

The Topical Past: Instrumentalization of the Historical Memory of 1812 during the Crimean War of 1853–1856

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Abstract—The main methods and forms of updating the historical memory of the events of 1812–1814 in legislative acts, periodicals, brochures, and books are presented. The complex of historical sources on this issue includes manifestos, rescripts, appeals, and letters of Alexander I, citing which contemporaries demonstrated the similarities between the Patriotic War of 1812 and the Eastern (Crimean) War of 1853–1856; a set of issues of the newspaper *Severnaya Pchela* (Northern Post) (March 1854); and book editions *The General Militia of Russia for the Faith, the Tsar, and the Fatherland* and *The 40th Anniversary of the Russians' Entry into Paris on March 19, 1814*, directly devoted to the comparison of the events of 1812 and 1853–1856. As a result of a comparative contextual analysis of texts of different origins and genre and stylistic features, three content blocks were identified through which the historical memory of the Patriotic War of 1812 and the foreign campaigns of the Russian army was updated in the public space of the Russian Empire during the Crimean War. The first problem—thematic block is represented by texts the authors of which, using historical analogies, showed the contradictory nature of the alliance of England, France, and Turkey against Russia; the disparity between the figures of Napoleon Bonaparte and Napoleon III; and the “true” goals of the Allies’ participation in the war. The content of the texts conditionally grouped into the second problem—thematic block clearly demonstrates the variety of genres and rhetorical techniques used to justify Russia’s intentions and actions in the comparative retrospective of the two wars. The third problem—thematic block of texts has made it possible to identify the main ways of updating the memory of the conflict that had happened forty years before to show the reader the continuity of generations and the readiness of the entire society to sacrifice themselves to achieve common goals.

Keywords: historical memory, Crimean War, power and society, Patriotic War of 1812, sociopolitical thought of the first half of the 19th century, *Severnaya Pchela* (Northern Bee) newspaper

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Historical memory, as a set of ideas about events and phenomena of the past, their relationship with the present, understanding the need to consider historical experience to find answers to pressing issues of our time, is one of the system-forming elements of social consciousness. In modern times, with the formation of a network of public communications, an increase in the volume and content diversity of newspapers and magazines, the emergence of “official” and unofficial “societies,” “clubs,” and other organizations, the use of historical analogies to achieve group and national goals was becoming widespread. In the first half of the 19th century, simultaneously with the quantitative growth of printed products, there was an expansion of topics and forms of updating the historical past. Manifestos and decrees; teaching aids and essays on historical topics; publications of poetic works, “travel notes,” and “letters from readers” in periodicals; news reports (including reprints from foreign publications)

and critical articles about theatrical productions—all these and other texts often acted as tools for representing historical experience, a public call to follow the heroic examples of previous generations.

The appeal to historical analogies is especially active during periods of large-scale domestic and/or foreign-policy crises related to wars and revolutions. Focusing attention on the relationship between the past and present, contemporaries of this kind of events noted typologically close examples of overcoming negative phenomena and processes. In this context, it is significant, for example, that the call of Emperor Alexander I to the unification of the people was accompanied by references to the historical experience of the consolidation of society. In the Manifesto on July 6, 1812, the Russian emperor expressed confidence that the enemy “will meet Pozharskii in every nobleman, Palitsyn in every monk, and Minin in every citizen.”¹

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¹ *Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire from 1649* (St. Petersburg, 1830), Vol. 32 (1812), No. 25175, July 6, Manifesto on the collection within the state of the Zemstvo militia, p. 388.

Later, a similar call, but this time with the mention of the events of 1812–1815, sounded on June 22, 1941, in the radio address of V.M. Molotov, and at the parade on November 7, 1941, I.V. Stalin expressed confidence that Soviet soldiers would be inspired by “the courageous image of our great ancestors—Alexander Nevsky, Dimitrii Donskoi, Kuz’ma Minin, Dimitrii Pozharskii, Aleksandr Suvorov, Mikhail Kutuzov!”²

Actualization of the historical past during periods of acute military confrontation has always been an important tool for consolidating society. The Crimean War of 1853–1856 was no exception. The analysis of the complex of legislative acts, materials of periodicals, and a number of literary and journalistic works made it possible to identify *three* meaningfully interconnected problem—thematic blocks, reflecting the characteristics of the appeal to the historical experience of participation in the Napoleonic Wars, the Patriotic War of 1812, and the foreign campaigns of the Russian army.

THE OPPONENTS OF THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE: THE IMAGE OF THE ENEMY IN COMPARATIVE RETROSPECT

In the public space, the ideological synchronization of the events of 1812–1815 occurred not from the beginning of the war with Turkey in 1853 but after the breakdown of relations with England and France. In the Manifesto on February 9, 1854, Nicholas I expressed confidence that “Russia will not change its Holy calling, and if enemies attack it, we will meet them with firmness, bequeathed by our ancestors, we remain the same Russian people the valor of which is testified by the memorable events of 1812. May the Almighty help us prove this in practice!”³

From this moment, the historical representation of the image of the enemy, its goals and moral qualities became one of the central subjects, which is traced in documents of an official legal nature and in the journalistic works of Russian authors. The image of the enemy, meaningfully constructed against the background of the historical experience of 1812, can be divided into several important elements.

