulgaria of San Stefano was divided into three separate parts, an autonomous Bulgaria with an elected prince north of the Balkans, Eastern Rumelia, south of the Balkans, which would be ruled by a Christian governor appointed by the Sultan, and the Macedonian lands which remained Ottoman territory. Austria-Hungary was permitted to administer Bosnia-Herzegovina but it would remain a nominal possession of the Ottoman state. Russia, for its 100,000 casualties and bankrupt treasury,³⁴⁸ managed to keep its acquisitions of Bessarabia and the towns of Ardahan, Kars and Batoum. To Gortchakov, the sacrifice had been all “for nothing.”³⁴⁹

346 Bismarck told the Ottoman representatives that if they were hoping for sympathy that they should know that the Treaty of San Stefano “would have remained unaltered, if it had not touched certain European interests.” Quoted in L.S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans Since 1453*.

347 B.H. Sumner, *Russia and the Balkans*, p. 553.

348 Bruce W. Menning, *Bayonets Before Bullets*, p. 81.

349 Quoted in Virginia Cowles, *The Russian Dagger*, p. 122.

Conclusions

Some general political conclusions can be drawn from the results of the war and the final peace imposed by the Treaty of Berlin. Though Russia had not gained all it had hoped for the outcome of the conflict did manage to redraw the map of the Balkans, creating three independent countries and the makings of a fourth. The seeds of future conflict in the region were drawn by the delineating of borders composed at Berlin. The case can be made that the partition of Bulgaria led directly to the Serbo-Bulgarian war of 1885, which was in large part caused by the desire of Bulgaria to unify with Eastern Rumelia.³⁵⁰ The religious and ethnic tensions inflamed by the Russo-Ottoman War led to the often indiscriminate killing of civilians and caused massive refugee crises in Armenia and Bulgaria where Christian and Muslim alike left their homes to avoid advancing armies and possible retaliatory treatment by both sides.³⁵¹ Many of these tensions have remained in the region to this very day and the Bulgarian government of Todor Zhivkov, as late as 1984, was placing restrictions on the country's Turkish Muslim minority to help them to “rediscover their true [Bulgarian] national identity.”³⁵² The Ottoman Empire, stung by Britain’s lack of support, was to move closer into the sphere of rising Prussian dominated Germany,³⁵³ and the battle lines that would engulf the world in 1914 began to appear in 1878.

The Russian and Ottoman armies that went to war in the spring of 1877 did so in the

350 Austria-Hungary's involvement in Bosnia-Herzegovina, sanctioned by the Treaty of Berlin, lead to its annexation in 1908. The tensions caused by this between Austria-Hungary and Serb nationalists it can be argued would lead directly to the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand in 1914.

351 See James J. Reid, *Crisis of the Ottoman Empire*, pp. 352-357 for a more complete discussion of the refugee crisis during the conflict.

352 R. J. Crampton, *Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century and After*. 2nd edition (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 383-384.

353 Ottoman military missions to Germany increased and “German defense imports rose to a position of virtual hegemony” within the Ottoman state in the years from 1885-1895. These new economic relations threatened to unseat Britain, who had been the Porte's number one trading partner since 1800. See Jonathan Grant, “The Sword of the Sultan: Ottoman Arms Imports, 1854-1914”, p. 20.

midst of transitional periods for both. That neither was sufficiently prepared for the realities of war in the late nineteenth century, where the advance of weaponry had far outstripped the tactics employed by both armies, was shown in the operations of several battles discussed in this work. Both armies (though the Ottoman case is more striking) suffered from a lack of coordination between units which very often decided the case of battles, as in that of the battle for Plevna on July 30, 1877, or campaigns as in the case of the failure of the Ottoman navy and army to contest the Danube crossings. Commissariat and medical services were also inadequate on both sides for the supply and upkeep of armies in the field (with the exception of the Romanian army). The Ottomans relied heavily on British volunteers for medical care at places like Erzeroum and Plevna and the Russians, owing to the long distances from their bases in Romania and along the Danube, had frequent supply problems, most notably of ammunition. Both armies were also hampered by diplomatic and financial concerns as the Ottoman state was bankrupt before the war began and Russia

In weaponry, the Ottomans had the distinct advantage, as their rifles and artillery were of better quality and had longer range and better accuracy than that of the Russians. That this was so was acknowledged openly by the Russians and General Skobelev had an entire division during the winter campaign armed with captured Peabody-Martini from Plevna.³⁵⁴ This advantage also had its drawbacks owing to the organization of the Ottoman army as was illustrated by Charles Williams' encounter with an Ottoman supply column related in Chapter 3, but the volume of Ottoman fire was so great that it could have devastating effect, especially when faced with shoulder to shoulder attacking columns employed by Russian commanders.

