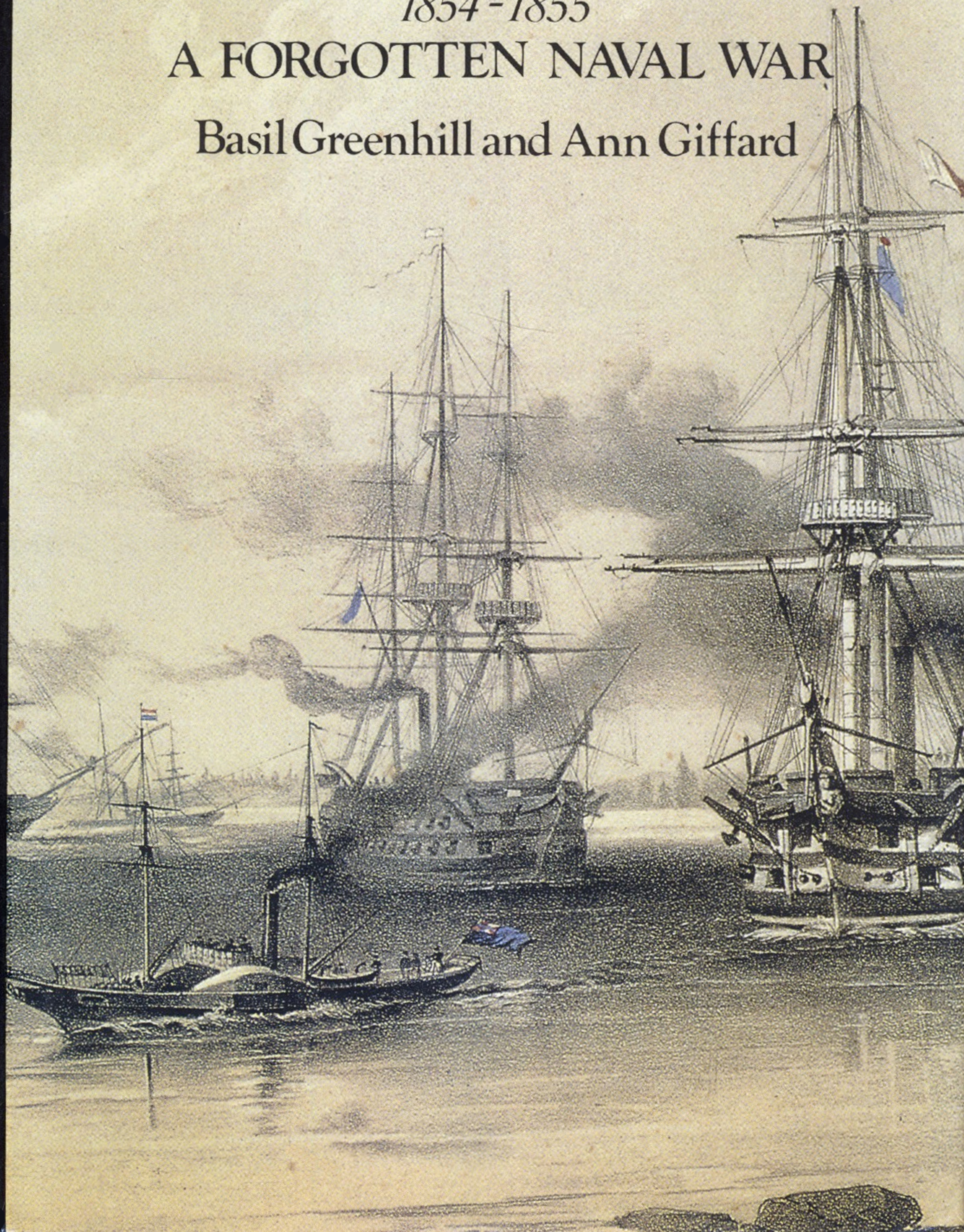
THE BRITISH ASSAULT ON FINLAND
1854 - 1855
A FORGOTTEN NAVAL WAR

Basil Greenhill and Ann Giffard



THE BRITISH ASSAULT ON FINLAND Greenhill & Giffard

NAVAL INSTITUTE PRESS

THE AUTHORS

BASIL GREENHILL took his degrees at Bristol and spent twenty years in the Senior Branch of the Diplomatic Service before entering academic life by accepting the appointment of Director of the National Maritime Museum, which he developed into a major national institution. Through the Museum's academic activities he encouraged internationally the study of the maritime aspects of history. He was co-founder – with the Director of Mystic Seaport, Connecticut – and first President of the International Congress of Maritime Museums. The author of more than twenty books, including the classic *The Merchant Schooners,* he has also worked with television and radio. A Fellow of Exeter University, amongst numerous present activities he is Chairman of the Trustees of the *SS Great Britain* Project and of the government Advisory Committee on Historic Wreck Sites. He has two sons and is married to:

ANN GIFFARD, who graduated at the Chelsea School of Art and London University, and earned her living as an artist before she married and turned her academic interests to nineteenth-century social history. Besides publishing on her own, she has collaborated with her husband in writing a number of books including *Women under Sail, Travelling by Sea in the Nineteenth Century* and the award-winning *Westcountrymen in Prince Edward's Isle,* which was filmed jointly by the BBC and the Canadian National Film Board. With an ancestral connection with Captain George Giffard and as a great-great niece of Captain the Hon Henry Keppel, Ann Giffard found research work for this book of absorbing personal interest.

Cover illustration:

Screw ships under the command of Rear Admiral Chads proceeding through the Ängö Channel to Bomarsund, HM Surveying Steamer, *Lightning* (Captain B J Sulivan) leading, 28 July 1854. From a drawing by Sir Oswald Brierly.

The Naval Institute Press publishes an unrivaled list of books on maritime history, some of which are listed below:

THE MERCHANT SCHOONERS

Basil Greenhill

A modern classic, published in two volumes forty years ago, now presented as a single volume in a large format filled with hundreds of line drawings and photographs. This comprehensive work provides a rare picture of a ship that worked the seas from 1870 to 1940 and the men who sailed her.

7¾" x 10¾", 320 pages, 250 illustrations.
ISBN: 0-87021-427-6.

SCHOONERS

Basil Greenhill

A detailed account of the evolution of the schooner, its British and American counterparts, supported by a handsome sequence of 141 illustrations.

8" x 12", 168 pages, 141 illustrations. ISBN: 0-87021-960-X.

BATTLESHIPS IN TRANSITION
The Creation of the Steam Battlefleet.
1815-1860

Andrew Lambert

The first book to study the influence of the introduction of steam power, the screw propeller, and the shell gun on ship design and ultimately on international politics.

7½" x 10", 160 pages, 120 illustrations.
ISBN: 0-87021-090-4.

WARRIOR: RESTORING THE WORLD'S FIRST IRONCLAD

Andrew Lambert

An engrossing account of the *Warrior*'s complete restoration that will delight the modelmaker, historian and layman alike.

8½" x 10", 192 pages, 150 photographs, 40 line drawings.
ISBN: 0-87021-986-3.

If you would like a free catalog of all our books please write to:

Naval Institute Press
Annapolis, Maryland 21402

THE BRITISH ASSAULT ON FINLAND
1854–1855

The British Assault on Finland 1854-1855

A FORGOTTEN NAVAL WAR

Basil Greenhill
and
Ann Giffard

NAVAL
INSTITUTE
PRESS

To Diana
Who in Finland, Russia, Estonia, Bulgaria,
Romania and Turkey shared in the
adventure of research for this book.

© BASIL GREENHILL and ANN GIFFARD 1988

First published in Great Britain in 1988 by
CONWAY MARITIME PRESS LTD
24 Bride Lane, Fleet Street
London EC4Y 8DR

Published and distributed in the United States of
America and Canada by the Naval Institute Press,
Annapolis, Maryland 21402
Library of Congress Catalog Card No. 87–63295

ISBN 0-87021-057-2

This edition is authorised for sale only in the
United States of America and its territories
and possessions, and Canada
Printed in Great Britain

CONTENTS

List of Plates vii
Preface xi
Definitions xv
Place Names xvi
Prologue xviii

PART I

Chapter 1 The Unknown Northern Land 1
Chapter 2 The Building of Bomarsund 24
Chapter 3 The Origins of the War 39
Chapter 4 The Imperial Russian Fleet 47
Chapter 5 The Royal Navy 63
Chapter 6 Manning the Royal Navy 84

PART II

Chapter 7 The Commander-in-Chief 95
Chapter 8 The Fleet Assembles 109
Chapter 9 The Fleet Sails 127
Chapter 10 Blockade 152
Chapter 11 'Take, Burn or Destroy' 171
Chapter 12 Reconnaissance 195
Chapter 13 Sulivan's Trail 223
Chapter 14 The Fortress Falls 236
Chapter 15 The Fleet Withdraws 267

PART III

Chapter 16 Steam and Sail 281
Chapter 17 1855—Preparations 293
Chapter 18 1855—The Campaign 307
Chapter 19 Sveaborg 325
Chapter 20 Peace and Afterwards 338

Tailpiece 344
Bibliography 345
Index 357

LIST OF PLATES

Between pages 46 and 47

PLATE 1. The wooden church at Petäjävesi in Central Finland, built in 1764, by Jaakko Leppanen, has the freshness and directness of true vernacular building and a beautifully modelled and finished interior, an expression of the 'wooden world' of rural Finland at its highest architectural achievement. [*Basil Greenhill*]

PLATE 2. The Vargatafjärd and the head of Bomar Sound taken from the site of Prästö tower looking due north. The ruins of Notvik tower still stand high on the sky line on the other side of the Sound. The island of Slätskär is across the water in the extreme right; the east end of Krakbarsorarna is visible behind the pine sapling. Russian plans included the linking of these skerries with Prästö by breakwaters which would have formed all this area of water into a deep sheltered harbour. [*Basil Greenhill*]

PLATE 3. Captain Lord Clarence Paget's *Princess Royal* photographed in Plymouth Sound in 1864 or 1867. Built at Portsmouth and converted to be a steam screw vessel while under construction, she was launched in 1853. She was broken up at Charlton on the Thames in 1872. [*Imperial War Museum*]

PLATE 4. The barque *Grefvre Berg*, was launched in Turku (Åbo) in 1857 as one of the many vessels built to replace war losses. She is typical not only of bigger vessels of the Finnish merchant fleet of the 1850s but also of the wooden square-rigged vessels which carried the great bulk of the world's cargoes until the 1870s. Seen here towing up the Avon towards Bristol's old floating harbour her small size – she was 556 tons gross – and thick natural fibre standing rigging are noticeable, as is the big wooden stocked anchor on her starboard bow. Her long jibboom has been rigged in to reduce the amount of space she will occupy in dock. [*Lars Grönstrand*]

PLATE 5. Bartholomew James Sulivan, 1810–1890, from a photograph by Maull & Fox. [*From the 'Life and Letters'*]

PLATE 6. HMS *Valorous*, a paddle frigate of 16 guns, built in 1851 and the last of the type to be built for the Royal Navy. *Valorous* was a unit of Admiral Plumridge's raiding flotilla in the Gulf of Bothnia. Note that the port paddle-box boat is not in position and that the top of the paddle wheel is in consequence visible. [*National Maritime Museum*]

PLATE 7. Some officers of HMS *James Watt*. The vessel, a screw ship of the line of 91 guns, was launched in 1853 and was in the Baltic in 1854 and 1855. Her machinery, second-hand from one of the unsuccessful iron screw frigates, was unsatisfactory and hampered her performance. This photograph was probably taken in 1855 or after. In 1854 facial hair, though it occurred with both officers and ratings – see the lithographs after E T Dolby

reproduced here – was not so frequently worn as this photograph suggests. [*National Maritime Museum*]

PLATE 8. When Queen Victoria reviewed the Baltic Fleet on 11 March 1854 immediately before it sailed for Vingå Sound, Roger Fenton, the photographer later to become famous for his work in the Crimea, was present at Portsmouth and took this photograph showing the Royal Yacht *Fairy* (centre) steaming through the fleet. Tremendous crowds assembled at Southsea to see the fleet sail. Chambers' *Journal* reported, 'as far as the eye could reach, the shores were covered with spectators.' [*Reproduced by Gracious Permission of Her Majesty the Queen*]

PLATE 9. Linnaeus Tripe titled this photograph 'the ship *Duke of Wellington* in Plymouth Dock'. The vessel is fully rigged with sails bent, but the topgallant yards are not aloft. Linnaeus Tripe probably took this photograph, together with others of the *Duke of Wellington*, in March 1854, immediately before she proceeded to Portsmouth to fly the flag of Vice-Admiral Sir Charles Napier. [*Plymouth City Museum*]

PLATE 10. This photograph, reproduced from a calotype negative by Linnaeus Tripe (1822–1902) made in Devonport in late 1853 or early 1854, shows the main deck and break of the quarterdeck of a large ship of the line, possibly HMS *Duke of Wellington*. The vessel was evidently laid up at the time the photograph was taken and much of her running rigging is missing. The mainyard is lowered on its halyard and lifts and no sails are bent. Note the hammocks stowed in the bulwarks, the thick natural fibre shrouds, and the device on both port and starboard shrouds of the mizzen and on the port shrouds of the main for gaining access to the shrouds over the high bulwarks. This is possibly the first photograph ever taken showing naval ratings on board ship. [*Plymouth City Museum*]

PLATE 11. The first Finnish merchant vessel to become a prize of war was the *Fröja* of Turku (Åbo) built in Åbo in 1849 and here shown reefed down in a gale off Beachy Head in December 1854, when she was owned in Salcombe, Devon, and commanded by Captain Frederick William Hill. [*Mrs Hugh Cleave*]

PLATE 12. Lithograph from drawings by Oswald Brierly of the British fleet entering the Great Belt, the passage through the Danish Islands by which the fleet entered the Baltic. [*National Maritime Museum*]

PLATE 13. Captain George Giffard's paddle frigate *Leopard* with the *Vesuvius* and a merchant ship saluting, drawn by the Reverend Calvert Jones, the pioneer photographer, in July 1853. [*Private Collection*]

PLATE 14. The *Freden*, a *galeas*, was built at Raahe (Brahestad) in 1818. She was employed in the coastal trade of the Gulfs of Bothnia and Finland and made yearly trips to Lübeck and Copenhagen. Though herself from a seaport town, in appearance she is typical of the larger rural vessels which were the principal victims of the British blockade. [*Raahe (Brahestad) Museum*]

PLATE 15. Surviving tar houses at Oulu (Uleåborg). The pine tar, 'Stockholm tar', was stored here while awaiting export, mainly to Britain. Many buildings like these were burned down by the men of Admiral Plumridge's flotilla of paddle steamers in their raid on the town. [*Basil Greenhill*]

PLATE 16. When Captain Sulivan made his numerous landings in Åland this was the kind of scene which greeted him, wooden piers built out into the water with thatched huts for fishing gear (the thatch held down against winter gales with poles), women, and a few men, at the water's edge. This photograph was taken in Saltvik Community in the later years of the century. [*Ålands Sjöfartsmuseum*]

PLATE 17. Elements of ship's companies on shore on the island of Nargen in 1855. The town of Tallin (Revel) can be seen in the background on the right. Lithograph from drawing by J W Carmichael who was present at the time. [*Private Collection*]

PLATE 18. 'The breeze was fresh from the westward, and the *Driver* . . . stood in past the Tolbuken Light, and up towards Cronstadt, until all the particulars of the fortifications and the positions of ships at anchor could be clearly made out from her deck . . . As she was coming out again she was met by the yachts *Gondola*, RYS, and *Esmeralda*, RWYC; and about the same time a large Russian steamer, with flag at the fore, was seen coming rapidly out of the harbour. The *Driver* immediately went to quarters and prepared to receive the steamer, and the yachts began to work out; in a short time the Russian stopped, and returned to Cronstadt.' Lithograph made from sketches by Oswald Brierly on board the *Driver* with quotations from his notes. Note the conspicuous paddle-box boats. [*National Maritime Museum*]

PLATE 19. Captain Sulivan landed on Simskäla and was well received by 'a nice family, father, mother and daughter . . . This family had a nice new log house, very clean, like all the others, and with bed places one above the other, built to one wall like the berths in a ship, in the same room where they live and cook. This is the general plan with these little farmers, who have few cattle and sheep, and a few acres of land in rye and potatoes with plenty of good long barns, cowsheds, etc. for their stock.' This photograph shows the main room of Seffers in Lövö, just south of Simskäla and in the same commune of Wårdö, the home of just such a small farmer/galeas skipper, a preserved mid-nineteenth century interior. Note the typical Åland cooking place, built of brick, on the right. [*Basil Greenhill*]

PLATE 20. Sulivan's Trail, looking due south from 5000 feet over Prästö, is indicated by the dotted line. Bomarsund is just out of camera to the right. Fjällskär, where some of the British dead lie buried, is the small skerry extreme right, centre. The deep channel between Töftö and Prästö is the Prästösund, by which vessels of the fleet gained access to the north of the fortress. *Penelope* grounded at its entrance, off the southern tip of Prästö, at the extreme range of the Russian guns. [*Basil Greenhill*]

PLATE 21. The lithograph, made from drawings made at the time by Oswald Brierly, shows the *Lightning* leading the *Edinburgh*, the *Hogue*, the *Blenheim* and the *Ajax*, all 60-gun blockships, the screw frigate *Amphion* and the paddle sloop survey vessel *Alban* bringing up the rear through the Ängö Sound 22 July 1854 on the way to the attack on Bomarsund. It is possible to identify the point at which this drawing was made as in the vicinity of the modern ferry landing on Lumparland looking south. [*Private Collection*]