First, it was emphasized that the alliance of Turkey, France, and England was unnatural and therefore temporary and fragile. The obvious confirmation of this statement was the religious incompatibility of Christianity and Islam. From these positions, already in the Manifesto on February 9, 1853, it was noted

with an exclamation mark that “against Russia, fighting for Orthodoxy, England and France are standing at the side of the enemies of Christianity!”⁴ Simultaneously with religious reasons, it was emphasized that the fragility of the alliance formed against Russia was the inevitable consequence of the history of the relationship of its main participants. Thus, for example, on March 2, 1854, in the article “Russian Letters to Yakov Nikolaevich Tolstoi,” N.I. Grech claimed that the French recalled Napoleon Bonaparte with great respect, and if his nephew called the British “... to avenge the insidious Albion for Waterloo and the glory of the uncle,” hundreds of thousands of Frenchmen would be ready to go to war with England.⁵ Moreover, the paradox of this situation, according to Grech, was manifested in the absence of logically justified reasons for joint actions with France.⁶

It is not clear how the British can blindly and unconditionally take the word of their two-faced neighbor. England acts inadvertently and recklessly, starting the war with its time-honored ally and looking for help in a foe that has no reason to love it and, acting against England, can win a lot, while in alliance with it France can lose everything. In Europe, France has eyes on the left bank of the Rhine, on Belgium and Italy; in the east, it keeps an eye on Egypt. England cannot and will not want to give it anything of this.

An important tool with which the image of the fragile alliance of the countries opposing Russian was broadcast was the constant newspaper section “Foreign News,” which presented either excerpts from foreign newspapers or evidence of foreign correspondents. Thus, for example, on March 5, 1854, a note from Constantinople of February 20 reported:⁷

It will be interesting for European readers to find out that there is no cordial harmony between the English and French sailors on the squadrons here; on the contrary, quarrels and fights occur daily. And the officers strongly complain of each other, accusing each other of violating all the decency, of insulting national feelings, and rather one can see in them a desire to shoot at each other than to unite against a third party. Russia, which knows the East better than any other power, of course, has considered this circumstance: it knows that the friendship between the British and the French is hypocritical, and very soon it can turn into obvious enmity.

² “Speech by the Chairman of the State Committee of Defense and the People’s Commissar of Defense Comrade I.V. Stalin on Red Square on the day of the XXIV anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution,” *Pravda*, Nov. 8 (1941).

³ *Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire*, Collection 2, in 55 vols. (Tip. II Otd. Sobstv. Ego Imper. Velich. Kantselyarii, St. Petersburg, 1830–1885), Vol. 29, Part 1, No. 27916, February 9, Manifesto, On the termination of political relations with England and France, pp. 176, 177.

⁴ *Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire*, Collection 2, in 55 vols. (Tip. II Otd. Sobstv. Ego Imper. Velich. Kantselyarii, St. Petersburg, 1830–1885), Vol. 29, Part 1, No. 27916, February 9, Manifesto, On the termination of political relations with England and France, pp. 176, 177.

⁵ N. Grech, “Russian letters to Yakov Nikolaevich Tolstoi,” *Sev. Pchela*, *Gazeta Polit. Lit.*, Mar. 2 (1854), p. 195.

⁶ N. Grech, “Russian letters to Yakov Nikolaevich Tolstoi,” *Sev. Pchela*, *Gazeta Polit. Lit.*, Mar. 2 (1854), p. 195.

⁷ “Foreign news, Constantinople, February 20,” *Sev. Pchela*, *Gazeta Polit. Lit.*, Mar. 5 (1854), p. 208.

A logical continuation of the topic of the historical condition of the situational nature of the alliance of England and France against Russia in 1854 was the explanation of the hidden motives of the unification of the Western allies. As one of the main reasons for the “friendship” of the states that had conflicted with one another in 1805–1814 was supposedly the fears lest Russia should strengthen its economic and military–political potential. This motive was represented, for example, in the poem by O. Miller, “Prayer at the Grave of Kutuzov.” Recalling the heroic fate of Moscow in 1812 and the subsequent victory of the Russian troops, the author focused on the direct participation of England in the “imprisonment” of Napoleon Bonaparte, whose nephew, Louis Napoleon (Napoleon III) joined the alliance against Russia:⁸

Was it long ago, o Lord, that a river of peoples
Rushed to our bosom? Napoleon led them;
Having captured half the world, he dreamed
Of seeing Rus’ bowed to the dust before him,
He dreamed that we would wait for peace
Like mercy, bowing our head before him;
But You gave us strength. Through gritted teeth,
We lit the heart of our Homeland with our own hand!
The blaze of Moscow burnt to ashes
The laurel crown around the proud brow of the alien.
Our victorious fire illuminated the whole West
And melted the shameful shackles everywhere!
<...>
Today, o Lord, two enemies are enviously staring
At our *mighty growth*,
And the *nephew’s hand* is shaking the hand
Of he who once imprisoned the uncle:
All ancient discords have been forgotten for hatred
towards us.
Their fleets are waiting at our shores,
And our friends find it hard to lend a hand to us.