The war furnished many military lessons for the Anglo-American attaches who witnessed it. The doubling of range and efficiency of breech loading rifles over traditional

354 F.V. Greene, *Report on the Russian Army*, p. 353.

muzzle loaders ushered a new era of warfare in which even half trained soldiers could do great damage to attacking forces if entrenched and equipped with modern rifles. As Greene stated in his official report to the United States government, the days of the offensive advantage had been largely made obsolete and the Russo-Ottoman War had shown that “the defense, behind fortifications has enormously gained upon the attack.”³⁵⁵ The war also highlighted that cavalry was still important for armies, though not as they had been used in the past. Having cavalry was essential for reconnaissance purposes, as well as being able to give an army quick strike capabilities. The Ottomans suffered throughout the war from their lack of an organized cavalry force, especially in Armenia where Moukhtar Pasha's army was often left completely uninformed about Russian movements. The Russians failed to take advantage of their overwhelming cavalry superiority and it was only under commanders like Skobelev and Gourko, who used them as mounted infantry, that the Russian cavalry was effective.³⁵⁶

Despite these and other lessons clearly observed and written about by not only the military attaches but also the journalists, many of them having witnessed other conflicts, the armies of the world were slow to implement them. The Spanish-American, in which Greene would take an active role, saw the Americans, though ultimately victorious, commit many of the same mistakes of flinging infantry against defended positions. In 1904-05 Russian troops at Port Arthur found themselves in a similar position to that of the Ottomans at Plevna and defended fortified positions against repeated frontal assaults from Japanese infantry. By 1914 the military lessons of the Russo-Ottoman War recorded by diplomats and journalists alike, were largely ignored as the European armies began the war to end all wars by relying on the offensive dash preceded by a usually largely ineffective artillery barrage. The “greatest

355 Greene, p. 422.

356 Richard L. DiNardo, “Russian Military Operations in 1877-78,” p. 138.

tragedy” of the Russo-Ottoman War in the words of Richard L. DiNardo was that the painful lessons and deadly mistakes learned and committed by the Russian and Ottoman armies in 1877 (spread around the world via telegram and newspaper) were ignored and recommitted again and again in subsequent conflicts.³⁵⁷

My initial research expectations on this project were that I would find a relation between which army an observer or correspondent was attached to and how that attachment affected their portrayal of the war. The results of my research I hope have shown that there was such a relationship but that it was mostly formed from past experiences or personal allegiances and attitudes. The average regular soldier on both sides was extolled, though in varying degrees, for his courage and endurance. Likewise lower and middle grade officers on both sides were deemed by many to be lacking in essential leadership qualities. Officers of high-rank, with the exceptions of Gourko, Skobeleff, and Loris-Melikoff for the Russians and Osman Pasha, Moukhtar Pasha, and even Mehemet Ali Pasha,³⁵⁸ were highly criticized for their actions by journalists and attaches in both camps with Suleiman Pasha being the most critiqued. The British correspondents were the most divided in their loyalties and men like Frederick Boyle, the *Standard* correspondent with the Russians in the Balkans and both C.B. Norman and Charles Williams in Armenia, viewed the war with an eye toward the possibility of British involvement.

Most observers tried to report all they saw as objectively as they could but national and ethnic prejudices often colored their view. Pfeil-Burghausz was not surprised that Russian officers were different from German officers because the Russians “did not necessarily require

357 DiNardo, p.138.

358 Despite his setbacks Baker found him among the best field commanders of the Ottomans and Pfeil-Burghausz believed if the Ottomans had followed Mehemet Ali Pasha's advice the war “would probably have taken another course.” See Richard Graf von Pfeil-Burghausz, *Experiences of a Prussian Officer*, p. 321.

[...] the fundamental principles of character” that distinguished German officers.³⁵⁹ MacGahan was still affected by what he had seen in 1876 and refused to acknowledge that Russian troops could be capable of atrocities. All of the Anglo-Americans from the professional soldiers to the journalists, found the Ottoman irregulars to be largely unruly and basically worthless as soldiers but, perhaps curiously, they do not condemn the Ottomans for employing.

There is still much for the scholar of military history to explore in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78. Possible future research questions that stem from this work could include a comparative analysis of religious minorities within the Russian and Ottoman armies and examination of battlefield accounts (if any) of soldiers on both sides not available in English. I see the main contribution of this work as exploring some of the limitations both armies faced in terms of organization and of hopefully showing a more balanced view of both armies through the contemporary reports and histories as well as the journals of foreign observers available in English. Some of the sources I found have been utilized before but to my knowledge not one of the secondary sources consulted for this thesis made use of Richard von Pfeil-Burghausz's memoirs and hopefully by including his voice along with some of the many others who witnessed the war this paper has contributed something new to the overall scholarship available.

359 Pfeil-Burghausz, p. 89.

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