PLATE 22. The mud fort on Grinkarudden where Keppel, having absented himself from his command, met Captain Cooper Key of the *Amphion*. Subsequently the fort was equipped with a 10-inch gun landed from HMS *Blenheim* which, under the command of Captain Denham of that vessel, kept up continuous fire during the attack on the main fort of Bomarsund which can be seen in the background. This drawing was made by Lieutenant (later Admiral) Francis Arden-Close who was promoted commander for his part in this operation. [*National Maritime Museum*]

PLATE 23. 'Position of the Allied Forces at the reduction of Bomarsund, 16 August 1854' drawn by George Giles, Master, HMS *Arrogant*. This excellent drawing covers all the features described in the text, the maps and the captions of other plates. The note 'Remains of Earth Works' appears on the island of Hararna, the site of the former Russian battery at the head of the Ängö Sound. [*Public Record Office*]

PLATE 24. Notvik tower showing the breach made by the 'three short 32-pounders' firing a total of 532 rounds, 487 balls and 45 shells. Lithograph from drawings by E T Dolby. [*National Maritime Museum*]

PLATE 25. Titled 'A sketch on the Quarter Deck of HMS *Bulldog*, 15 August 1854, Bomarsund' this lithograph from a very fanciful drawing by E T Dolby shows Captain Hall, extreme left, in conversation with Rear-Admiral Seymour, Rear Admiral Chads with his back to the artist, Sir Charles Napier in straw hat with telescope and handkerchief falling out of his pocket and Rear Admiral Plumridge in cocked hat. [*National Maritime Museum*]

PLATE 26. The assault on Bomarsund as seen by a contemporary artist. The 'mud fort' on Grinkarudden is on the land on the left. Bränklint tower is in the act of blowing up after its surrender. Notvik and Prästö towers are clearly visible, as is the village of Skarpans and the houses on Prästö. The main fort is under attack. [*Museé de la Marine, Paris*]

PLATE 27. Russian guns from Notvik tower arranged in a serried rank overlooking the north end of the Bomar Sound. The site of Prästö tower, from which the photograph in Plate 2 was taken, is on the land on the opposite side of the water on the left of the photograph. [*Basil Greenhill*]

PLATE 28. Bränklint tower as it is today. [*Basil Greenhill*]

PLATE 29. 'On 4 September, the fleets being anchored at Ledsund, in the Åland Islands, it came on a heavy gale from the northward. Many of the ships drove during the night, and nearly all let go a second anchor . . . On the 5th and 6th it continued to blow strongly, and increased again to a gale on the 7th; blowing very hard in the squalls, and about 4 pm the English ships sent down fore and main-topmasts.' Lithograph from drawings made by Oswald Brierly whose notes are reproduced above. The vessels are depicted with topgallant masts sent down. Evidently later in the gale the topmasts where sent down as well, together with the topsail yards. Such work in such conditions required extreme skill. [*National Maritime Museum*]

PLATE 30. Suomenlinna, Viapori or Sveaborg from the south east, the group of islands in the centre of the picture, with Helsinki in the background. Södrahamn, with the buildings depicted on page 17 clearly visible, is the big bay in the right centre background. Observatory Hill, where the citizens of Helsinki gathered to watch the bombardment, is the dark area immediately to the west of the mouth of Södrahamn. The old-fashioned steamer is making her way through the narrows that mark the deepwater entrance to Helsinki Harbour. The Russian battleship *Rossiya* was moored broadside on across this channel just beyond the bows of the steamer. Bakholm, now known as Vallisaari, on which General Jones proposed the landing of 5000 men, is in the immediate foreground. [*National Board of Antiquities, Finland/Salkari Salokangas*]

PLATE 31. In a quiet grove of pines in a modern military area on the island of Fårö, across Fårö Sound from northern Gotland, is the Engelskakyrkogården where some of the dead of the campaigns of 1854 and 1855 lie buried. [*Basil Greenhill*]

PREFACE

Crimocentricity—the noun is ours and is derived from Andrew Lambert's adjectival 'crimocentric'—has been a characteristic of almost all historical writing about the war with Russia of 1854–56. The war is seen as centred on the battlefields on a small fragment of the coastal plain of the peninsula on the Black Sea although, in fact, it was a worldwide conflict, (with an engagement even in the Pacific) which began and ended in the Baltic Sea, on the coasts of Finland. It was here that what was to prove in the end the most telling force was brought to bear on the Russian autocracy.

One purpose of this book is to correct the balance and to put on record the achievements and non-achievements, the frustrations and follies of the British fleets in the Baltic in 1854 and 1855. They were the fleets of a navy in rapid transition, the first steam-screw battlefleets that had ever gone to war, the most formidable attacking forces that had ever existed at sea. Its very existence, unique in the world, gave the British steam-screw battle fleet total command of the sea and kept the Russian Fleet, a massive relic of the sailing navies of all the centuries before, locked away behind the formidable defences of Kronstadt, and the autocracy in fear of an attack on the capital city and seat of government, St Petersburg, situated at the head of the Gulf of Finland, behind the protecting forts of Kronstadt. In 1856, when the possibility of such an attack became a certainty, that fact was one of the major influences in bringing the war to an end. In the preceding two summers the threat of the hovering British screw-steamers in the Gulf of Finland had kept 200,000 or more Russian troops, including the crack Guards regiments, on the shores of that Gulf when their presence on the battlefields in south Russia might have changed the course of events there to Russia's advantage.

The Baltic fleets had other purposes. One was to destroy such Russian naval and military installations as were accessible to them, given the equipment with which they were supplied. Another was to launch an attack

on the shipping and trade of Finland. What is now Finland was then a quasi-autonomous grand duchy of Tzarist Russia, with the Tzar himself as the Grand Duke. Finland and the Finns were granted a degree of social, economic and political freedom unique in the rapidly-growing Russian Empire. By far the greater number of merchant ships sailing under the Russian flag was Finnish, owned in the coastal towns in the Gulfs of Bothnia and Finland and by countrymen, small farmers, living on the coast and in the great archipelagos of the Gulfs. Much of the trade of the towns and their ships was with Britain. Their merchants had built up most intimate trading links with this country, and a great deal of the trade was British financed. Indeed, Britain was dependent on Finland for vital raw materials. The countrymen, the owners of the small ships, often living out on the wild islands, were poor men and women in the very early stages of capital generation through small-scale merchant ventures. Given the nature of the Russian autocracy, an attack on these people could have no real influence on the course of the war; yet for two summers, the towns, villages, and isolated farmsteads, as well as Finnish shipping, large and small, became the target for attack by a navy the majority of whose officers appear to have been unaware of any distinction between Finland and Russia or Finns and Russians.

This assault on Finland and the Finns' response to it were to have their effects on the Russian administration's attitude to Finland and, in the very long run, on the course of that country's development into the prosperous independent Finland of today. We seek in this book to say what happened in those two Baltic summers of 1854 and 1855, and what, in the broadest sense, were the results. We also seek to explain, to some extent, why it happened. And Andrew Lambert, one of the 'better singers' of our Tailpiece, will be dealing with this aspect of the history in greater depth in a forthcoming publication.

This book provides an example of the dangers of neglecting the maritime dimension in historical studies. At the same time, the study may also suggest that there can be no maritime history, and certainly no naval history, distinct from economic, technical, social and diplomatic history. And in attempting to record the history of a conflict it is necessary to take account of the historical sources of both sides.

We have been helped by a great many people. It was the late Sjöfartsrådet Edgar Erikson of Mariehamn and his wife, Solveig, who suggested that this book should be written and who introduced us to the site of the great, incomplete Russian naval base at Bomarsund, which was attacked and destroyed by British and French land and naval forces in August 1854. In the Åland Islands, where the remains of the naval base are situated, Martin Isaksson, then Governor of the Province, Commander Kärkkäinen of the Finnish Naval Forces and Hilding and Marja Lundqvist of Västergård in Vargata in Wårdö provided the facilities which made it possible for us to complete the extensive field work necessary to the understanding of the campaign in the islands of 1854. We are also greatly indebted to Martin Isaksson for help in many other ways. In Åland also, Sverre Scott, who has been studying the site of Bomarsund for many years, was most helpful, as were also Justus Harberg and Captains Karl Kåhre, Karl Karlsson and Göte Sundberg. In Kokkola, Mrs Martinozolli and her husband were most helpful, as were also Pekka Toivanen at Pietarasaari, Christer Norrvik and Captain Harju of Kristinankaupunki, Lars Grönstrand of Turku, and Professor Knut Pipping and John Hackman of the Åbo Akademi. In Helsinki, Professor Christoffer Ericsson, CJ Gardberg, Dr Torsten Edgren, Matti Gustafsson, and Henry Forsell were all extremely helpful to us. We also wish to thank especially Artos Erkko, proprietor and Editor-in-Chief of the *Helsingin Samomat* and his London correspondent, Erkki Arni. In Poland, Jerzey Litwin was our most helpful escort and guide during some 2000 miles of travel. In Washington, Dr Philip Lundberg was most helpful in suggesting American source material. In Britain, we are most grateful to Dr Screen of the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London, to the staffs of the British Library, the Guildhall Library, the Plymouth Reference and Naval Libraries, the Caird Library and the Department of Pictures of the National Maritime Museum, especially Alan Pearsall, Ann Shirley and Dr David Cordingly, and to the Public Record Office, especially Dr N A M Rodger. We are very grateful to Dr Ewan Corlett for his help in understanding the development of the screw-steamer and the role played by the *Great Britain* in its history. We want to thank Captain Peter Allington and Master Shipwright Tom Perkins for much very practical advice. We are also very grateful to Hugh A Warren OBE, for his brilliant translations from several languages, and finally to our patient secretary, Mrs Ivy Grinney.

We also wish to thank the Trustees of the Caird Fund for a grant which partly financed our field work and for the use of illustration material provided by the National Maritime Museum under the grant. Our very special gratitude is due to Professor John Vincent of the University of Bristol, to Dr Michael Branch, Director of the School of Slavonic and East European Studies of the University of London, to Dr Andrew Lambert, the historian of the mid-nineteenth century navy and to Dr John Channon of the School of Slavonic Studies, all of whom read copies of the typescript of

this book and most kindly prepared critical assessments of it. We have gratefully taken full account of their most constructive comments, but we are, of course, entirely responsible for the book in its final form.

Finally, we are from time to time asked to explain the workings of our long-established collaboration. Such a process is much too subtle to be spelled out. The quotation of Finnish folk poetry which forms our prologue explains it, perhaps, as completely as it ever can be explained.

Basil Greenhill
Ann Giffard

DEFINITIONS

The use of some contemporary technical terms is unavoidable in a history of this kind. They were part of the language at the time the events recorded took place. In the same way, the technical terms associated with computers are becoming part of modern English. The following classification of ship types, partly based on Lambert's definitions, may be useful.

Ship of the line: a sailing warship with two or three covered gun-decks, in this period carrying between 70 and 120 guns.

Frigate: a sailing warship with a single covered gun-deck, carrying between 32 and 60 guns. Used for scouting and protection of commerce.

Paddle-frigate: a large paddlewheel-driven steam warship with a battery of very heavy guns.

Screw-frigate: a frigate with steam screw propulsion.

Blockship: a British conversion of a small ship of the line, originally of 74 guns. Intended for harbour defence and coastal operations.

Wooden steam battleship: any ship of the line which was built for, or fitted with, screw-steam propulsion. Two or three covered gun-decks, 60 to 131 guns.

Floating battery: a French-designed armoured vessel of limited sea-going ability, intended for the bombardment of coastal fortifications.

Ironclad: a sea-going ship with armour plate, descended from the floating battery.

Full-rigged ship: a three-masted merchant ship, square-rigged on all three masts.

Barque, or bark: a three-masted merchant ship, square-rigged on fore and main masts, gaff-rigged on the mizzen.

Brig: a two-masted merchant ship, square-rigged on both her masts (that is the fore and the main).

The last three definitions were equally applicable to naval vessels.

Schooner: at this period in Northern Europe a two-masted vessel gaff-rigged on both masts and with square sails set on the fore topmast.

PLACE NAMES

Since the middle of the nineteenth century there have been many changes in the names of places in the Baltic region. In particular, names in the Finnish language have come into use in parallel with, or in place of, the old Swedish names in mainland Finland, although in Swedish-speaking Åland the old Swedish place names are still in sole use. In this book we have used Finnish place names with the Swedish names used during the war in brackets. The following list of modern place names with the older, or Swedish language, names may be helpful.

Finnish and/or *Modern*	*Swedish* and/or *Nineteenth Century*
Daugava river	Dvina/Düna river
	Elgsnabben = Älvsnabben
Gdańsk	Danzig
	Gottska Sands = Gotska Sandön
Hamina	Fredrikshamn
Hanko	Hangö
Helsinki	Helsingfors
Hiiumaa	Dager Ort
Kaliningrad	Königsberg
Klaipeda	Memel
Kokkola	Gamla Karleby
Kristiinankaupunki	Kristinestad
Kronstadt	Cronstadt
Køge Bugt	Kioge Bay
Lappohja	Lappvik
Leningrad	St Petersburg
Liepaja	Libau
Naissaar Island	Nargen/Nassau Island
Oslo	Christiana
Oulu	Uleåborg
Paldiski	Baltic Port
Pietarsaari	Jacobstad
Pillau	Baltiysk

Pori	Björneborg
Porvoo	Borgå
Raahe	Brahestad
Rauma	Raumo
Saaremaa	Oesel/Ösel
Sovetsk	Tilsit
Suomenlinna/Viapori	Sveaborg
Tallinn	Revel/Reval
Tammisaari	Ekenäs
Turku	Åbo
Uusikaupunki	Nystad
Vaasa	Vasa
Vehmaa	Wirmo
Viipuri	Viborg
Vingå	Wingo Sound

PROLOGUE

'Shall I start to sing
Shall I begin to recite
With a good man as partner
two who grew up together?
Come, let us put hand in hand
and finger in finger gap
each grip in the other's grip.
One word from you, one from me
splendid speech from both:
We will shape our mouths
We will pitch our tunes
like two kanteles
like five or six gates
*three doors of a hut.'**

*Miihkali Pertunen, recorded by A A Borenius (1877), quoted in Kuusi, Bosley & Branch, *Finnish Folk Poetry: Epic* (Helsinki, 1977).

PART I

I

The Unknown Northern Land

The long prelude to the British assault on Finland of 1854–5 began in July 1807 on a great raft moored on a river which is now the border between the Soviet Republic of Litva (formerly called Lithuania) and the Rossiiskaya Sovetskaya Federativnaya Sotsialisticheskaya Respublika, or RSFSR, once part of East Prussia. The river was the Neman, or Nemunas, and the raft was moored off the town of Sovetsk, which for centuries was known as Tilsit. To find these places (which are little known in western Europe) on a modern map you must look at the south coast of the Baltic Sea where it turns suddenly in a right angle to the north, after running due east and west in Gdańsk Bay on the coast of Poland.

The raft was moored to provide a meeting place for the Emperor Napoleon of France and the Emperor of Russia, Alexander, and on it an agreement of mutual expediency was signed which provided a façade for the settling of outstanding differences and was supposed to herald a new era of co-operation. Short lived as it was (for Napoleon was to invade his new ally's territory in the disastrous campaign of 1812) this treaty was to have important consequences, some of the effects of which are still apparent in the late twentieth century.

Napoleon had dreams of the conquest of India, and references in the negotiations on the Neman to a possible joint Franco-Russian invasion through Turkey, Persia, and Afghanistan, gave rise to the 'Great Game', the contest between Britain and Imperial Russia for political ascendancy in Asia. This 'tournament of shadows', as a great Russian minister was later to call it, was to last for much of the nineteenth century and influenced the course of events in western India and central Asia. A legacy, it has been argued, was the Russian occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s.

A second consequence of the Treaty of Tilsit was that Russia, Prussia, and Denmark joined the blockade against Britain which Napoleon had declared a year before. It was intended that Britain should be totally excluded from commercial relations with the rest of Europe. In the north,

the ports of all the Baltic timber-exporting countries, except Sweden, were for a short time closed to Britain. Baltic timber was as important to a Britain deeply involved in the Napoleonic wars and in the early throes of an industrial revolution as steel is to industry today. The result of its temporary loss was the rapid development of the Canadian timber trade which lead to the mass movement of people of British origin into Canada and the United States in the mid-nineteenth century.

However, there was a price to be paid for Russian support for French strategic blockade and French ambitions for long-term conquest. It was to be paid at the expense, not of France, but of Sweden. To make the continental blockade against Britain complete, Sweden had to be persuaded, or coerced, to join in. The Emperor Alexander was given a free hand, under arrangements entered into at Tilsit, as to the means by which this was to be brought about. But, encouraged by the appearance of a British Fleet in the Baltic, a development which was itself a consequence of events in Denmark following the Tilsit treaty, the Swedish King, Gustav Adolf IV, despite the fact that he was a brother-in-law of the Russian Emperor, remained outside Russian and French influences.