In the same historical context, the Russian reader was presented with the motives for the participation of Western European countries in the book *The General Militia of Russia for the Faith, the Tsar, and the Fatherland, or Russian Warriors in the Time of Emperor Alexander I and the Currently Reigning Alexander II*. This book, published in 1855 after the death of Nicholas I, directly compared the events of the current “Eastern” (Crimean) War with the events of the Patriotic War of 1812. The author stated with regret:⁹

Four decades have passed since the twenty peoples
of different ethnicities that had flooded our Father-

land had to seek salvation in flight—tired and exhausted. And now, jealous of the power of Russia, two strong Western nations, who had long been hostile neighbors to one another, entered into an alliance against us with the Ottoman Porte. The power of Russia is really great if three powers armed themselves against it, knowing that each of them, alone, would not have been able to defeat our Northern Colossus.

An additional subject that was supposed to finally convince the reader of the “instability” and “dishonesty” of the allies was numerous publications reminding the reader of the history of relations between Russia, England, and France. Texts of this kind, as a rule, set out specific facts of Russia’s provision of military and political support to the countries that participated in the war against it. Such historical excursions were presented as proof of the lack of understanding by the rulers of European countries that only compliance with agreements could be the only condition for peaceful development with account for the interests of all parties. In *Russian Letters*, Grech asked rhetorical questions, and, in fact, accused the opponents of a lack of historical memory and an ungrateful attitude towards our country:¹⁰

It is sad and insulting to think how strong lies and slander are in the world. Russia is now being attacked from all sides and is being showered with impudent abuse. And for what? I’m not saying: Whom did Russia harm? I ask: To which of the states of Europe and Asia that are in relations with it did it not show kindness, assistance, and salvation? Didn’t England receive significant help from us when it came to overthrowing its powerful and brilliant enemy? France, for its part, owes Russia that its irritated enemies (in 1815) did not tear Alsace and Lorraine away from it and did not destroy its most brilliant monuments in Paris. The Ottoman Porta twice (in 1833 and 1840) owed its salvation to Russia.

Along with the statement about the fragility of allied relations, the dishonesty and ingratitude of the allies, *the second meaningful element of the image of the enemy* in public texts during the Crimean War was a comparison of the personal qualities of Napoleon Bonaparte and his nephew Louis Napoleon III, who had entered into an agreement with England and Turkey.

In most publications on this topic, the comparison of the two French emperors was aimed at demonstrating the contradictory figure of Napoleon Bonaparte and the insignificance of Napoleon III, who was presented as a kind of imitator of his “great uncle.” Thus, for example, in the second part of *Russian Letters*, Grech, recognizing that “Napoleon was a man of immense intelligence and great talents, a paramount commander, an amazing administrator,” and “every-

⁸ O. Miller, “Prayer at the coffin of Kutuzov,” *Sev. Pchela*, *Gazeta Polit. Lit.*, Mar. 16 (1854), pp. 242, 243.

⁹ *The Universal Militia of Russia for Faith, the Tsar, and the Fatherland, or Russian Warriors in the Time of Emperor Alexander I and Now Reigning Alexander II* (Tip. Aleksandra Semeva, Moscow, 1855), p. 5.

¹⁰ N. Grech, “Russian letters to Yakov Nikolaevich Tolstoi,” p. 195.

thing was united in this unique genius,” asked a question fundamentally important for understanding the causes of his defeat: “What did he lack?” The answer to it was formulated very clearly: “The truth. To achieve his goals, he would lie, give his word without intending to keep it, flatter those whom he needed, insult and humiliate those whom he had no reason to fear. His formidable dominion collapsed like a snowy mountain from the breath of the sun.”¹¹ This rhetorical device allowed Grech to use a historical analogy to explain the behavior of Napoleon III and the general information policy of French and English newspapers. Unambiguously hinting at the reigning monarch in France, the author wrote, “What can we say about those who, not having his genius and merits, imitate him precisely in what ruined him! Our enemies distort the truth without mercy, lie without a twinge of conscience.”¹² To prove his words, Grech offered the reader a detailed analysis of the content of an article from *The Times* of January 21, 1854, which reported on the critical situation of the financial system and the growth of public discontent in Russia. All this evidence, according to Grech, not only were at variance with the facts but also showed the absolute ignorance of English journalists of Russian reality.¹³

Along with criticism of the works of foreign authors, an additional tool for verbalizing historical analogies was the publication of specially selected materials from foreign editions. For example, on March 23, 1854, *Severnaya Pchela* published the article “A Letter from a Russian Veteran,” previously published in the *Journal de Francfort*. The article, written on behalf of a Russian veteran, who, in his words, “was once an unknown soldier on another battlefield, and now has become a humble writer,” provides a detailed analysis of the “circular” of the French Foreign Minister Édouard Drouyn de Lhuys.¹⁴ The author consistently argues that it was inadmissible on the part of the French to address the Russian emperor in the form of an ultimatum. Reflecting on modern French rule, he turns to the figure of Napoleon I, who “was, of course, a great commander, and a man of great character,” but “after all his exploits, he left France twice defeated.”¹⁵ In this context, his nephew, not possessing the outstanding qualities of his uncle, cannot count on any significant successes in foreign policy. Moreover, his “political inheritance” initially did not have strong foundations because “in the face of monarchical

Europe, no matter how Napoleon tried to introduce order, he was always a representative of the elements of unrest” and remained in the public consciousness “the embodiment of the revolution despite his imperial robe.”¹⁶

Critically assessing the anti-Russian orientation of the circular of Drouyn de Lhuys, the “Russian veteran” spoke about the need to remember 1812 in the new circumstances, “when we begin a gigantic struggle, reminiscent of the one we endured against all Europe.” This memory, according to the author, is “our glory in the past and our rule in the future.”¹⁷ From these positions, no matter how unfavorable the situation may seem today, we must bear in mind that even when the united army under the command of Napoleon entered Moscow, “neither the sovereign nor the people ever imagined the possibility of concluding a humiliating peace.” The need to publicly express historical analogies with the Patriotic War, according to the author, is quite appropriate since “our current situation is exactly the same as it was in 1812.”¹⁸

SELF-PRESENTATION OF RUSSIA'S INTENTIONS AND ACTIONS IN A HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Along with the image of the enemy, a relatively independent topic in publications during the Crimean War was a comparison of Russia's goals during the era of the Napoleonic Wars, the Patriotic War of 1812, and the foreign campaigns of the Russian army with the events of 1853–1856. The main leitmotif in texts of this kind was a demonstration of the disinterest of both Alexander I and Nicholas I in the war, their initial desire to preserve peace. Quotes from decrees, rescripts, and manifestos were used as irrefutable evidence of Russia's readiness to search for a mutually acceptable solution to the conflict. Thus, for example, in the above-mentioned publication *The General Militia of Russia for the Faith, the Tsar and the Fatherland...*, the author focused the readers' attention on the forced nature of our country's entry into the war, placing all responsibility for its continuation on England and France. In support of his words, he not only referred to the manifesto of January 29, 1855, the text of which was given in full in the same publication, but also explained to the reader the emperor's motivation: “...despite all the sincerity of His desire to preserve peace, the warring powers have never ceased to increase their strength. Seeing such hostile actions on their part and considering it His primary duty to protect the fatherland from all hostile attacks, He

¹¹N. Grech, “Russian letters II,” *Sev. Pchela*, *Gazeta Polit. Lit.*, Mar. 22 (1854), p. 263.

¹²N. Grech, “Russian letters II,” *Sev. Pchela*, *Gazeta Polit. Lit.*, Mar. 22 (1854), p. 263.

¹³N. Grech, “Russian letters II,” *Sev. Pchela*, *Gazeta Polit. Lit.*, Mar. 22 (1854), pp. 263–265.

¹⁴“Letter of the Russian veteran,” *Sev. Pchela*, *Gazeta Polit. Lit.*, Mar. 23 mapra (1854), pp. 272–274.

¹⁵“Letter of the Russian veteran,” *Sev. Pchela*, *Gazeta Polit. Lit.*, Mar. 23 mapra (1854), pp. 273, 274.

¹⁶“Letter of the Russian veteran,” *Sev. Pchela*, *Gazeta Polit. Lit.*, Mar. 23 mapra (1854), p. 274.

¹⁷“Letter of the Russian veteran,” *Sev. Pchela*, *Gazeta Polit. Lit.*, Mar. 23 mapra (1854), pp. 273.