Nevertheless, Sweden's position was weak. Indeed, it has been argued that the wars she had entered into with Russia in the eighteenth century had left her eastern territory indefensible. This country, which is now Finland, was then part of metropolitan Sweden. Britain, following in her own interests the policy of encouraging stability in the Baltic Sea, saw a threat in Sweden's weakness and Russia's growing sphere of influence. The annexation of the Crimea by Russia in 1783 had done nothing to allay British fears; but when Napoleon and the Emperor Alexander met on their raft in 1807, midway through the long Napoleonic Wars, Britain, anxious not to alienate Russia and hopeful of her eventual separation from France, was in no position to protect Sweden. Russian policy with regard to Sweden's Finnish territories had never been clarified in the eighteenth century when the main thrust of her foreign policy had been in the south-west, but twice, in 1741 and 1788, Swedish armies had threatened St Petersburg, Russia's new capital city.

St Petersburg had been established by Peter the Great at the head of the Gulf of Finland on land taken from the Swedes at the beginning of the eighteenth century, during the Great Northern War. Peter the Great's objective was to gain access to the seas of the world as well as to build a magnificent capital. The acquisition of the areas of marshland, sparsely inhabited by Finnish-speaking peasants, on the banks of the Neva, where St Petersburg was to rise; the foundation of the city during the war, in 1703;

the consolidation of Russian possession of it at the victory over the Swedes at Poltava in 1709 (which has been described as one of the decisive battles of world history)[1]; and the subsequent defeat of the Swedish naval forces at Hanko (Hangö) in 1714, were the steps by which he achieved his object. There followed the formal acquisition of the territory, together with Estonia and the territories fronting the Gulf of Riga, at the treaty signed with Sweden at Uusikaupunki (Nystad) in 1721 when the Great Northern War ended and Russia emerged for the first time both a Baltic and a naval power; indeed, as one of the great powers of Europe.

The magnificent new capital of Russia grew on the banks of the Neva as the eighteenth century advanced. A new naval base at Kronstadt, a heavily fortified group of islands at the head of the Gulf of Finland guarding the approaches to the capital, became Russia's first line of defence. The possession of Estonia meant that the southern coast of the Gulf of Finland was already in Russian hands. Although the territory of Finland, with its sparse population and lack of natural resources, did not much interest Russia, characteristically, the pushing of the outer lines of defence ever further forward did interest the Emperor Alexander a great deal. If both sides of the Gulf of Finland were in Russian hands and the great Swedish fortress of Sveaborg on islands off the modern town of Helsinki became a Russian naval base; if, in due course, an additional base could be constructed in water free from winter ice further west still, then St Petersburg, given an effective Russian Fleet, would be inviolably secure, not only against Sweden, but against any power hostile to Russia with which Sweden became allied – and in 1808 Sweden enjoyed close relations with Britain, and was, indeed, Britain's only ally in Europe. Russian forces had twice temporarily occupied large areas of Finnish Sweden in the eighteenth century, but now the position had changed and occupation would mean permanent annexation. Finland began to be spoken of in St Petersburg as 'the gift from Tilsit'.

Vastly important as the Baltic basin and the Fenno-Scandian region has been to Britain, as the source of part of our ancestral stock and language, as a major trade route to the east and as a source of cultural influence, its study has been left to a few specialists. This book deals almost exclusively with the north-eastern part of this region, and very largely with two or three years of its history in the mid-nineteenth century. It is therefore necessary to set the scene in some detail.

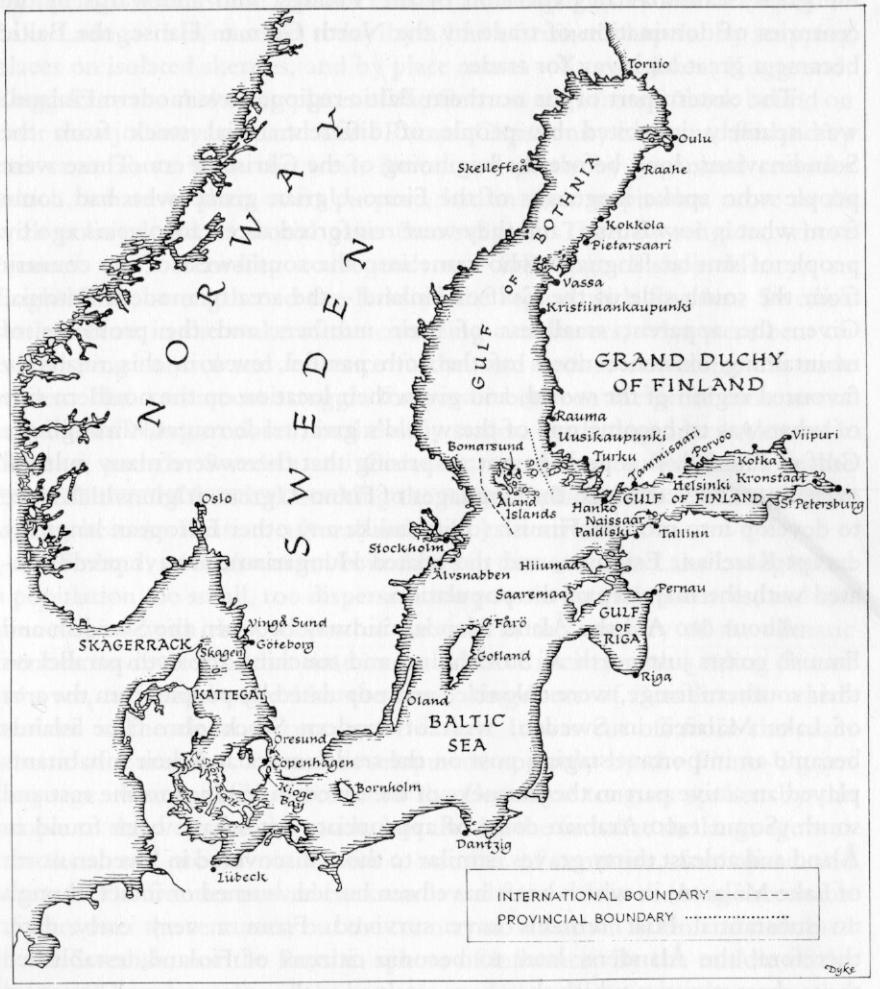
The Baltic is an inland sea accessible from the Atlantic, and thereby from the other oceans of the world, through only three channels. These are

[1] C H O Hoetzsch, *The Evolution of Russia* (London, 1966).

The Sound (the Öresund) which runs between the southern province of Sweden, called Skåne, and the main island of Denmark, called Sjaelland; the Great Belt (the Store Baelt), which runs between Sjaelland and the next largest island of Denmark to the west, Fyn; and the channel between Fyn and the continental mainland of Denmark, the peninsula of Jylland, which is called the Little Belt (the Lille Baelt). Of these three channels, the first and most important now has water deep enough to take most of the world's shipping, even today. It is only 5 kilometres wide between Helsingør in Denmark and Hälsingborg in Sweden. Hamlet's castle, the Kronborg, in Helsingør could, and did for centuries, control the deep water gateway to the Baltic and from the Baltic to the oceans. The Great Belt is wider and is a longer route to the open Baltic Sea. The Little Belt is so narrow that at one point it is bridged.

As well as the Neman, several other great rivers flow into the Baltic. The Oder and the Wisla drain parts of the great North European plain. The Daugava, which joins the Baltic at Riga, like the Neman brings down water from the Russian plain, as does eventually the Neva, the river on which the palaces of Leningrad (St Petersburg) stand at the head of the Gulf of Finland. The Baltic receives vast quantities of fresh water from these and other rivers and so it is a brackish sea, not so salt as the open oceans (the mingling of fresh and salt water provides ideal conditions for fish and fishing) and with a very limited tidal movement. This is not to say that the sea does not rise and fall. It varies in height with barometric pressure and wind. The water can be a metre or more lower than average at the mouth of the Gulf of Finland with high pressure and a persistent strong northerly wind. With a long-lasting low pressure and winter gales from the south-east, the icy water of winter can rise to cover wharves and wreck boats carelessly beached.

The warm waters of the Baltic Sea make a breach in one of the natural frontiers which have been important in human history. The 60th North parallel of latitude runs just south of the Great Slave Lake in the North-West Territories of Canada, bisects Hudson Bay, touches the southern tip of Greenland, runs right through Siberia and north of the Sea of Okhotsk. These places are all north of the grain line and late twentieth century human life is made possible only by high technology, by support from the south. Without it, only the trapper, the hunter-gatherer, perhaps the herdsman, can survive. Yet almost on the parallel stand Leningrad and Helsinki, and just south of it, Stockholm – three of Europe's greatest cities. The Boreal Forest of the sub-Arctic here stops north of the parallel, while in the rest of the world it flows far to the south. The grain line also reaches far to the north here. The winters are savage, but the summers are often idyllic and in



The Baltic Region.

Finland for two months can be hot and stable with brilliant sunlight for twenty-four hours a day. The long hours of daylight give the summer nights a magical quality. The growing hours of crops are extended long enough for grain (though not apples) to ripen even north of Vaasa (Wasa) on the coast of the Gulf of Bothnia, while fields are ploughed, cattle grazed, and the woodman tends and crops his forests as far as at the head of the Gulf of Bothnia. In Vendel, that is immediately pre-Viking, times, in the years of

the great Scandinavian expansion of the Vikings, and afterwards in the centuries of domination of trade by the North German Hanse, the Baltic became a great highway for trade.

The eastern part of the northern Baltic region, now modern Finland, was sparsely inhabited by people of different racial stock from the Scandinavians, long before the beginning of the Christian era. These were people who spoke languages of the Finno-Ugrian group who had come from what is now Russia, and they were reinforced about 2000 years ago by people of similar language who came into the south-west of the country from the south side of the Gulf of Finland – the area of modern Estonia. Given the apparent smallness of their numbers and the problems of maintaining existence north of the 60th parallel, even in this relatively favoured region of the world, and given their location on the northern side of what was to become one of the world's great trade routes, through the Gulf of Finland, it is perhaps not surprising that there were many cultural exchanges. Nevertheless, the languages of Finno-Ugrian origin which were to develop into modern Finnish (quite unlike any other European language except Karelian, Estonian, and the related Hungarian), always predominated with the majority of the population.

About 600 AD the Åland Islands, midway between the Swedish and Finnish coasts just north of Stockholm, and touching the 60th parallel on their southern fringe, were colonized and populated by people from the area of Lake Mälaren in Sweden, west of modern Stockholm. The islands became an important staging post on the trade routes and their inhabitants played an active part in the journeys of the Swedish Vikings to the east and south. Some 1400 Arabian coins of appropriate dates have been found in Åland and at least thirty graves, similar to those discovered in Sweden north of Lake Mälaren, in which boats have been buried, burned or intact, though no substantial boat remains have survived. From a very early date, therefore, the Ålanders, later to become citizens of Finland, established those characteristics which they have retained to the present day. They were entirely Swedish in culture (though in the last two centuries they have slowly developed an individual Swedish language culture of their own), they were great traders, and they were people of boats, ships, and the sea.

The racial mixture consequent upon the development of the trade routes is demonstrated in Åland today. The great majority of the population is blue-eyed and fair-haired, but in the community of Kökar, a group of islands in the extreme south, right on the great east-west trade route, there is an above average number of people with brown eyes and dark hair. This trade route ran from Lake Mälaren through the Åland archipelago to the

archipelago of the south coast of Finland and through the Gulf of Finland to Lake Ladoga. It is marked today by a line of ruined chapels, by stopping places on isolated skerries, and by place names – Kuggholmen, Kuggsund, Kuggskär – the sheltering places of the German cogs from Lübeck bound on their slow journeys east and west. Roman Christianity came into Finland by this same route from the west, introduced partly by organized crusades which, whatever their overt purpose, had in their inspiration more to do with political and territorial gains than religion. The new religion, whose pioneer was, according to legend and folksong, Bishop Henry, an Englishman, strengthened the links of the region with Sweden. Swedish settlers came in the wake of the crusading conquerors, who were bent on establishing control and influence further and further east along the trade routes. The consequent struggle for power between the great commercial republic of Novgorod, led, in the early stages, by the legendary Alexander Nevsky, and the Swedish and Germanic invaders, resulted finally in the establishment of frontiers marking the meeting places of Swedish and what was to become Russian cultural and political territory.

Finland, with its natural boundaries in the sea and in Lake Ladoga, had a population too small, too dispersed, too poor in natural resources, and too preoccupied with the problem of survival in this country of the climatic frontier, to develop at that time into a cohesive society with a ruling élite of its own, a unified state like the three kingdoms of Scandinavia which evolved in the eleventh century or earlier. It was cut off from the main stream of European cultural development not only by the Finno-Ugrian language, which gave no access to the Germanic tongues spoken by the people to the west and the south, but also by the fact that the language was not then, and would not be for a number of centuries, formalized and written. The frontier moved backwards and forwards in the long succession of wars over the centuries, but the country now known as Finland remained in the Swedish, not the Russian sphere of influence. By the middle of the thirteenth century Swedish settlers were moving into the sparsely-populated areas of south-western Finland in large numbers. The Finnish-speaking inhabitants lived in the interior. There was no great conflict of interest, and relations between the two cultural groups, the Finnish speakers and the Swedish speakers, developed peacefully from the very beginning.

Gradually, a Swedish legal system and a Scandinavian type of social pattern developed in Finland. Swedish and Finnish customs and practices continued side by side. The independent Finnish farmers retained their freedom and ran their own affairs in their own areas. The Åland islanders, like the rest of the population, were not subjected to feudalism. Although

more numerous and better organized and with greater resources than the Finns, the Swedes were in no position to enslave them. The Finnish farmer was never bound to the soil as his European or British counterpart frequently was. The country was represented in the Diet in Stockholm in the four 'estates', developed early in the fifteenth century, under which the nobility, the clergy, the merchants, and the farmers all participated – at least in theory – in government. In the words of a distinguished contemporary Finnish historian, Professor Matti Klinge, this system 'gave Finland indisputable and full political rights within the Kingdom of Sweden'.[2]

This situation continued through all the vicissitudes of the conflicts between Sweden and her neighbours to the east, west, and south and the consequent ebb and flow of armies across the country, and through two periods of Russian occupation. Finland was not a colony or an occupied territory of Sweden. It was a part of Sweden, sparsely populated, as was mainland Sweden's own territory on the west side of the Gulf of Bothnia, north of the 60th parallel, and cut off to a degree for six months of the year by the ice and snow. It was populated mainly by people who did not speak Swedish, but who were too few in number and too dispersed to develop a strong political or cultural consciousness and who accepted their position as freemen in Sweden without much question.

Though the famine in Finland in the 1690s was the worst in European experience, during the seventeenth century on the whole the country prospered, with a university founded at Turku (Åbo) at the south-western corner of the country, and with the translation and publication of the complete Bible into the Finnish language. New towns were founded. Migration became a two-way process with population movement from eastern Finland into Sweden. Gradually the standard of living rose.

However, Sweden's years as a world power were over by the early eighteenth century. The country had been seriously weakened by defeat in the Great Northern War with Russia. This conflict lasted for twenty long years from 1700 until 1721, during which Finland was occupied by Russian forces in a dreadful period which became known as the Great Wrath. The war ended with loss of territory for Sweden in Karelia, at the head of the Gulf of Finland. A second conflict, the Little Northern War of 1741 to 1743, was again accompanied by a Russian occupation, known as the Little Wrath, and by the ceding of more land in the east to Russia. Sweden was left with its eastern regions difficult to defend against further invasion. With French encouragement and support (for French foreign policy was strongly

[2]Matti Klinge, *A Brief History of Finland* (Helsinki, 1981).

opposed to Russia at this period) in the second half of the eighteenth century a new fortified city was built on islands off the southern coast, just off the shores on which Helsinki (Helsingfors) was later to be built. This fortress city was given the name in Swedish of Sveaborg, the Swedish castle. With it came the building of a naval fleet, comprising largely rowing and sailing galleys designed for operation in the labyrinthine channels of the archipelagos. Publications in the Finnish language began to appear, although not fiction or drama. The language of administration, however, remained Swedish.

During this troubled eighteenth century, the part of Sweden which was one day to become independent Finland was thus twice occupied by Russia and bore the brunt of the disastrous effects of Swedish foreign policy. For the first time some of those who lived there, nearly all of them Swedish-speaking Finlanders of the coasts, rather than Finns, began to think of Sweden's eastern territory as being different from the rest of the country. There began to emerge the beginnings of a consciousness of the special interests of this area. Representatives of the territory began to speak critically in the Swedish Diet of Stockholm's neglect of the economy and the defences of their part of the country. There were rumblings of what much later was to become a major issue, the status of the Finnish language. The university at Turku (Åbo) played its role in the growth of a new perception of national cultural identity.

This kind of feeling led to a development in which the inhabitants of the eastern territory gained a notable advance. This was the abolition of the *Bottniska Stapelvånget* by the Swedish Diet of 1765–6 as a result, largely, of the efforts of Anders Chydenius, the Lutheran minister at Kokkola (Gamla Karleby) on the shores of the Gulf of Bothnia, and against the bitter opposition of Stockholm merchants and bankers. This meant that Swedish towns on the east coast of the Gulf of Bothnia could export direct to their west European markets the products of their hinterlands – pine tar, an essential preservative in the days of the wooden sailing ship of the natural fibre rigging and, indeed, of the wood of the ships themselves; hemp, for making the ropes; flax for the canvas; and timber for shipbuilding and every other purpose. Previously, these ports had been compelled to ship in small vessels to Stockholm or Turku (Åbo) where trans-shipment to larger ships for export took place, to the great benefit of the merchants and bankers of the cities. Now Pori (Björneborg), Kokkola (Gamla Karleby), Vaasa (Wasa) and Oulu (Uleåborg) could export direct to western Europe in their own ships, although their imports, principally salt, still had to come through Stockholm. The freeing of other towns followed. For many years these

towns had been building the greater part of the Swedish merchant fleet. The figures published by Gustaf Halldin in 1963[3] show that over the period 1680–1814 Kokkola (Gamla Karleby) town and district built shipping with a total of 38,000 'heavy lasts'. Over 300 vessels were built around Kokkola in those 135 years, only 120 or so in the Stockholm area of a total of 24,500 lasts. The third, fourth and fifth places were occupied by Oulu (Uleåborg), Pietarsaari (Jacobstad) and Vaasa (Wasa), all in what is now Finland. It is clear that the Finnish shipbuilding industry was of great importance to Sweden. Now the seaport towns began to build their own considerable fleets of merchant ships and the effect on what was to become, many years later, the Finnish merchant shipping industry and through it on the Finnish economy, was considerable and very relevant to events during the Crimean War in the middle of the next century. Even today, if you visit some of these towns, you will be told that they were founded twice, once, to take the example of Kokkola (Gamla Karleby) itself, by King Gustaf Adolf II of Sweden in 1620, and then again by the freeing of trade in 1765. The effect on the operations of merchant ships was quite dramatic. Sweden had treaty relations with the Barbary States of western North Africa and as a result, ships flying the Swedish flag avoided capture by the notorious Barbary pirates. An extensive Mediterranean trade grew up and in due course trade developed with the West Indies and what is now Indonesia.

To some extent, the building of Sveaborg, with its significant name and its French architecture, was a response from Stockholm to the independent trends emerging in the Finnish eastern regions of Sweden. A great Swedish naval victory at Svensksund, near Kotka, during a brief and final war against Russia from 1788 to 1790, when the Russian naval force lost fifty-two ships against Swedish losses of six, to a certain extent restored Sweden's international prestige, though it resulted in little material benefit. Sweden remained weak and increasingly vulnerable to Russian pressures.

The American and French Revolutions had not been without influence on the thinking of small but influential groups in Finland. A frame of mind had been developing since the 1780s among civil servants, officers, and other educated people, which was receptive to ideas of a change in national status. After the agreement of Tilsit, considerable changes in the dispositions of the Russian forces, together with re-equipment, were necessary before the Russian Army (without a declaration of war) could launch a campaign against Sweden's eastern frontier in February 1808. Within one month the old capital, Turku (Åbo), had fallen. The retreating Swedes

[3]Gustaf Halldin, ed, *Svenskt Skeppsbyggeri* (Malmö, 1963).

burnt their ships in the harbour, rather than let them fall into Russian hands, and counter-attacked. In Åland a spontaneous revolt of the farmers drove an occupying Russian force right out of the islands. But Sveaborg, though fully manned and provisioned and never assaulted, surrendered after a two months' siege to a weaker Russian force, and by the autumn the Russians had gained a full military victory. By the peace of Hamina (Fredrikshamn) in 1809, Sweden on the east side of the Gulf of Bothnia, the future Finland, became an autonomous state within the Russian Empire, but with a responsibility for the government of its own affairs enjoyed by no other non-Russian group within the Empire – or, indeed, by the Russians themselves – under the Tzar as Grand Duke.

The country was a strategic and geographical, not an ethnic, unity. The Finnish language was spoken both east and west of the new border with Russia, all the way from the Baltic to the Arctic Sea. In Finland itself, Finnish was spoken by the majority of the rural population, but there was a substantial Swedish-speaking minority in the coastal areas. The professional and administrative classes tended to be bilingual or to speak only Swedish. In the Åland Islands nothing but Swedish was spoken.

By courtesy of Napoleon, Sweden gained Norway as compensation. The King of Sweden was banished to wander round Europe as an emigré and Sweden settled down to a century of relatively impoverished existence on the fringes of European affairs, only to re-emerge with industrialization in the twentieth century. The country which was now to be the Russian Grand Duchy of Finland was to have a different and, for a country within Russia's orbit, an entirely novel fate, for Finland was to be given a constitution granting a degree of liberty and independence which did not exist elsewhere in Imperial Russia and her territories.

There were complex reasons for this remarkable development. When Poland was partitioned between Russia, Prussia, and Austria in 1795, the Russia of Catherine the Great acquired some 190,000 square miles of territory beyond her western frontier and Poland ceased to exist as an independent state. Conditions in the newly-acquired territories were made uniform with those in Russia itself. But in Finland, from the very beginning, while the war was still raging, the Emperor Alexander issued proclamations promising freedom of worship for the Lutheran Church, which meant that the Greek Orthodox Church of Russia, with its administration and its bureaucracy, was not to be imposed on Finland, and promising the preservation of the existing privileges which the four Estates of Finland had had in the Diet in Stockholm. Rapid though the conquest of Finnish Sweden seems to have been in retrospect, it still went more slowly

than the Russians were probably expecting and in the summer they met both with popular resistance, such as that in Åland, and a degree of military opposition which surprised them. Considerable Russian forces, comprising 50,000 men, were in danger of becoming tied down in Finland, perhaps over a second winter, at a time when relations with the France of Napoleon were already rapidly deteriorating towards the point where, in 1812, Napoleon was to invade Russia and suffer his greatest defeat.

The speedy pacification of Finland was essential. Finland's whole political tradition was totally different from that of Russia; in political terms, the country was relatively highly developed. An attempt to impose the full rigours of the Russian autocracy – serfdom, conscription, the Russian language, the Orthodox Church, Russian law, the integration of the Finnish economy with that of Russia – would probably have resulted in prolonged and expensive enforced pacification at a time when Russia needed all her resources to combat the coming French invasion. Since the French Revolution, change was in the air in Europe and autocracy was in question. To grant a high degree of autonomy to Finland, besides being expedient in the prevailing circumstances, could be represented as an act of enlightened liberalism by the Emperor Alexander, actually making Finland more independent than she had been when she was a part of Sweden.

As the summer of 1808 went on, the Lutheran Church was sympathetically handled and allowed itself to be used as a means of gaining the support of the population. The Åbo Akademi, the great university at Turku (Åbo) was promised further development. Promises were given – which were kept – that Swedish law and the system of justice would be maintained. There would be no conscription for fifty years. The farmers, the important element which made up the bulk of the population, were recognized as landowners in their own right, with their status legally protected. The nobility and some others spoke French, as did the Russians with whom, with German, it was the language of the court and St Petersburg society. Their attitude to the Russians was conditioned in part by the decline of Sweden in the later years of the previous century. They were inclined to turn to the society in the ascendant. Faced with unexpected liberality on the part of the Russians, the attitudes of officers, civil servants and others, began to change from initial reserve towards a working relationship; there was no great flight of administrators, nobility and university men to Sweden.

Although the response was at first very uneven, acceptance of the new situation rapidly spread. The Russians paid compensation for war damage and reduced taxes and under the pressure of external events made

unexpected major concessions. What emerged was a kind of model conquered territory. Finland was granted a political existence separate from Russia. The Emperor Alexander took the title of Grand Duke of Finland. In December 1808, he ruled that business concerning Finland was to be presented directly to him; the Russian bureaucracy was to play no part in running the country. There were, naturally, uncertainties in the way the system worked in the early stages and, though a Finnish administration developed, it had no government to work to because the old Diet had been in Stockholm. The Emperor, therefore, took the unprecedented step of creating a new national representative body where none had ever existed before, and, moreover, attending himself the meeting at Porvoo (Borgå) at which the new body came into existence.

Thus Finland was seen internationally to be a new model nation on the European stage. Not only were the old laws and judicial system kept, not only were the Finns left largely to run things for themselves, but the economy of the new country was not integrated with that of Russia. The customs frontier between Russia and Finland was re-established and Finland became a tariff area on its own, maintaining its trading relations with Sweden. But while the long wars continued, the merchant shipping industry, which had grown so much since the liberation of the Bothnian towns in 1765, suffered from exclusion from the international trade to which its previous neutral status as Swedish tonnage had given it access.

The Treaty of Hamina (Fredrikshamn) ratified the situation in 1809. No mention was made of Finland's autonomy, nor, indeed, was the name of Finland mentioned in the text, but the Treaty determined the areas ceded to the Russian empire by Sweden and thereby marked a major strengthening of Russia's position in northern Europe. This development was a great set-back to Britain's policy of keeping the balance of power in the Baltic, but there was nothing that could be done about it, even though the British Navy moved where it wished in the Baltic Sea. The position of Russia in the conflict with France was all important to Britain at this stage in the Napoleonic Wars and relations could not be hazarded over Finland. Later, things were to look very different.

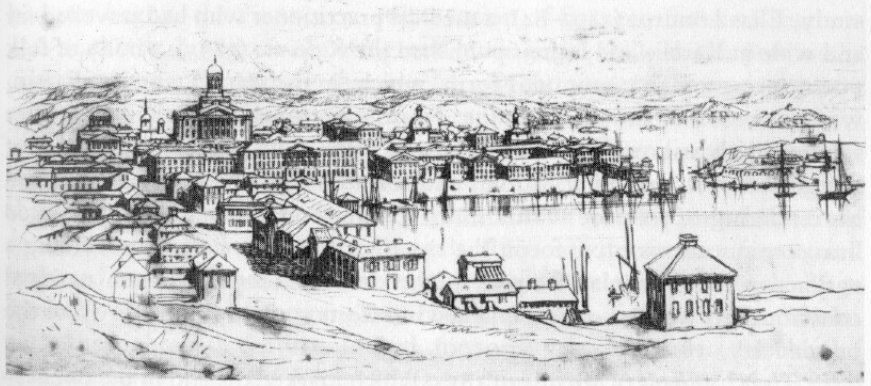
Under the Treaty commercial relations between Finland and Sweden remained unchanged, with the two countries continuing for the time being as partners in the old trading area, to the great advantage of both. In fact, Swedish currency remained a unit of exchange and ceased to be legal tender in Finland only in the early 1840s, when the central Bank of Finland began to regulate the country's monetary policy. One of the most important issues discussed by the negotiators at Hamina concerned Åland. Lying as it does at

the junction of the two great Gulfs and being relatively ice free, the Russians saw the Åland archipelago as their outer defence line and also potentially as a base from which – given an effective fleet – they could exercise control over much of the Baltic Sea and exert a much wider threat. Negotiating from strength, they not only kept Åland against Swedish claims but overrode Swedish appeals that the islands should be demilitarized.

In 1812 Old Finland, that is the areas of Karelia west of Lake Ladoga ceded to Russia after the Great and Little Northern Wars, was annexed to the Grand Duchy. Finland became economically and defensively a more viable unit – defensively, this cession of territory by Russia was to prove very significant during the Second World War – and consequently Finnish fears that the main body of the Duchy might slowly be Russianized to the level imposed on the ceded territories in the preceding century were removed. At the same time, a Finnish Affairs Committee was established in St Petersburg, thus adding an administrative mechanism to fulfil the earlier promise that Finnish business would be presented directly to the Emperor, by-passing the Russian bureaucracy. This committee was headed by a Finnish Secretary of State with a permanent staff from Finland.

There was a further Russian gesture still to be made, a further clear indication that, contrary as it might seem to the general behaviour of Russia towards conquered territories in the past (and in the future), Finland was to be an independently functioning entity. For many centuries the ancient city of Turku (Åbo), situated at the south-west corner of the country on the first continuous land reached after the voyage east from Stockholm, had been the principal city of Finland (the capital was, of course, Stockholm). It was the site of the oldest and greatest cathedral, the seat of the bishopric and of the senior Court of Justice, of the country's oldest medieval castle where the Swedish Court had been held with Renaissance splendour in the middle 1500s, and of the great university which had played a leading part in the development of the society of Finland. Now the Emperor Alexander decided to give the new country a capital city of its own, a new city, less vulnerable to attacks from the west. It was to be on the site of an existing settlement protected by the fortress of Sveaborg – the Swedish Fortress (now called in Finnish, Suomenlinna – the Finnish Fortress) – which was virtually a city in itself and for many years after the foundation of Helsinki had a larger population. The new city was built on the rocks at the back of the natural harbour created by the fortress's island chain and within fifty years grew to be of European consequence. It was magnificently conceived, with a central focus around the church of St Nicholas (later to become its cathedral) fronted by the Senate Square. In 1828, the university was moved

to Helsinki after a disastrous fire the year before had ravaged much of the old Turku (Åbo). The centre of Helsinki, designed by a German architect, G L Engel, stands today little changed since that time. Engel's university library fronts the Senate Square to the west, as does the Senate House to the east. Today the President of the Republic lives in the former palace of the Grand Duke and Russian Emperor, facing the lovely Södrahamnen with its stone quays occupied by the daily market, where farmers' boats from Porvoo (Borgå) and Sibbo (Sipoo) still lie each summer day selling their fresh produce, and to which Åland farmers from the wild skerry community of Kökar still make an annual pilgrimage in their boats to sell fish and vegetables and see old friends in the capital. Meanwhile, Turku (Åbo) has regained much of its former importance as a modern industrial, commercial, and, with an Åbo Akademi re-established in the 1920s and a Finnish language University of Turku, an intellectual centre.



Helsinki Södrahamnen in 1842. The principal buildings and the broad quay in the middle are little changed today and give this splendid city something of the character of a miniature St Petersburg. From Letters from the Shores of the Baltic, *by Elizabeth Rigby, 1842.*

Ironically, Finland, which had seen much warfare in its seven centuries as part of Sweden, now for two generations quietly and peacefully developed as an autonomous Grand Duchy of Russia, outside the autocracy, run on a lighter rein than any other territory in the Russian Empire. Behind this external façade of peacefulness considerable developments, social, political, and economic, took place. In these developments Finland was in many ways a typical example of an emerging central – European nation-state of the nineteenth century. The detail of the complex process of her development need not concern us much here.

Dialects of Finnish were spoken by the majority of the inhabitants of the country, but Swedish remained the official language. Gradually, in the first fifty years of the nineteenth century there developed a Finnish national movement. Here again we are dealing with a small élite of educated people whose efforts were directed, not against the Russians but against the Swedish-speaking establishment. Some Swedish-speaking Finlanders became sympathetic to the movement, but the development of a Finnish national identity involved first the development of a consciousness of their history which enabled Finnish people to know who they were by knowing who they had been.

One of the factors in this process was the work of the folklorists, who literally went out into the wilds and over many years collected the fragments of an extremely rich oral poetry in Finnish, Karelian and Ingrian, perhaps the richest heritage of its kind in Europe. Some of its themes may go back to a period long before the ancestors of the speakers of these dialects reached the Baltic region. After years of work by early pioneers in this study, Elias Lönnrot (1802–84), a medical practitioner who had travelled far and wide in Karelia and Ingria, published the *Kalevala* (1835), a body of folk poetry presented in continuous form, which, in the second edition of 1849, was to become and remain the Finnish national epic. Though later scholarship has shown Lönnrot's *Kalevala* to be in its structure a product of the genius of its compiler himself and for academic purposes has replaced his rendering of folklore with a much greater body of material not forced into continuous narrative form, the significance of his work in providing a national symbol to play its role in the development of Finnish national consciousness was to be profound and its effects were to roll on down to the present day.

The Congress of Vienna of 1815, which marked the end of the twenty-five years of more or less continuous European war, left the Baltic effectively a Russian sea. Relatively light though the Russian rein was on Finland, it must not be imagined that life in that country between 1815 and the outbreak of the Crimean War in mid-century was free and unrestricted in a broader political or social sense. To keep their high degree of autonomy, the Finns had, in practice, to tread very carefully. The Finnish Senate, reporting directly to the Emperor, might be the constitutional equal of the highest Russian organ of state, but to avoid arousing the suspicions and opposition of the Russian establishment and to retain the good will of the Emperor, the Finnish administration had to keep a low profile and establish a paternalistic attitude when dealing with the various and complex intellectual and political movements which the new situation generated over the years.

Under the Grand Duchy the Lutheran Church continued as an organ of social and political control, as it had been for centuries. The Church required an ability to read at least the litany as a pre-requisite for confirmation, which was a social necessity and a necessary preliminary to marriage. Literacy, at least to the extent of an ability to read, was therefore far more widespread among farmers, peasants, seamen and fishermen than it was, for instance, in contemporary Britain.

Control both of the Swedish language press and of the infant Finnish language press was constantly and variously exercised throughout the first half of the century. Apart from the newspapers, the chief route by which foreign ideas and influences reached the ordinary people of the coastal areas was through the growing merchant shipping industry. In the early 1820s it revived slowly after the slump which inevitably followed the boom after the end of the Napoleonic Wars, and by the late 1820s the industry was developing rapidly. In the 1830s Finnish merchant vessels became the principal part of Russia's merchant fleet. Industrial development on land had not begun, the Finns were still a nation of farmers, foresters, hunters and seafarers; but great seafaring and managerial skills developed in the coastal towns and merchant shipping became the country's growth industry and one of the principal generators of capital.

The industry was sharply divided into two parts: town shipping, which was a world-wide activity, and the so-called 'peasant seafaring', rural ship-owning, *allmogeseglation* in Swedish. The latter comprised trade conducted by small vessels, locally built, frequently by farmers from small seaboard communities or from rural areas where there was no village nucleus. This kind of shipping had been centred on trade with Stockholm since the eighteenth century. Indeed, for some years after 1810, Stockholm was visited annually by some 350 'farm ships' from Åland and the Turku (Åbo) area and was virtually dependent for its food supplies and firewood on these vessels. In the 1820s these farm ships made up 40 per cent of the entire carrying capacity of the merchant shipping industry of Finland.