¹⁸“Letter of the Russian veteran,” *Sev. Pchela*, *Gazeta Polit. Lit.*, Mar. 23 mapra (1854), pp. 273.

addressed all classes of the State with an appeal...¹⁹ Immediately after the text of the manifesto, the author pointed out the similarity of the current foreign policy situation with the Patriotic War, specifying the mention in the manifesto that Russia had previously overcome “painful, sometimes cruel trials.” According to the author, 1812 was such a trial for Russia, when “Emperor Alexander, with humble faith in Providence, also addressed His subjects with an appeal, confident in their unshakable devotion to the Throne and the Fatherland.”²⁰

The use of a comparative historical context to form a positive image of Russia as a country that does not have aggressive intentions is clearly visible in the comments to information from foreign sources. Moreover, as a rule, such texts contained references to correspondence from different countries, official statements of European politicians, or materials published in various periodicals. For example, on March 13, 1854, the newspaper *Severnaya Pchela* with reference to a publication in the *Journal de St.-Petersbourg*²¹ reported about “the absurd inventions of current English newspapers about Russia’s imaginary lust for power and its desire to shake the dominance of England in its Indian colonies.” The author called these fears “a terrible ghost that haunts England day and night” and the main reason that “made it forget the past.” In his opinion, a lot should be remembered: during the reign of Paul I, the alliance of Russia and England against the French Republic “for the protection of monarchical rules, for the inviolability of the European thrones, which were threatened by the hydra of the French Revolution”; during the reign of Alexander I, joint opposition to the “mighty Napoleon” in 1803, 1807, and 1812–1814 “...for the honor and freedom of Germany, and all Western Europe, for liberation from the continental system, which is harmful to it!”²² Russia even provided vital assistance to its longtime enemy, Turkey. The author reminded readers that in 1833, when “the Egyptian Pasha threatened the Ottoman Empire, Constantinople, and the Sultan,” it was “certainly not England or France but the magnanimous Russian Emperor who saved it!”²³ The historical excursion ended with an indication of the positive role

of Russia in the suppression of “unrest” in Hungary in 1849. It was argued that that campaign of Russian troops was purely peacekeeping in nature since its main goal was “the salvation of Europe from the predatory revolution, used by debauchees, sloths, and bloodthirsty ambitious people, calling themselves communists, to threaten the Crown and all its enlightenment, education, and prosperity!”²⁴ All these examples made it possible to ask, in fact, a rhetorical question, the answer to which should have been obvious to every educated reader: “Where is the Russian lust for power with which the trade policy of England frightens the European simpletons?”²⁵ An additional proof that Russia did not have a hostile attitude towards any people, according to the author, was the centuries-long history of public service and commercial activities of foreigners in Russia.

From the point of view of the editors of Russian newspapers, an even more convincing way of the self-presentation of the image of Russia was the publication of the opinions of foreign authors who directly opposed the war and, by referring to historical analogies, explained to readers the logic of the warring parties. One of these publications, accompanied by lengthy quotes and author’s comments, was a review of the brochure “Why Fight with Russia? Or Who is for War?”, published in Edinburgh by an unknown author. The editorial comment stated that the pamphlet was distributed in England by the religious society of Friends (Quakers) with the aim of preventing public demonstrations in favor of the war with Russia.²⁶ After this, on behalf of the author of the brochure, originally intended for the English reader, a detailed overview of the main arguments against England’s participation in the war with Russia was offered.

One of these arguments was a discussion about the falsity of the goals of England’s participation in the war for “a barbarian power hostile to Christianity,” whose army “is being carried away to war by a gang of fugitives, rebels, fanatics, people indifferent to bloodshed....”²⁷ The proposed formulation was supposed to demonstrate the senselessness of the war and not only the absence of any rationally justified goals but also the obvious contradiction between intercession for Turkey and the religious traditions of the British. The second argument against the war proposed by the author of the brochure to his compatriots is “the danger of an

¹⁹*The Universal Militia of Russia for Faith, the Tsar, and the Fatherland, or Russian Warriors in the Time of Emperor Alexander I and Now Reigning Alexander II* (Tip. Aleksandra Semeva, Moscow, 1855), p. 5.

²⁰*The Universal Militia of Russia for Faith, the Tsar, and the Fatherland, or Russian Warriors in the Time of Emperor Alexander I and Now Reigning Alexander II* (Tip. Aleksandra Semeva, Moscow, 1855), p. 9.

²¹*Journal de St.-Petersbourg* was an unofficial journal of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, published in French in St. Petersburg, but in the publication the belonging to the Russian government was not indicated. Focus on foreigners and the French-speaking nobility.

²²“All sorts of journalistic things,” Sev. Pchela, *Gazeta Polit. Lit.*, Mar. 13 (1854), pp. 233, 234.

²³“All sorts of journalistic things,” Sev. Pchela, *Gazeta Polit. Lit.*, Mar. 13 (1854), p. 234.

²⁴“All sorts of journalistic things,” Sev. Pchela, *Gazeta Polit. Lit.*, Mar. 13 (1854), p. 234.

²⁵“All sorts of journalistic things,” Sev. Pchela, *Gazeta Polit. Lit.*, Mar. 13 (1854), p. 234.

²⁶“Foreign news,” Sev. Pchela, *Gazeta Polit. Lit.*, Mar. 13 (1854), pp. 234, 235.