To encourage farming at home in the 1820s and 30s, the Swedish authorities gradually introduced customs restrictions on the import of Finnish produce. In 1830 a Russian statute permitted Finnish vessels from the rural areas to trade anywhere in the Baltic. At about the same time, an agreement was reached with the Russian authorities under which vessels from the Grand Duchy were treated identically with vessels from metropolitan Russia, rather than having to pay the heavier harbour dues imposed on foreign vessels in Russian ports. Together these measures opened up the Baltic to Finnish ships from rural areas. From east Finland

small vessels supplied vast quantities of firewood to St Petersburg and, to pave the streets, each summer delivered scores of shiploads of cobblestones, laboriously gathered from the boulder fields, *stenåkrar* in Swedish, which are a legacy of the ice age on the islands of the Finnish archipelagos. From south-western Finland farmers' vessels sailed to Denmark and Germany as well as Estonia, carrying their own farm and forest products but increasingly becoming general carriers, moving other people's goods – timber from sawmills, cargoes for urban merchants – from north Sweden to Stockholm, from Sweden to Germany, and from place to place along the coasts of Finland. Bigger vessels were built, able to carry larger and more profitable cargoes. The *jakter* (cargo smacks with a single mast and a bowsprit, very like the smacks which carried on much of the home trade of western England and Wales at the same period) and *galeaser* (the term at that period was applied to a vessel rigged like a brigantine but with the proportions of her masts those of a ketch) persisted, and even increased in numbers as farmers became wealthier on sea-trading. But gradually bigger vessels, schooners and brigs, entered the trades of the rural shipowners.

By mid-century vessels from rural areas in Åland and south-west Finland were carrying about 150 cargoes from Sweden to Germany (mainly Lübeck) and Denmark each year, usually returning with cargoes of salt for the farmer/owner's use. Cloth was exported from Turku (Åbo) to Tallinn (Revel) and Riga – this business was largely in the hands of women. Through this means, the men and women of rural communities on the coast became aware of foreign lands and cultures, foreign ways and foreign ideas. According to contemporary reports, the carrying trade became so important to Åland's economy that farming was neglected. Money could be made quickly and more readily upon the sea. According to Gabriel Rein's contemporary report[4] in 1850, not including Åland there were 927 rural vessels sailing on the coasts of Finland and to Sweden, Germany, Denmark, St Petersburg and other Russian Baltic harbours. Add to this figure the 125 or so vessels quoted by Georg Kahre[5] as sailing from Åland in that year and the total cargo capacity must have been over 12,000 tons. Capital generation and social change had begun amongst the farmers.

Much the same process of expansion happened on a larger scale in the recognized seaport towns. At first, after 1809, the long-established Mediterranean trade carried high risks for Finnish shipping because Russia had no agreements with the Barbary pirates. The last vessel ever to be

[4]Gabriel Rein, *Statistik techning av Storfurstendimet Finland* (Helsingfors, 1853).
[5]Georg Kähre, *Den Åländska Segelsjöfartens Historia* (Helsinki, 1940).

captured by North African pirates was, in fact, to be the barque *Helsingfors* of Helsinki, taken in July 1829, shortly before the fall of Algiers to the French marked the end of Arab control of the Mediterranean sea lanes. But, despite the limitations consequent upon the high British customs duties on the import of Baltic timber imposed to protect the Canadian lumber industry, the old trade in timber, pine tar and pitch continued. One Finnish authority has estimated an annual export of between 150,000 and 160,000 barrels of pine tar, each containing 30 to 32 gallons. Britain, especially the ports of Newcastle and Liverpool, became the centre of this trade because return cargoes of coal and salt were readily available. British merchants and banks financed it, intimate business relations developed between the Finnish merchant houses, and the families which ran them, and their British colleagues. Indeed, for a time Cheshire salt replaced to a large extent the Mediterranean variety as a food preserving agent on Finnish farms.

In 1829, by the Treaty of Adrianople, the ports of the Black Sea were opened to international trade. With their newly-acquired entitlement to pay reduced port dues, Finnish vessels entered the Black Sea grain trade, notably to Britain. The trade grew rapidly. It is a surprising statistic, but two-thirds of the grain imported into Britain in 1850 came from Russia and only one-eighth from the United States. Finnish vessels set out from their home ports in the autumn with pine tar for Britain. There they loaded coal for a Mediterranean port or Odessa. In Odessa they loaded grain for Britain or Western Europe. They would sometimes be so employed for several years before returning to their home port with a salt cargo. After refitting, they would then turn round again for a further two or three years of sailing away from the Baltic. A trade in coffee from Brazil was established in the 1840s. As world trade developed with the rise of industrialization and economic liberalism, Finnish long-range sailing vessels from the seaport towns participated more and more in the world's carrying trade. Although the ships were seen less and less in their home port towns, the money they earned was remitted there and the crews, on the whole, were still recruited at home in Finland.

From 1845 to 1847 the barque *Hercules* of Pietarsaari (Jacobstad), Master P G Idman, circumnavigated the globe in a series of passages with cargo. A whaling company was established in Turku which opened up trade via Cape Horn to the north-western Pacific and Alaska. According to Jorma Pohjanpalo,[6] in 1834 the major seaport towns of Finland had

[6]Jorma Pohjanpalo, *Suomen kauppamerenkulku ja erityisesti linjaliikenteen osuus siinä* (Helsinki, 1949).

registered between them 250 deep water ships with a total carrying capacity of about 54,000 tons. By 1838 the number of vessels had risen to 382 with a cargo capacity of over 70,000 tons and by 1853 to 471 ships with a capacity to carry nearly 100,000 tons. Add the 'peasant' tonnage, the vessels of the farm communities sailing within the Baltic, and at the time of the outbreak of war between Britain and Russia in 1854 the Finnish merchant fleet comprised more than 1500 vessels, large and small, able to carry between them at any one time almost 110,000 tons. This was a very respectable tonnage for a country with the resources and population of Finland, and indeed by European standards at the time, though it was totally dwarfed by the merchant fleet of the world's greatest shipping nation, Britain, with almost 3½ million registered tons of sailing vessels in 1850.

This Finnish merchant shipping industry comprised an important asset to Russia. It contributed, as has been said, the greater part of her total fleet; it was an important generator of capital, and a big earner of foreign currency. By the late 1840s the fleet brought liberal ideas about trade and business with it every time its units entered their home ports. The very conduct of international trade in a changing Europe required liberal approaches in its regulation. But watchful paternalism remained the keynote and the Russian authorities and the Emperor were quick to respond when they saw danger to the autocracy from outside influence.

The fleet was owned, managed and manned almost entirely by Swedish-speaking Finlanders of the relatively rich settlements on the coasts of the Gulf of Bothnia and the Gulf of Finland. The majority of the Finnish-speaking population lived among the forests and lakes of the interior. Here they maintained existence by marginal farming, clearing the land by cutting down areas of forest and burning the tree stumps, faced with the same appalling problems as their contemporary settlers in eastern North America.

Like their North American contemporaries, they found the lakes and rivers the natural highroads, travelling long distances by boat in summer and on the ice in winter. They used the classic Finnish lakeboats, graceful, easily pulled, stable, five metres long, which are still used for leisure purposes in their thousands. They dragged these boats with infinite labour across the watersheds from one river system to another. They used the wooden tools, implements and utensils which are to be seen in so many museums in Finland today, most notably, perhaps, in the Central Finland Museum at Jyväskylä. This was a wooden world which expressed itself in such superb structures as the wooden church at Petäjävesi. Not only its day-to-day life but its economy depended on wood, on the export of timber

in the south and east, and to an enormous extent, on the making of pine tar northwards from the hinterland of Kristiinankaupunki (Kristinastad).

It was among these people, living on the periphery of Europe, that the ancient beliefs and the folk poetry survived which, in the hands of a small group of intellectuals, were to be so important in Finland's cultural and political development. Geographical and linguistic isolation protected them from being submerged in cultural derivatives of the Graeco-Roman tradition; and the results can be seen and felt in Finland today. Much of the energy of these people went into survival north of the 60th parallel. They accepted the ruling administration, what little they saw of it, whether it was Swedish or Russian. 'He who whips the ox's back has no time to study books' – even though he could read. The feeling and truth of this peasant life in the sub-arctic is most powerfully conveyed in modern Finnish terms in Aulis Sallinen's opera *The Red Line*. As one recent Finnish historian has put it, 'On the whole, conditions in Finland in the later 1840s expressed political tranquillity, though not submission'.[7]

This was the country and these were the people who were to bear the brunt of the northern campaign against Russia by the British and French allies in the two years of the 'Crimean' War; or rather, because of the rigours of life on and north of the 60th parallel, in the summer and the early autumn of 1854 and of 1855. Intimately linked as they were in a trading pattern with Britain, the people of the coasts of Finland were to face a British Navy intent, in the words of one of its senior captains, on a policy of 'take, burn, or destroy'. This navy came into contact almost exclusively, not with the majority of the population with its Finnish language and culture, but with the Swedish-speaking Ålanders and the Swedish-speaking Finlanders of the coastal belt. To many of the senior officers they were all simply Russians; their towns, ships, and other property Russian, to be seized or destroyed. 'Highly trained and wholly uneducated' as a modern naval historian has said of the succeeding generation of naval officers,[8] there was scarcely an officer in the fleet who could even record Swedish language place names correctly in his journal, much less speak Swedish or Russian, let alone Finnish.

[7]Juhani Paasivirta, *Finland and Europe*, (Helsinki, 1978).
[8]N A M Rodger 'British Naval Thought and Naval Policy, 1820–1890', in *New Aspects of Naval History* (Annapolis, 1981).

2

The Building of Bomarsund

The Black Sea campaigns of the Crimean War in which by far the greater part of the land fighting took place, with the battles of Alma and Inkerman and the folly of the charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava, have recently been described by one of the leading modern historians of the war as 'not a regular field campaign, but a large scale landing raid, which ended in a protracted siege'.[1] King Oscar I of Sweden went further when, at the height of the war, he described the Anglo-French operations in the Crimean Peninsula as 'merely children's games'. The Allies were, he said, playing with the giant's little toe instead of hitting him on the head; instead, that is, of attacking St Petersburg which remained safe within the mouth of the river Neva at the head of the Gulf of Finland, and its inner line of defence, the naval base of Kronstadt.[2]

The Russians were well aware of the vulnerability of their capital city in the event of a war with a major naval power. Once both sides of the Gulf of Finland were secured in 1809, a scheme was embarked on which could be seen, at the time and retrospectively, as both defensive and offensive, given the Russian history of pushing defensive lines outwards so that the defences of today require defences ever further forward to protect them tomorrow. This scheme comprised the creation of a great naval base at the mouth of the Gulf of Finland.

As early as the summer of 1809, Lieutenant-General Steinheil, a fortification specialist, was sent to Åland to prepare a report on the defence of the islands. As a result, a recommendation was made to the Russian War Minister, endorsed by the then Commander-in-Chief and Governor-General of Finland, General Barclay de Tolly, that a garrison regiment be stationed in Åland to superintend the post-route and the civil administration, but mainly to form a permanent defence force against attack from the

[1]John Shelton Curtiss, *Russia's Crimean War* (Durham, North Carolina, 1979).
[2]Martin Isaksson, *Kring Bomarsund* (Helsinki, 1981).

west. To make this force effective, it was recommended that a permanent fortification should be built at Bomarsund in the vicinity of the village of Skarpans, on a peninsula between the Vargatafjärd to the north and the Lumparfjärd to the south, more or less in the geographical centre of Åland.

The Emperor Alexander accepted this recommendation immediately and General Steinheil was sent back to Åland to negotiate the acquisition of the land on which the fortress was to be built. He did this rapidly and successfully, treating the local inhabitants liberally. He had high authority to be generous and the process of land acquisition was described in a 'gracious rescript' of the Imperial Cabinet for 1811, which has been summarized by Isaksson.[3]

It appears that rocky land, mainly forest-covered, was acquired, comprising most of the peninsula east of a line of small lakes which stretches due south from Träsk to the Lumparfjärd (see map p. 26). In the whole of this part of the Baltic the land has been rising out of the sea at rates varying with time and locality from half a metre to a metre a century. Nearly a century and a half ago, therefore, the lakes were bigger and as their names – Finbyvik, Hummelvik, Övrevik – indicate, the southern ones probably still comprised a long, narrow arm of the Lumparfjärd, a relic of the sound that had once been a sheltered passage for vessels through to the Gulf of Bothnia in the north. For the fertile land acquired to the west of this line of lakes and east to the Sound of Bomarsund and for land acquired on the island of Prästö, the landholders were compensated by fields, woods, meadows, and other benefits from a Swedish Crown estate in the nearby community of Saltvik. They were also excused from military quartering liabilities for the next six years.

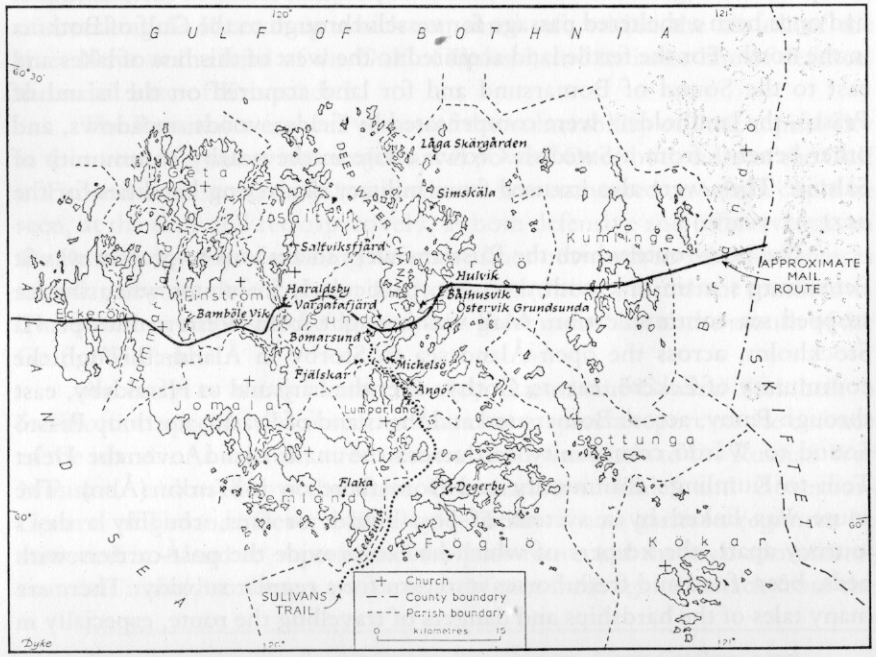
The post-route which the Russians were so anxious to protect was St Petersburg's main link with the west, particularly in winter when the ice stopped sea communication. Mail was brought from Western Europe via Stockholm, across the open Åland sea to Storby in Åland, through the community of Eckerö, east to Gotby, over the Färjsund to Haraldsby, east through Finby, across Bomarsund and the island of Prästö, north up Prästö Sound to Wårdö community and across the main island, over the Delet Teili to Kumlinge community and from there on to Turku (Åbo). The route was linked by a system of post-houses or inns, roughly a day's journey apart, the keepers of which had to provide the post-carriers with beds, beer, food and fresh horses in return for a regular subsidy. There are many tales of the hardships and dangers of travelling the route, especially in

[3]Isaksson, *op cit.*

the open farm boats used to cross the wider stretches of water, and in the ice-boats used in winter which were dragged over the flows like sledges and rowed and sailed in open water.

Visiting the area today it is not at first obvious why the Russians chose the site at the tip of the peninsula fronting the little strait of Bomarsund for their great fortress and naval base. There was a village here, Skarpans, now visible only as a series of foundations in the woods, which was probably the largest single settlement in Åland at the time. From its central position in the heart of the whole archipelago, and on the post-route, the place had acquired some importance. The Russians had built a battery there as soon as they had consolidated their position in the islands after conquering Finland. The answer probably lies in previous Russian experience in invading the islands, both in the war which had just ended and in the occupations of the eighteenth century.

Russian thinking, directed always towards defence from invasion from the west, saw the Saltviksfjärd as the natural line of defence in Åland against further penetration east by an enemy from the west who had been



The Åland Islands.

able to establish a bridgehead ashore. East of this line, the Vargatafjärd was the first sheltered deep water harbour accessible to big sailing vessels, the natural place for the defence base. The southern bays of the Vargatafjärd could be relatively easily developed as a harbour for a fleet by the building of breakwaters. The resulting base could provide both control of the civil administration and also be the readily reinforcible heart of a system of a defence which, with 50 batteries of four guns each (the sites of some of which can still be found spread over the western parts of the islands), strong defences at the narrows at Haraldsby, and batteries on eastern Prästö and on Michelsö (the latter to guard the only possible channel for big ships up to Bomarsund from the south) would offer formidable opposition to an invader. The Vargatafjärd to the north of Bomarsund was, and is, difficult of approach, which made it all the more defensible, given effective Russian naval forces.

The new harbour, when it was completed, would provide an excellent base for big sailing warships, bearing in mind the high standards of ship-handling under sail which were normal at the time. At the same time, it could be a safe harbour for the rowing and sailing flotilla, the *skärgårdsflotta* – the archipelago fleet – the force of rowing and sailing galleys which had become the standard offensive and defensive naval weapons for use in the labyrinthine archipelagos of Finland and Sweden, where the handling of big sailing vessels of war was very difficult. It was intended that one hundred of these rowing and sailing galleys should be stationed at Bomarsund, but the conception of the fortress really depended, as did the inner defences of St Petersburg at Suomenlinna (Sveaborg) and Kronstadt, on the existence of a strong and effective Russian Baltic fleet, able to deter hostile forces from entering the Gulfs of Bothnia and Finland and able to deal with them if they made the attempt.

Before the conclusion of the Peace of Hamina (Frederikshamn), the Ålanders had to find quarters for 4400 Russian troops who were billeted on them, and over 300 houses were requisitioned. The Peace saw the force reduced to a couple of thousand. The preparations for the building of the fortress were begun as soon as the land had been acquired, with the clearing of the woods and the building of temporary storehouses for materials. The outbreak of war between Russia and France in 1812 meant that the well-disciplined crack regiments which had previously occupied Åland were withdrawn and replaced by less well-behaved troops, but General Steinheil, now Governor-General of Finland, was sympathetic to the complaints from the Ålanders which inevitably followed the change. The islanders gradually recovered their traditional independent attitudes and began to argue back, as when the farmer-shipowners refused to carry timber to Bomarsund in 1813, having more lucrative freights readily available that summer.

The billeting of Russian troops – ten to a room with no chairs and only straw bedding on the bunks – imposed considerable hardships on Ålanders in those areas where troops were stationed, and theft and violence were not uncommon. The soldiers themselves were villagers, chosen by their landowners to be conscribed from their peasant communities for twenty-five years service under brutal discipline. At the end of this period, if they survived, they had lost all touch with their roots, been forgotten by their community, perhaps had forgotten their own mother tongue if it was not Russian. There was continuous stress between the civil government and the military garrison. The enforced domestic intimacy over many years resulted in some small introduction of Russian words into Åland dialects and certainly some Russian blood. The Russian soldiers' terms of service can best be expressed through the soldiers' oath and the forms to be observed in addressing officers, quoted by Martin Isaksson:

> The Soldier vowed before God's countenance, the Saviour's Cross and the Holy Gospel. He should in all things subordinate himself without demur to his superiors. He should be able to withstand cold, hunger, and all hardships; in strife he should be intrepid and cheerful; it was his duty to sacrifice his last drop of blood for the Tzar, Holy Russia, and for the Orthodox Throne.

The soldier had to distinguish by the badges of rank between,

> Your Grace and High Excellency – the form of address to Generals of the highest rank.
> Your Excellency, for Generals of a lower grade.
> Your Most Highborn – for other officers down to the rank of Captain.
> Your Highborn – for Lieutenants and junior officers.

By announcing an Imperial decree from the pulpit, a priest could give the Emperor all the grandeur of his full titles,

> Through God's helping Grace
> We, Alexander,
> Emperor and Autocrat over all Russia,
> Moscow, Kiev, Vladimir and Novgorod,
> Tzar of Kazan, Poland, Siberia, the Taurus,
> Crimea and Georgia,
> Grand Duke of Finland,
> Etc etc etc
> make it known that. . . .'[4]

[4]Isaksson, op cit.

Needless to say there were endless problems with 'dissolute female persons'. Junior officers had their concubines. Others found more permanent relationships which could sometimes lead to desertion. To quote Martin Isaksson once more,

> One day the Commandant's office realized that a Swedish-speaking officer, one Burmeister, stationed with a Jaeger Company in Lemland, had suddenly disappeared. The Sheriff duly received the task of carrying out enquiries and went to investigate. It transpired that a young girl from one of the farming estates had also disappeared. The Sheriff then visited the girl's parents, who gave him an exceedingly coherent story. Certainly their daughter had been keeping company with Lieutenant Burmeister for the whole of the summer. But it was wholly inconceivable that she should have 'run away from the country' with the young officer. As some proof of this it was stated that the young couple had, on many occasions during the summer, been out sailing together in the fishing boat. On every occasion after such expeditions they had always come back again, so it would be readily realized, now that they had disappeared, that they could not have gone out across the sea. Never had the parents heard their daughter say that she was contemplating crossing to Sweden.[5]

Lieutenant Burmeister may, of course, have been a Swedish spy.

Preparatory work at Bomarsund went very slowly for a number of years. In 1816 a fortifications committee visited the site and called for an accurate survey. In 1818 the Emperor Alexander's brother Nicholas, soon to be Emperor himself, visited Åland, and in his official capacity as an inspector of Russian public works, touched on a vital point when he pointed out that it was going to cost a lot more to build a fortress in the archipelago than on the mainland. Nicholas as Emperor was again involved with Bomarsund in 1825 when the completed plans for the building project were submitted to him. The cost now was to be 2.2 million roubles with another 1.6 million roubles for a convict labour force. The whole proposal was re-submitted to the Emperor in 1829 with a scale model for him to study and in the climate engendered in that year by Russian victories over the Turks, he finally approved the work.

A works committee was set up and in the summer of 1832 serious building began at last. Stonemasons, carpenters, labourers, and prisoners were brought into Åland and the works committee began to advertise in the newspapers of Turku (Åbo) for tenders by auction for contract construction work. The Ålanders saw two great advantages for themselves in the

[5]Isaksson, op cit.

construction of the fortress. The first was that the building of a central barracks would mean an end to the incubus of billeting. The second was that the construction work would mean employment, contracts for timber and other supplies, and work for the local farm shipping on a large scale. Small brickworks which were to supply millions of bricks over the years were set up in Lemland, Lumparland, and on the mainland of Åland, built to standard plans drawn up by Russian technicians. The sites of some of these little brickworks can still be traced today. Local farmers' *galeaser* and *jakter* carried the bricks, profitably, to the fortress site. Deliveries of less than 1000 bricks were not accepted and they had to conform to the standards of colour and breaking strength laid down by the Russians. Wooden objects, bowls, whisks, jugs, drinking mugs, casks and barrels were in great demand at the building works as were also brushes and some Ålanders contracted to supply this sort of material on a large scale. Others benefited from the inevitable sales of rejected or surplus materials, others from the equally inevitable acquisition of material that came 'over the wall'. Money was also to be made from the supply of foodstuffs on a large scale and of liquor, both legally and illegally distilled, some of it, according to surviving oral tradition, delivered to the fort in milk churns with double bottoms. On the other hand, it appears that the bulk of the skilled masons' work was done by men from mainland Finland, or from Russia. There was little or no tradition of building in stone in Åland.

The Ålanders' expectations were to be fulfilled. Indeed, the construction work at Bomarsund was very important in priming the pump for the gradual process of capital accumulation which has made Åland into one of Europe's more prosperous communities in the late twentieth century. There were disadvantages, however, notably in the depredations of convicts from the labour gangs employed on the fortress who took any opportunity to escape and who robbed and murdered their way to freedom or eventual recapture. The convicts lived near the fort in a labour camp surrounded by a fence. Again, according to surviving oral tradition in the neighbourhood, local girls used to roll themselves first in carpets and then under the fence. Besides the convicts, there were plenty of ordinary labourers and craftsmen of many nationalities, to a total of 3000 to 5000, employed at the works. They came from all over the Russian Empire and they stayed, often with their families, for many years. Today their graves can still be found in the woods of Prästö. Buried in separate cemeteries were Orthodox Russians, Catholic Poles, Muslims from the newly-conquered territories of central Asia, Jews, Protestants, men, women and children.

The works going forward in this remote corner of the Baltic soon

gave rise to some concern in London. Although the British Ambassadors in St Petersburg maintained and financed agents on secret service, difficulties seem to have been experienced in collecting information about what was happening in the Åland Islands. In February 1836 Lord Durham, then Ambassador, reported that he had learned from secret sources that 'it appears they (the Russians) are determined not to be taken by surprise in the event of an unexpected rupture. I have received secret intelligence of preparations now making for placing Kronstadt, Sveaborg, Åland and Reval in the most complete state of defence'.[6]

In the middle 1830s Sir John Ross, a serving naval officer and apparently the only one with a working knowledge of the Swedish language, was on a visit to Russia in connection with polar matters. He was famous at the time as the first European to have reached the then site of the North Magnetic Pole. At the request of Lord Palmerston, then Foreign Minister, he sought to find out what he could about the works at Bomarsund. He duly reported that three forts were under construction, that the main fort appeared to be built for 60 guns, that there was deep water for large vessels close to the fortifications, and that by the late summer of 1834 the foundations of the main fort were complete. In the late 1830s Ross was appointed British Consul in Stockholm, a position he occupied with doubtful distinction, constantly under pressure from London to pay his debts to local tradesmen. In November 1839 he reported to Captain Beaufort, then Hydrographer to the Navy, that 'The intelligence I have now to give you is not wanting in importance. The works at Bomarsund are now nearly complete and a canal is about to be constructed by which a communication can be kept up between it and Sveaborg, without going out around Hanko (Hangö), a thing of great importance as it will then be impossible by blockade to prevent troops and supplies, etc to be brought into it by steam in the event of war.'[7]

In April 1837 the Ambassador in Stockholm sent to Lord Palmerston a sketch map drawn by 'a very intelligent officer of the Swedish Guards' together with a sketch of the ground plan of the fort, a detail of the outside and a cross section. The Ambassador commented, 'I am concerned that this erection . . . will come to prove to the Swedish Government the necessity of devoting all naval resources to the creating of a fleet which alone will guarantee them against the dangers threatening their capital city and coasts.'[8]

[6]PRO, FO 65/223 Correspondence with St Petersburg.
[7]PRO, FO 748/3 Correspondence with Stockholm.
[8]Ibid.

On the other hand, in the correspondence of British Ambassadors in St Petersburg there can be detected a tendency to accept the assurances of their hosts at face value. Thus in April 1839, Lord Clanricarde, then Ambassador, formally addressed Lord Palmerston.

> My Lord,
>
> In October last, your Lordship did me the honour to send me a confidential despatch from His Majesty's Chargé d'Affairs at Stockholm – communicating a report that the Russian Government had given an order in Stockholm for 2000 guns, and intended to form at Åland a depot of naval stores and ammunition. I have not been able to gain any intelligence confirmatory of the latter notion.
>
> I am assured that the pieces of ordnance which had been ordered in Sweden, are intended for the new forts erected on the frontier of Poland, and that they will be shipped at Stockholm for Danzig in the course of the summer.
>
> I understand that the fortifications at Åland are on a very small scale: – that they are at present only capable of containing two battalions; and the accommodation for that amount of force, so scanty, that some of the officers now stationed in the Island are lodged in houses, not within the fortress; that they are at this moment only protected by half a dozen pieces of artillery, four of which belong to the two battalions who form the garrison, and that no considerable extension of the work, or addition to the defences, is in contemplation.
>
> Prince Menchikoff, Minister of the Marine, lately told me that the Russian Government considered it necessary to have at Åland such fortifications as might enable the troops there stationed to hold out for a short time against any attempt to surprise them – because from their position they were exposed to a sudden attack, in case of war breaking out, and it would require three, or four days, for them to obtain succour from the nearest Russian garrison. But that the Island was not of such value, as to make it likely a large expedition would ever be sent against it, or to justify a great expenditure for its protection.[9]

Different interpretations could be placed on the available evidence about what was happening on the shores of the Lumparfjärd. The fear of Russian expansion which developed in Britain in the 1830s and 40s was well illustrated by an article which appeared in *The Gentleman's Magazine* when the two countries were on the verge of war in 1854, which, taking as its text the report of the Russian census of 1850, examined the evidence for the growth of the Russian Empire and concluded,

[9]PRO, FO 65/251 Correspondence with St Petersburg.

> Russia, in the course of 985 years of her existence as a nation, has augmented her original superficial extent nearly forty-six times, and if we look back to the time of her re-organization under the reign of the third Ivan, we shall find that she has increased her territorial dominions nearly thirty-five times in comparison with her dimensions at that period – 385 years ago.

The contemporary Russian view of this process of endless expansion, which has continued without ceasing to the present day, has been well summed up by Edward Crankshaw.

> It did not matter . . . that this ceaseless enlargement of frontiers meant neglecting the infinitely rich natural resources of the lands nearer home. All that mattered was that Russia was great, and the only way to sustain her greatness was to push the foreigners even further away from her heart.[10]

Chamber's *Russian War* was later to sum up one mid-nineteenth century British view of Russia in terms which are surprisingly similar to much late twentieth century comment,

> Sparing no expenditure of means to accomplish an object, and unrestrained by constitutional forms, the ruling power in Russia pursues a steady onward progress of deceit and aggression, as if governed by but one principle – that of aiming at universal empire. . . . Scheming and far sighted, and sparing no means to attain any desired end, this remarkable power has established agents in every corner of Europe and Asia, and, it may be added, America – male and female, open and avowed, secret and furtive, commercial and military, princely and plebeian, literary and scientific, connected with the press as well as with the recesses of private life. Some of this extraordinary army of agents are accredited to foreign courts, for ostensible purposes; some are merely spies, appointed to detect and report on the 'nakedness of the land', moral or material; while others appear to have a mission combining the envoy and the spy . . . the methodic system of Russian aggression . . . presents almost the precision of a science . . . this code or system presents four stages which may be indicated by the words *disorganization*, *occupation*, *protection* and *incorporation*.[11]

Bomarsund had a very particular potential significance in British eyes. Kronstadt and the two strong points which guarded the western end of the Gulf of Finland – Suomenlinna (Sveaborg) on the north shore, Tallinn (Revel) on the south – were both frozen in, the fleets there immobilized, for

[10]Edward Crankshaw, *The Shadow of the Winter Palace* (London 1976).
[11]Chamber's *Russian War* (ed London 1856).

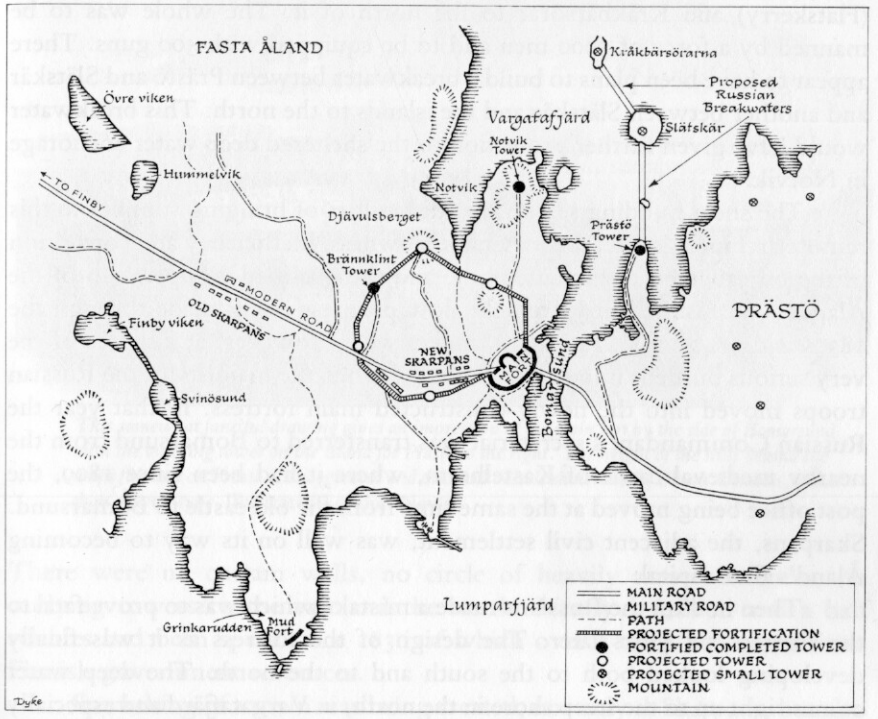
many months of the year. Catherine the Great had planned a relatively ice-free naval base and port at Baltic Port, now Paldiski, west of Revel, but it had proved too shallow and contemporary technology was not up to dredging it. The situation with regard to Revel was well summed up in a dispatch (No. 44, 30 March, 1836) from Lord Durham in St Petersburg to Lord Palmerston,

> Referring to Mr Backhouse's letter of 16th ult, I think it is right that you should be informed as to the real state of the case as regards the division of the Russian Fleet in the lower part of the Baltic.
>
> It consists of four sail of the line, two frigates, and one schooner, under the command of Vice-Admiral Ricord. It is always laid up for the winter at Reval which is between 30 and 40 miles from the extremity of the ice, which extends across and closes up the Gulf of Finland. It is consequently shut up from November to April.
>
> Occasionally it happens that the ice breaks up earlier than usual, and allows vessels to enter the roads and convey their cargoes across the ice of the harbour of Reval – but this occurs rarely, and it is more than usual for ships, arriving early with cargoes of fruit destined for St Petersburg to succeed in entering Baltic Port whence the fruit is conveyed by land to St Petersburg.
>
> Baltic Port is 48 versts below Reval and on the Baltic; as it is often accessible when Kronstadt and Reval are frozen up, the Empress Catherine intended to make it the station for the whole of the Baltic Fleet, and commenced great work for this purpose. The project, however, was abandoned in consequence of the shallowness of the harbour and other natural obstacles.
>
> Windau in Courland was also thought of at one time for the same object, but no steps were ever taken to carry the plan into effect.
>
> The squadron at Reval is always laid up and dismantled during the winter.
>
> I mentioned these details because I am positively unable to comprehend on what rational ground anyone could have reported the probability of the Russian Fleet being at sea in any part of the Baltic during the winter. There is but one part of the Russian dominions where they could be, viz Reval – and to get out of that they must cut through 30 miles of ice.[12]

But the seas around the Åland Islands froze less solidly, more briefly, and sometimes not at all. An effective Russian Baltic fleet based there would not be immobilized for at least half the year and could offer, it was believed in Britain, a far more serious threat.