²⁷“Foreign news,” Sev. Pchela, *Gazeta Polit. Lit.*, Mar. 13 (1854), p. 235.

alliance with Louis Napoleon, who announced that he wanted to avenge Waterloo and turn the Mediterranean Sea into a French lake.”²⁸ Thus, the history of the Napoleonic Wars was considered as a reason that supposedly determined the current impossibility of mutual trust between England and France.

However, the main and most emotionally expressed appeal of the foreign author was not about England but about Russia and its emperor. He, citing the experience of the Patriotic War of 1812, expressed confidence in the inevitable victory in the current war:²⁹

History shows that although the wars of this power were unsuccessful at the beginning, it always triumphed in the end thanks to the moral strength and firmness of its people. They may have time to burn, with great difficulty and not without a stubborn struggle, several Russian ports, even several Russian cities, but these cities will revive from the ashes, as Moscow arose after the fire of 1812, and Russia will not give in; moreover, on the contrary, it will be more persistent in its resistance.

Particularly important for the Russian reader was the final part of the article, where the foreign author admitted that the Russian emperor “wants to live in peace with other countries,” and the Russian fleet’s attack at Sinope, disastrous for Turkey, was a forced and, in fact, defensive measure to prevent the strengthening of the enemy. Finally, comparing the historical role of Western countries and Russia in maintaining political stability in Europe, the author directly admitted the full support of the Russian emperor and the futility of continuing the war:³⁰

I take His side because I love truth and justice. I hate and condemn this war because with it we make enemies for ourselves, because it increases the poverty of the poor; I especially disapprove it because we are joyfully preparing to shed blood and attack a friendly power under the pretext of revenge for an insult inflicted on others, and not on us; I do not approve of such behavior because it will bring execution on our heads for our own atrocities.

AUTHORITY AND RUSSIAN SOCIETY IN WAR CONDITIONS

The third problem—thematic block identified in the course of this study was significantly larger in scope than the sections indicated above and meaningfully included publications characterizing the similarity of sentiments within Russian society in 1812 and in 1854–1855.

²⁸“Foreign news,” Sev. Pchela, Gazeta Polit. Lit., Mar. 13 (1854), p. 235.

²⁹“Foreign news,” Sev. Pchela, Gazeta Polit. Lit., Mar. 13 (1854), p. 235.

³⁰“Foreign news,” Sev. Pchela, Gazeta Polit. Lit., Mar. 13 (1854), p. 236.

In the public space of Russia, indications of the similarity of society’s perception of war and the readiness of Russian subjects to defend their Fatherland were often accompanied by quotes from the manifestos or rescripts of Emperor Alexander I and Emperor Nicholas I. An indicative example of the ideological synchronization of appeals from the supreme authorities to their subjects is the publication *The General Militia of Russia for the Faith, the Tsar, and the Fatherland*. As documentary evidence of the similarities between the two wars, the reader was offered the full text of the manifestos of January 29, 1855, “On the Call to the State Militia” and July 6, 1812, “On the Gathering of the Zemstvo Militia within the State”; appeals “to Our Mother Capital Moscow,” as well as extensive quotes from rescripts to Count N.I. Saltykov and M.A. Miloradovich, letters from Alexander I to Barclay de Tolly, and appeals of the Synod.³¹ Each of these documents was accompanied by the author’s commentary on the substantive similarity of the two emperors’ call for the unification of the people, and, consequently, the prospects for victoriously ending the war. After the text of the Manifesto on January 29, the author very clearly updated the importance of turning to the historical experience of organizing the militia in 1812: “Let us turn to this past event, similar to the present event, so that, following its progress, the Russian soldiers now taking up arms are inflamed with the same sense of selflessness that inspired them during the memorable era of the Patriotic War.”³²

In the comments to the rescript of June 13, 1812, to the Chairman of the State Council and Committee of Ministers, Count Saltykov, the attention of the reader was drawn to the words of the emperor concluding the rescript: “The defense of the Fatherland, the preservation of independence and the honor of the people forced Us to gird Ourselves for battle. I will not lay down My weapons until not a single enemy warrior remains in My Tsardom.”³³ The above quotation, according to the author of the book, contained “Alexander’s lofty thought—to perish or die,” which “will pass from generation to generation and be repeated by later offspring.” In this context, he expressed confidence that “if Providence decides to subject our Fatherland to a new trial, if the united forces of the West, together with the Ottoman Porte, armed against us at their instigation, dream, as in 1812, to shake Russia, the Russian people will remember Alexander’s words and fearlessly go into battle, repeating them.”³⁴ Thus, by referring to the public statements of the pre-

³¹*The Universal Militia of Russia for Faith, the Tsar, and the Fatherland...*, pp. 10, 11, 13–18, 23–26.

³²*The Universal Militia of Russia for Faith, the Tsar, and the Fatherland...*, p. 9.