In 1839, despite Sir John Ross' report, the fortifications at Bomarsund

[12]PRO FO 65/223 Correspondence with St Petersburg.



The Fortress of Bomarsund as planned, and as completed in 1854. This plan by John Dyke is based on the research of Sverre Scott.

were very far from complete, nor were they to be by any means as small and innocuous as Prince Menshikov would have had the British authorities believe. What was planned, as the work of Isaksson and Scott has revealed,[13] was a main fort connected by an almost circular system of defensive walls to five heavily armed towers, linked inside the walls by military roads. The whole wall system was to be almost a kilometre in diameter. Two other heavily armed towers were built to the north of the circular walls, one at the west side of the entrance to the Bomar Sound and the other on the east on the island of Prästö. It may well be that these towers were afterthoughts, reflecting the final orientation of the base towards the deep-water anchorage of Vargatafjärd and particularly Notvik (the north harbour). Seven other smaller towers were to be built to form a defensive line to the east down the length of Prästö and on the islands of Slätskär

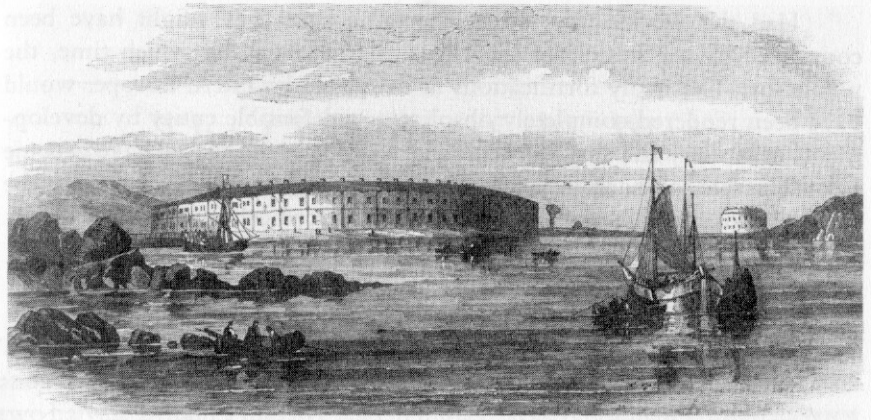
[13]Sverre Scott, *Bomarsunds Fästning* (Stockholm, 1974).

(Flatskerry) and Kråkbärsörar to the north of it. The whole was to be manned by a force of 5000 men and to be equipped with 500 guns. There appear to have been plans to build a breakwater between Prästö and Slätskär and another between Slätskär and the islands to the north. This breakwater would have given further protection to the sheltered deep water anchorage in Notvik.

The short building season, the difficulties of bringing supplies to this remote archipelago site, the inevitable slowness, inefficiency and corruption of the bureaucracy of the autocracy, and the qualified co-operation of the Ålanders all resulted in extremely slow progress being made through the 1830s and 1840s. By 1842 the Ålanders were, however, at last free of the very serious burdens imposed by billeting when the majority of the Russian troops moved into the newly-constructed main fortress. In that year the Russian Commandant's secretariat was transferred to Bomarsund from the nearby medieval castle of Kastelholm, where it had been since 1809, the post office being moved at the same time from the old castle to Bomarsund. Skarpans, the adjacent civil settlement, was well on its way to becoming Åland's first capital.

Then in 1848 the Russians made a mistake which was to prove fatal to the fortress six years later. The design of the fortress as it was finally developing looked both to the south and to the north. The deep water comes right up to the steep shore in the north, in Vargatafjärd and especially in Notvik. In the south the deep water of Lumparfjärd does not extend close in shore. The natural features provided a base for big ships to the north of the fort and for the shallow galleys of the *skärgårdsflotta* to the south. The Russians had always believed that there was one deep-water channel into the Lumparfjärd, the Ängösund between the islands of Ängö and Lumparland, and to bar access through this channel they had begun the slow construction of a fortified battery on the little island variously named Harun, Haren and Hararna, immediately south of Michelsö. In the late 1840s, however, a survey reported that there was no deep water channel through Ängösund and the building of the battery which, properly constructed, could have effectively closed the channel, was abandoned and the island sold to a local merchant. Subsequent events were to show the Russian survey completely in error and that the largest warships afloat could pass through the Ängösund with ease.

By the early 1850s only the main fort and the two northern towers had been completed. The third tower, in the west, diametrically opposite to the main fort across the circle to be enclosed by the wall, was in an advanced stage of construction, and there were the foundations of three other towers.



This somewhat fanciful drawing gives an impression of the main fort by the side of Bomarsund with the outlying tower on the island for Prästö to the right. The height of the hills behind the main fort and on Prästö is exaggerated and the local vessels shown are of North German, rather than Åland, type. Illustrated London News

There were no curtain walls, no circle of heavily armed defences, no outlying towers to the east and the north. Nearly a million and a half roubles had been spent since 1830 of which over a third had come from Finnish government resources.

Something of a town was being created, not only at Skarpans, but also across the narrow sound on the island of Prästö. The foundations of other buildings were beginning to appear in the area planned to be inside the protecting walls. The teeming life connected with a big garrison carried its own impetus and there were the beginnings of the social life associated with a large group of relatively prosperous professional people. There is at least one house, on Töftö, which is still furnished partly with painted chairs, and two dressers from a Russian officer's quarters in Skarpans. The fortress' Commandant at this time, Colonel Bodisco, had an expense account of 3000 roubles a year, (the hospital doctor's salary was 120 roubles a year) and he could, and did, entertain in style. Visiting notabilities were properly looked after. The life in the fortress area could be very pleasant. Martin Isaksson records that when Lieutenant Melart of the Finnish Line Battalion was posted there in 1852 he found his duties light and the life cheerful. The officers of the Line Battalion were Finns, the Fortress artillery and other officers Russian. The garrison comprised at that time 1700 men. The construction work was being carried forward by 500 labouring convicts and 250 men who had mutilated themselves in various ways to avoid military service.

Had the works gone on at the same pace they might have been completed by the middle of the 1870s or even later, by which time, the whole fort, like many fortifications in Britain and western Europe, would have been rendered completely obsolete as a defensible entity by developments in artillery and ship-borne gunnery. Bomarsund would have become a considerable town, an important Russian naval base and the centre of the growing business life of Åland. The Fates decreed otherwise.

3

The Origins of the War

The long period of peace which followed the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the Congress of Vienna in 1815 saw the gradual division of Europe into two halves. Britain's massive lead in industrial development created its own momentum for capital accumulation and expansion. Industrialization was beginning in regions of Germany, in Saxony and Silesia, and with it came a degree of political and social awareness among workers and demands from the middle classes for a role in society. To a certain extent, the same developments were occurring in France, while Britain was going through the early stages of a social revolution in which financial power was to move steadily away from the aristocracy and landowning classes to the new industrialists.

The eastern half of Europe had not shared these developments and was still dominated by the old system of aristocracy, landownership and autocracy. The profound difference between the two Europes was reflected in equally great differences in political attitudes. In 1848 the stresses in western European society burst out in revolution in France. The king was forced to abdicate and a republic based on universal suffrage was proclaimed. The unrest rapidly spread through western Europe, to Germany, Austria, Italy, Denmark, even into Sweden. Russia transferred large forces to her western frontier. On 26 March 1848, the emperor denounced the liberal movement and called for Russia to defend the 'sanctity of its boundaries'. He was ready to defend the traditional systems of central Europe. The brutal suppression of a revolt in Hungary in 1849 enhanced the growing unpopularity of the Emperor Nicholas I in Western Europe, where Russia was increasingly seen as the embodiment of the old order. For the first time this view was shared by the beginnings of a mass public opinion – the newspaper-reading public who could be swayed to support one line or another in foreign policy. Russia became increasingly isolated. Many factors and tensions pointed towards the possibility of an armed conflict between Russia and at least some western countries.

The origins of the war usually called the 'Crimean War' have not always been well-presented. They have sometimes been taken at a very superficial level, attributing the conflict's origins to squabbles between Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic priests over the keys of the Holy Places in Jerusalem. The real causes lay much deeper. Since the Congress of Vienna in 1815, the great powers in Europe had played their roles in the 'Concert of Europe', which was an uneasy system of conservative control. It was inevitable that sooner or later, as great changes in economic and social conditions took place, entirely new forces would develop and this 'Concert' would break down into international anarchy. The Crimean War marks the point at which it did so.

The occasions for the war were manifold. Napoleon III of France, who had established himself as Emperor in 1852 in the aftermath of the 1848 Revolution, wanted to strengthen his position by breaking up the historic alliance between Russia and Austria. He was seen as an upstart by many European rulers and he sought a foreign adventure to consolidate his position. The British feared that Russian expansion south-east of the Caspian represented a potential threat to the sea route to India. Many British statesman saw in Russia a threat to Europe which could only be ended by a major defeat for that country and the cession of extensive territory, especially of Finland and Poland as well as provinces in the south. British public opinion, growing in significance and influence, feared and disliked the autocracy. Robert Rhodes James has recorded Prince Albert's assessment of contemporary public feeling, 'The Emperor of Russia is a tyrant and the enemy of all liberty on the Continent, the oppressor of Poland. He wanted to coerce the poor Turk. The Turk was a fine fellow; he has braved the rascal, let us rush to his assistance'.[1] A corrupt and decaying Turkish Empire, which extended far into Europe, might, as its decline accelerated, have given Russia further spheres of influence and again threaten the control of the road to India. Thus the war can be seen, among many other things, as one episode in the Great Game, the contest for political ascendancy in central Asia between Britain and Russia which was played for much of the nineteenth century.

All these are very proper and legitimate ways of looking at the Crimean War. They are all highly relevant to any thinking about the war. But there is another dimension, fundamental to the conflict, to the course taken by the war, and its long-term results. This dimension has perhaps been neglected by historians. It is the naval dimension.

[1]Robert Rhodes James, *Albert: Prince Consort* (London, 1983).

Whatever else the war was about, it was about fleets and naval forces. In November 1853 an event occurred in the Black Sea which was to have momentous consequences. The war had begun. Turkey had declared war on Russia on 4 October 1853 and hostilities had broken out at the eastern end of the Black Sea. Against western advice a Turkish squadron was sent into the Black Sea to reinforce the Turks in the east and the vessels put into the Bay of Sinope, on the north coast of Turkey, to shelter. The British-trained commander of the squadron had little confidence in its ability to meet bad weather. Inevitably, the squadron was annihilated by ships from the Russian base at Sebastopol, only 130 miles away.

For the first time in the history of naval warfare the Russians used explosive shells in attacking the Turkish ships. Though British and other nations' naval vessels had carried these guns for twenty years, and in greater numbers than the Russians, they had not been used in battle. Though the shell-firing guns played only a small part in securing the Russian victory at Sinope, the battle therefore represented the beginning of a new epoch, and in fact the end of the thousands of years of the ascendancy of the wooden warship. It was seen by contemporaries in Britain as a brutal attack on a squadron which might have been captured with relatively little bloodshed. It became known as 'the massacre of Sinope'. But this was a view conditioned by the contemporary international situation and a later nineteenth century naval historian saw it as 'really a brilliantly conceived and executed surprise'.[2]

Although exactly what happened at Sinope is still a matter of historical discussion, this battle had a great effect on British public opinion, nurtured in the belief that the British Navy was impregnable. The British Navy, supported by Britain's infant and rapidly-growing industrial power, had, it was widely believed, saved western Europe from domination by Britain's natural enemies, the French. Though it was abhored by most of the sea-going community because of its traditions of brutality and because of the press-gang, the idea of the invincible navy, increasingly the policeman of the world, the symbol of all that made Britain's explosively-growing prosperity in the mid-nineteenth century possible, and which would continue to protect that prosperity from the acquisitive French, was enormously strong. The negative side of anti-Russian feeling was expressed in enthusiasm for Turkey, for all that Turkey was a corrupt, decaying, and utterly alien power. Here was the Russian fleet destroying a unit of the fleet of a potential ally and friend using a weapon, the Paixhans gun and shell,

[2]Fred T Jane, *The Imperial Russian Navy* (London, 1899).

developed by the traditional enemy, France, and copied by the Russians, as by the British themselves. The message was clear. The day of the wooden walls of Britain was over, or so it seemed. Moreover, the destruction of the Turkish fleet, according to a contemporary source was completed in only two hours[3] – although it can be argued that it should have been done even more quickly.

The Russian ships at Sinope were from the naval base at Sebastopol in the southern Crimea and from this time, November 1853, the long-standing concern of the maritime powers, Britain and France, with the growth of Russian naval power became acute. The Russian Baltic Fleet, based at Kronstadt, Sveaborg and Tallinn (Revel), was known to be bigger than the British Western Squadron. Though the intelligence about it was incomplete and contradictory, through the 1830s and 40s it had been a source of constant preoccupation for successive British administrations. Only a few days sail from the east coast of Britain, it presented a potential threat, reinforced in the eyes of many after Sinope. From the course of events in the first half of the nineteenth century already narrated in this book, it will be no surprise that concern over this fleet led to the sailing of a Baltic fleet from Britain in March 1854, before war had been declared between Britain and Russia and six months before the first allied troops went ashore in the Crimean peninsula. At this time, all the fighting that had taken place had been between the Russians and the forces of the Turkish Empire in various Turkish provinces.

It is one of the ironies of this war that despite the importance of the naval dimension, all the battles should have been fought on land. Another is that, although there was never a major sea battle, an important factor in the eventual allied success was the British Navy's steam power. The presence of their steamships contributed significantly to the Western Allies' victory, although they fired remarkably few shots at Russian ships, and although the British naval authorities and the majority of the senior officers had scarcely begun to appreciate the significance of what had happened. The equipping of a wooden warship of Nelsonian appearance, though larger and better built, with an inefficient low-powered steam auxiliary engine driving a screw-propeller was a development perhaps comparable in its historical significance with that of the self-guided missile in our own day. This, rather than the subsequent development of the armoured warship, was the great naval advance of the nineteenth century.

[3]Testimony of the Austrian Consul at Sinope, quoted in J A Baxter, *The Introduction of the Ironclad Warship* (Harvard, 1933).

Russia was a difficult country to attack. As her neighbours, Austria, Prussia, and Sweden knew – and the French remembered – vast distances, very poor communications, and a huge and hostile population, made a successful land campaign by Russia's enemies almost impossible. Quite apart from the fact that the forces of the Russian Navy which had destroyed the Turks at Sinope were based at Sebastopol and had retreated there when faced with a British fleet largely powered by steam, the self-contained peninsula of the Crimea was almost the only region of Russia a sea power could invade and hope to achieve a significant victory without becoming bogged down in the plains, the forests, and the swamps. In the Crimea, Russia faced grave logistical problems in an area remote from the centre of government and the centres of population. There remained, however, the Baltic Fleet. Overcome this fleet, penetrate or by-pass the fortifications of Kronstadt, and the pressures on Russia, though they would never have brought about her conquest, would have been formidable.

Finland, the Grand Duchy, was an unknown quantity to western powers. Intelligence about the country was very limited. Much of its economy was dependent on its merchant fleet and on the export of forest products, mainly 'naval stores' – timber and the all-important pine tar – to western Europe and especially to Britain. The sympathies of its inhabitants towards Russia or Sweden were not really known in Britain. Although there were some good articles in contemporary journals, very few people in Britain in the early 1850s, except perhaps some business men trading with the country, knew as much about the situation in Finland as the reader of this book now knows. But a blockade of Finnish waters, with the Black Sea already closed at the Dardanelles, would, in theory, destroy Russia's overseas trade, render inoperative the greater part of her merchant fleet, and perhaps encourage the Finns to disaffection and the Swedes towards participation in the conflict with a view to the recovery of Finland.

A major battle at sea with the Russian Fleet would have resulted in almost certain victory for, although this fact was not generally appreciated in Britain, while the Royal Navy was not at its best at this period, the Russian Fleet, designed to fight second and third rate naval powers – Sweden and Turkey – was in a worse state; and the British had steam and the Russians had not. It was here, in the north, that the Russians were most vulnerable, and they knew it.

As it was, in the eighteen months the war lasted, the allies did not commit their real strength in the northern regions. They sent a fleet in 1854 and the wider conflict of the Crimean War began – the involvement of Britain and France and the extension of the war beyond Turkey. It began in

the Baltic with a blockade of the Finnish and Russian coasts and the conquest of Bomarsund. The fleet maintained the blockade in 1855 and bombarded Sveaborg from the sea. Kronstadt, which the fleet was then quite incapable of attacking with the ships and equipment with which it was provided, was reconnoitred in both years and the foundations of a possible attack on this formidable place were laid. But there was no spectacular battle at sea because the Russians wisely kept their fleets of sailing ships behind the forts and mines and shoals of Kronstadt and the narrow gaps in the rocks which led through Sveaborg.