³³*The Universal Militia of Russia for Faith, the Tsar, and the Fatherland...*, p. 11.

³⁴*The Universal Militia of Russia for Faith, the Tsar, and the Fatherland...*, p. 12.

vious and current monarchs, the continuity and trusting nature of the relationship between power and subjects were emphasized.

No less important confirmation of the existence of continuity of generations were the testimonies of contemporaries who had survived the Patriotic War of 1812. In periodicals, such evidence was published in the form of letters to the editor or publications styled as private correspondence. For example, Grech in *Russian Letters to Ya.N. Tolstoi* enthusiastically stated not only the similarity of patriotic sentiments in 1812 and 1854 but also a significant increase in the confidence of Russian citizens in Russia's ability to provide worthy resistance to the enemy:³⁵

I see a repetition of the past, I feel the same excitement in my heart when thinking about the danger for Russia, I also foresee its triumph and glory. People will write to you from here that the year 1812 has resumed—but in a new, most brilliant form, with a deep awareness of the greatness, strength, and rightness of Russia. Old people readily praise the past and blame the present. But I must say that Russia and the Russians of 1854 are loftier, firmer, more invincible than the Russians of 1812.

According to Grech, it was the continuity of generations and the awareness of the need to unite society to defeat an enemy superior in numbers that could and should become the basis for overcoming the problems arising during the current war. The Patriotic War changed people's consciousness and shaped the idea of the unity of Russian society. In this context, Grech directly pointed out the interconnection between the previous war with Napoleon and the current "Eastern War":³⁶

Without 1812, 1854 would not have happened. That era was the spring of Russian life; now the time of harvest has come. At the beginning of 1812, it was still possible to be afraid and perplexed. Now this is impossible. Now, from the very beginning, with the first steps in the military field, everything began to boil, everything rose, everything was ready to sacrifice life to the Tsar—the Father of the Fatherland and the Defender of the Orthodox Faith. Recruits come out from towns and villages with cheerful songs. Fathers and mothers, saying goodbye to their children, perhaps forever, refrain from tears. "Remember the oath," every father says to his son, marking him with a cross upon leaving a temple.

Along with the testimony of the "old men," the public demonstration of the existence in the public consciousness of associative and logical interconnection between the era of the Patriotic War of 1812 and the modern "Eastern War" was accompanied by numerous evidence from various provinces of the Russian Empire. Using publications in the genre of "let-

ters from readers" for this purpose, newspaper editors showed the commonality of historical memory of Russian subjects not only in the capital of the empire but also in Moscow, the city that had suffered the most from Napoleon's invasion, as well as in other cities of the country. As a rule, the authors of letters to the editor introduced themselves as participants in various meetings, balls, and ceremonial sessions and noted the similarity in the content of private conversations and public statements with the mood of Russian society in 1812. For example, on March 6, 1854, in the article "Road Impressions of F.B. Letter Eight," F.V. Bulgargin³⁷ shares his impressions of his stay in Moscow at a "party" in the house of Guard Colonel, Count N.V. Orlov-Denisov. At the beginning, as if by chance, he mentions that the house was purchased in 1812, and after having described it and the guests, he reports:³⁸

I did not see Moscow in 1812, but the consequences proved what kind of spirit reigned in Moscow at that time. I can confidently assure everyone that neither Paris, nor London, nor any capital in the world can ever be dominated by such a general spirit of sincere and boundless devotion to the Sovereign and the Fatherland that now dominates in the heart of Russia, in Moscow. Who do the hostile aliens take us for, demanding that Russia fear the threat of two allied states, renounce its just and sacred demands, and, as a petitioner, appear before their court to make peace? No, the noble Russians said: We will sacrifice everything—life and property....

Similar evidence of the inclusion of the memory of the events of 1812 in the modern agenda is presented in the "Letter from Kursk of March 3": "The delight of love and devotion to the Sovereign and the Fatherland is seething here, involuntarily reminiscent of 1812." Specifying his impressions, the author, whose name was not reported by the editors, testified that the nobility of the province expressed their readiness to increase the amount of donations and the allocation of recruitment, the peasants happily participated in the transportation of guns and shells, and the merchants were in a hurry to "treat the soldiers and are ready for all kinds of donations."³⁹

The wide spread of associations in the public space with 1812 was also facilitated by the tradition of celebrating anniversaries of various kinds. One of these significant dates, very relevant in the context of the current conflict between Russia and France and England, was the 40th anniversary of the entry of Russian troops into Paris, to which various meetings were dedicated and even a book with the appropriate title

³⁷Authorship established by: I. F. Masanov, *Dictionary of Pseudonyms of Russian Writers, Scientists, and Public Figures*, Vol. 3: *R—Ya* (Izd. Vsesoyuzn. Knizh. Palaty, Moscow, 1958), p. 190.

³⁸"Road impressions of F.B.: The eighth letter," Sev. Pchela, *Gazeta Polit. Lit.*, Mar. 6 (1854), p. 210.

³⁹"Letter from Kursk of March 3," Sev. Pchela, *Gazeta Polit. Lit.*, Mar. 23 (1854).

³⁵N. Grech, "Russian letters to Yakov Nikolaevich Tolstoi," p. 193.

³⁶N. Grech, "Russian letters to Yakov Nikolaevich Tolstoi," p. 193.

was published.⁴⁰ In addition, the actualization of the historical memory of the war with Napoleon was facilitated by the return to theater stages of a number of productions from the repertoire of the times of Alexander's reign, which, as contemporaries testified, were received with interest by the public. A unique reflection of the positive attitude towards well-known productions in the new conditions is the publication of notes from theater critics in Russian newspapers. Thus, for example, in the "Theatrical Chronicle" section, the author under the pseudonym R.Z.⁴¹ wrote:⁴²

There was a memorable period of Russia's struggle with the Western giant from 1803 to 1815, and our scene was always resounding with expressions of the Russian character. *Dmitrii Donskoi, Pozharskii, Susanin, Meeting of the Uninvited, General Militia, Love for the Fatherland*, and many other plays filled the theater hall with spectators every day.... In 1854, new events threw a spark into our national character, and now again the price is the same as in 1812, the same feelings, the same warmth of soul and boundless devotion.

The theater critic drew special attention of the reader to the third act of the play *News of Victories and a Guest from the Caucasus*, which reminded the audience of "the times and plays of 1812," as well as the musical production based on the poems of Prince A.A. Shakhovskoi *The Peasants, or the Meeting of the Uninvited*. The increased interest and invariably enthusiastic reaction of the audience testified, according to the critic, to the constant readiness of Russian citizens to defend the country.⁴³

Forty years have passed since the time of this play and the couplets, but their effect is the same. This serves as the best proof that Russian sentiments have not changed one bit since that unforgettable period, and that one spark from above—and all of Rus' will ignite, as then, with the purest fire of love for the Motherland and unchanging devotion to the Throne.

All these and similar statements took place against the backdrop of numerous announcements in Russian periodicals about rewarding soldiers and officers who distinguished themselves on the battlefield, voluntary donations of funds, and collection of food for the needs of the active army.⁴⁴

⁴⁰*The Fortieth Anniversary of the Russian Entry into Paris, March 19, 1814* (Tip. Vedom. Mosk. Gor. Politsii, Moscow, 1854).

⁴¹Zotov Rafail Mikhailovich. Authorship established by: I. F. Masanov, *Dictionary of Pseudonyms of Russian Writers, Scientists, and Public Figures*, Vol. 3: *R–Ya* (Izd. Vsesoyuzn. Knizh. Palaty, Moscow, 1958), p. 10.

⁴²"Theater chronicle: Alexandriiskii Theater," *Sev. Pchela, Gazeta Polit. Lit.*, Mar. 23 (1854), p. 225.

⁴³"Theater chronicle: Alexandriiskii Theater," *Sev. Pchela, Gazeta Polit. Lit.*, Mar. 23 (1854), p. 225.

⁴⁴See, e.g.: "The highest diploma given to the nobility of the Smolensk province," *Sev. Pchela*, Mar. 6 (1853).

* * *

In the public space of Russia in the first years of the Crimean War, the emphasis on the historically determined contradictions of the allies, the comparison of the personal qualities of the French emperors, their failure to fulfill previously concluded agreements, as well as the reluctance to remember the past experience of relations with Russia—all these tools for creating the image of the enemy were combined with the reproduction of the idea previously formed in the public consciousness, that of the national character of the Patriotic War of 1812, the exclusively defensive and peace-keeping intentions of both Alexander I and Nicholas I. This strategy of turning to the past made it possible to carry out historical contextualization of the current events, emphasizing the commonality of previously occurring processes, and to interpret historical facts, updating their significance for realizing the fundamental possibility of victory over the enemy. Later, after the forced conclusion of a peace agreement, the ideological synchronization of the two wars, to a certain extent, as far as possible, softened the disappointment of Russian society. In the Manifesto "On the End of the War" on March 19, 1856, Emperor Alexander II, without directly mentioning the Patriotic War of 1812, noted the immutability of the moral qualities of his subjects: "In this painful time of trial, as always, Our faithful, brave troops, as well as all classes of the Russian people showed themselves worthy of their great calling."⁴⁵ The shift in emphasis from the restrictions and concessions imposed on Russia to the heroic resistance of the defenders of Sevastopol and its subsequent abandonment, which evoked historical analogies with the retreat from Moscow in 1812, as well as the demonstration of the constant readiness of Russian subjects for self-sacrifice, became an important ideological construct in the postwar period.

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⁴⁵*Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire*, Collection 2, Vol. 31, Part 1, No. 30273, March 19, Manifesto On the end of the war, pp. 131, 132.