This was a war quite largely about fleets, and fleets were expected by the British people and, of necessity in the face of popular feeling, by their politicians, to win great victories at sea. There was not even a spectacular piece of folly, like the Charge of the Light Brigade, to be romanticized although one was contemplated. So, although it did its job very well by the standards of the times (though it was badly manned, particularly in 1854, and officered by men who were either in their dotage or without previous operational experience), the British Baltic Fleet gained no honour in public esteem, its commanders no rich rewards. Its orders were changed by an Admiralty pressured by public opinion into demanding more than the fleet had been equipped and expected or required to do, and when it returned after the first northern sailing season in the autumn of 1854 it was to harsh criticism, Parliamentary condemnation, and eventual historical oblivion. The fleet of 1855 fared scarcely better.

The British assault on Finland was a campaign by a forgotten fleet which conducted forgotten operations, relegated to the back rooms of history. Its record, even in books dealing with the Crimean War, is usually confined to a few lines, while the single episode of the Light Brigade has a chapter to itself. A government issue of fine engravings of drawings of the campaign of 1854 by Sir Oswald Brierly hangs on the walls of the staircases of the quarters of a number of senior naval officers today, yet such is the oblivion to which the fleet's operation has been consigned that it is rare to find a naval officer of any rank who is aware even that there was a northern campaign of the Crimean War, or, indeed, that naval conflict was an issue in that war at all. Yet in June 1855, the Russian General P K Men'kov wrote in his diary (as summarized by Curtiss):

> that while St Petersburg constantly 'grieved' about the Crimean, it kept the Crimean army short of powder, small arms, modern cannon, bombs, and other up-to-date weapons. For the protection of the swampy Baltic shore, however, defended by fortresses, they maintained 300,000 of the best troops armed with high-powered rifles and modern artillery, but they never fired a shot! At the same time 'the other army dying in the bastions of Sebastopol was not reinforced in time, was constantly in need of powder and projectiles and, armed with sticks (obsolete muskets), fought against the strong allied enemy, excellently armed, completely ready for war'.[4]

It was perhaps the greatest irony of the war that this forgotten Baltic fleet played a major part in eventual Allied victory. Even if the General's figure of 300,000 is reduced to the 200,000 given by other reliable Russian sources as the number of troops kept to protect Finland, and above all the vital St Petersburg area, against the threat of the hovering fleet (whose sails were visible that summer of 1854 even to the Tzar and his family looking out from the palace of Peterhof), a quarter of these, sent to the south, could have turned the tide in favour of Russia, for some of the Crimean battles were close-run affairs. It is to be remembered that the original British force landed in the Crimean comprised, according to Eardley-Wilmot, less than 30,000 men.[5] However, these Russian troops remained in the north as defence against the threat of the fleet of 1855, the naval base of Sebastopol fell, and the Russian government faced with an alliance which now included Sweden and Norway and plans for a massive attack on Finland and on Kronstadt by the new alliance in 1856, accepted terms proposed by Austria and the Paris Peace Conference, which was to end the war, began.

Edgar Anderson in his well-documented paper 'The Scandinavian Area and the Crimean War in the Baltic', writes that the Baltic Fleet had 'kept half the Russian land forces idle in the Baltic area . . . and had humiliated the Russian navy . . . The Russian armed forces had outnumbered the Allied armed forces eight to one in the Baltic area but had been able to do nothing . . .'[6] In his paper 'The Crimean War in the Baltic Area', quoting Tarle, *Krimskaya voina*, (Moscow, 1944–50) and Rousett, *Histoire de la Guerre de Crimée*, (Paris, 1877), Anderson is more specific, giving the Russian forces retained in Finland and the Baltic provinces as comprising 270,000 men. 'Altogether 215 Russian combat battalions from a grand total of 716 were tied up in the Baltic area.'[7] Juhani Paasivirta quoting Tarle and other Russian sources including Nesselrode's correspondence, writes of the Russian forces in Finland itself as rising 'during the period of the war to nearly 70,000'.[8] Together with the forces in Kronstadt and St Petersburg,

[4]John Shelton Curtiss, op. cit..
[5]S Eardley-Wilmot, *Life of Vice-Admiral Edmund, Lord Lyons* (London, 1898).
[6]*Scandinavian Studies*, Vol 41, No 3 (August, 1969).
[7]*Journal of Baltic Studies*, Vol V, No 4 (Winter, 1974).
[8]Paasivirta, op cit.

and in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, this number would tend to confirm Anderson's total of over a quarter of a million.

As Edward Crankshaw has pointed out,[9] in fact only a part of the Russian army was ever engaged in the Crimea. Quite apart from the 200,000 or more men, including the crack Guards regiments, held down on the Finnish and Estonian coasts and around St Petersburg, there were another 200,000 in Poland, watching both the local people and the Austrians. Given the absence of railways (there were only 650 miles of railway line in Russia at the time of the war), the only way of moving troops from Finland to the Crimea was on foot. The transport which went with them moved at ten miles a day, the horses always at a walk. As Crankshaw says, 'The rules, devised by stupid men for even more stupid troops, had to be simple and iron hard. Otherwise the horses would have been ridden to death in no time at all'.[10] The British and French forces, carried by sea in steam-driven transports or line-of-battleships towed by steamers, had a far higher degree of mobility. It would have taken three months to move a Russian army from the Crimea to St Petersburg, a month at the most to move a British one. This simple fact played its part, with all the other factors, in the Russian acceptance of peace terms in 1856, when, as explained in Chapter 20, the main threat for the summer campaign at last moved to the Baltic. The rest of this book is the story of the forgotten fleets of 1854 and 1855 in the north. They penetrated the labyrinth of the Finnish archipelagos, where the channels were sometimes so narrow that the tall trees of the soft woods which clothed the islands became merged with the masts of the ships, as if the fleet was sailing through a forest.

[9]Crankshaw, op cit.
[10]Ibid.

4

The Imperial Russian Fleet

What, then, was the nature and state of the Russian and British Fleets at the time of the declaration of war in March 1854? Consider first the Imperial Russian Navy in the first half of the nineteenth century. Its two fleets, the Black Sea Fleet and the Baltic Fleet, shared some of the same difficulties and disadvantages, but the Baltic Fleet, as has already been seen, had peculiar problems of its own.

The British Ambassador in St Petersburg summed up one general aspect very well in a dispatch (No 17 of 4 February 1839) to the Foreign Secretary, Lord Palmerston, when he wrote:

> . . . The Emperor is certainly very anxious to have a powerful, and efficient navy, but I do not believe that this desire is combined with any particular, or ambitious project. His Imperial Majesty seems to have conceived notions of the identification of a navy with the memory of Peter the Great, and with Russian greatness, which he vainly endeavours to impress upon his people, and which he will not readily lay aside . . .
>
> The Emperor's nautical passion is not shared or admired by his subjects, who place little confidence, or affection in their navy and who, for the most part consider the money and time given up by the Emperor to the Baltic Fleet as a profitless expenditure.
>
> Count Orloff assured me that ever since the reign of Catherine an allowance has been made in the Russian budget for the maintenance of 27 sail of the line in the Baltic and for 15 in the Black Sea; – that the Emperor found on his succession that the money had for years been improperly diverted from this purpose, and that he had succeeded with difficulty in putting an end to the malversation and abuse that had been established.
>
> I do not think it will be possible to persuade His Imperial Majesty to lessen the amount of his naval forces, although he may abstain from making such an exhibition of them as may disturb the minds of his allies.[1]

[1]PRO FO 65/251 Correspondence with St Petersburg.

For fuller captions see pages vii–x

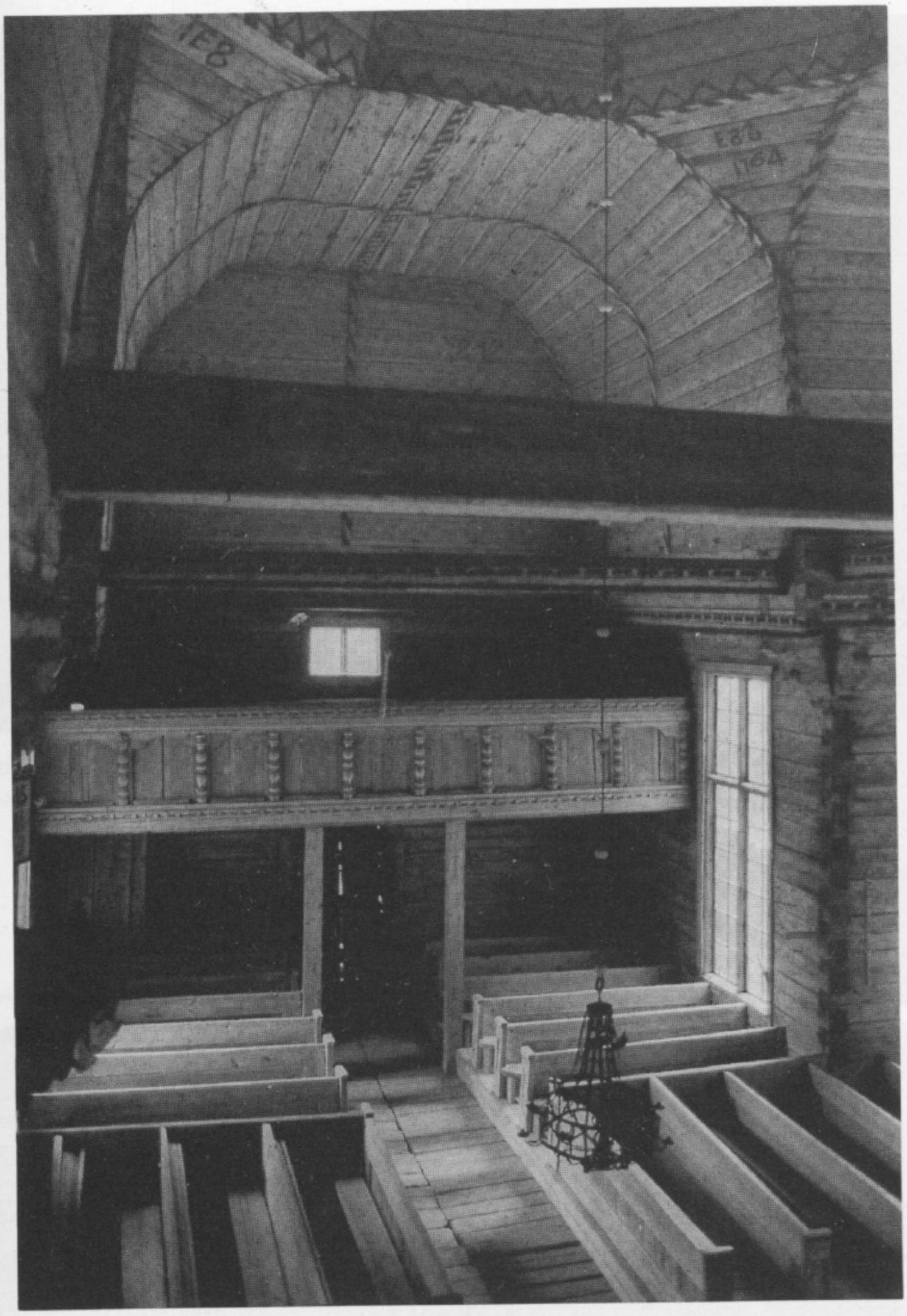
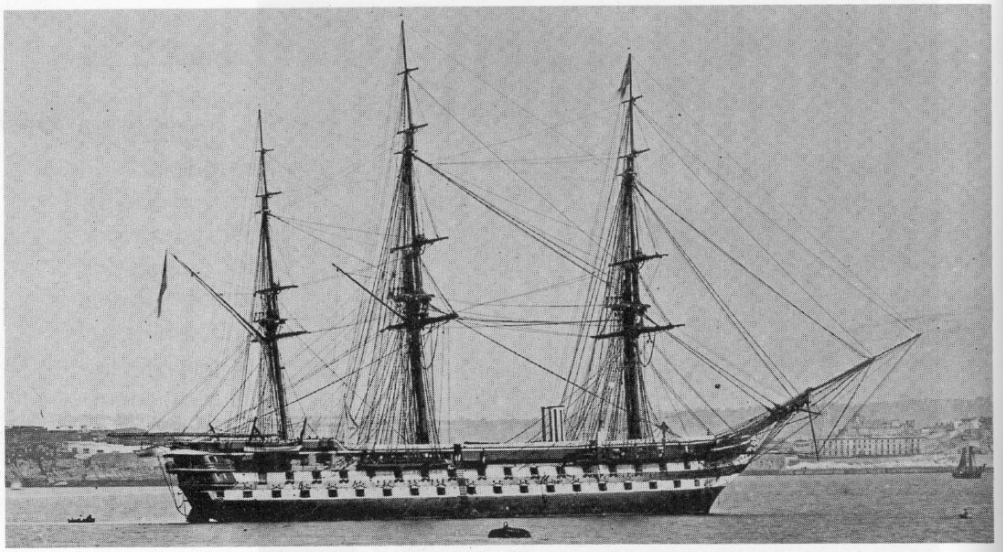


PLATE 1. The wooden church at Petäjävesi in Central Finland.

[*Basil Greenhill*]

PLATE 2. The Vargatafjärd and the head of Bomar Sound taken from the site of Prästö tower looking due north. The ruins of Notvik tower still stand high on the skyline on the other side of the Sound.

[*Basil Greenhill*]

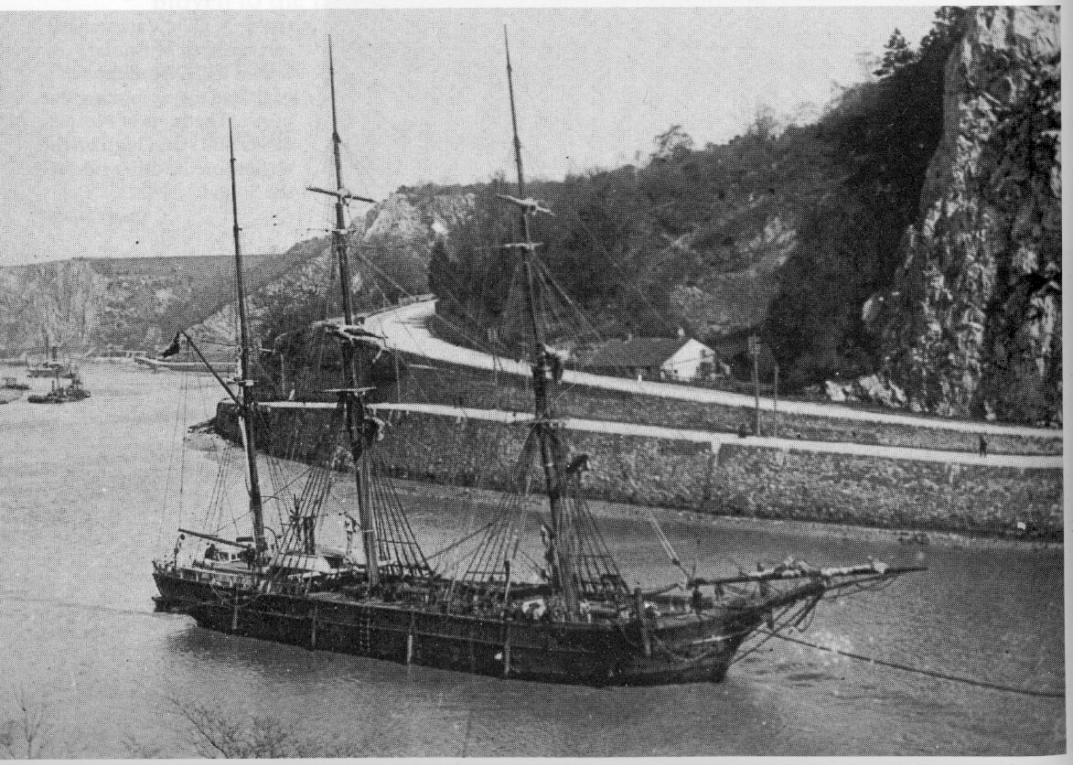


[*Imperial War Museum*]

PLATE 3. Captain Lord Clarence Paget's *Princess Royal* photographed in Plymouth Sound in 1864 or 1867.

PLATE 4. The barque *Grefvre Berg*, was launched in Turku (Åbo) in 1857 as one of the many vessels built to replace war losses.

[*Lars Grönstrand*]



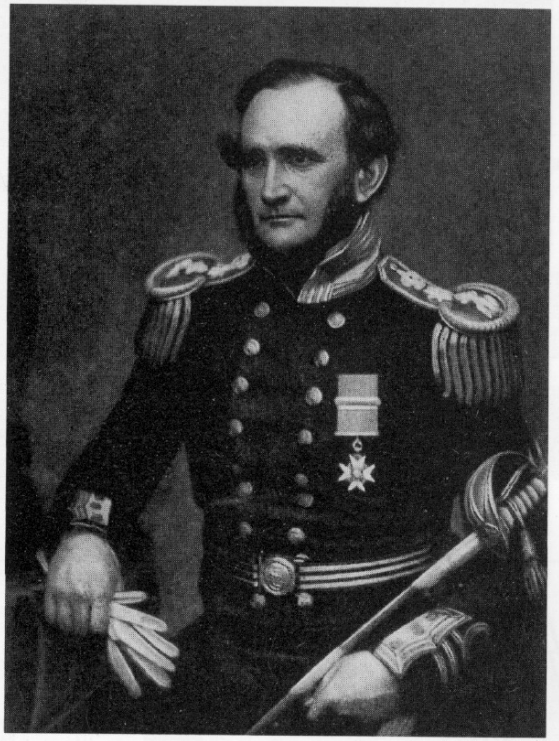
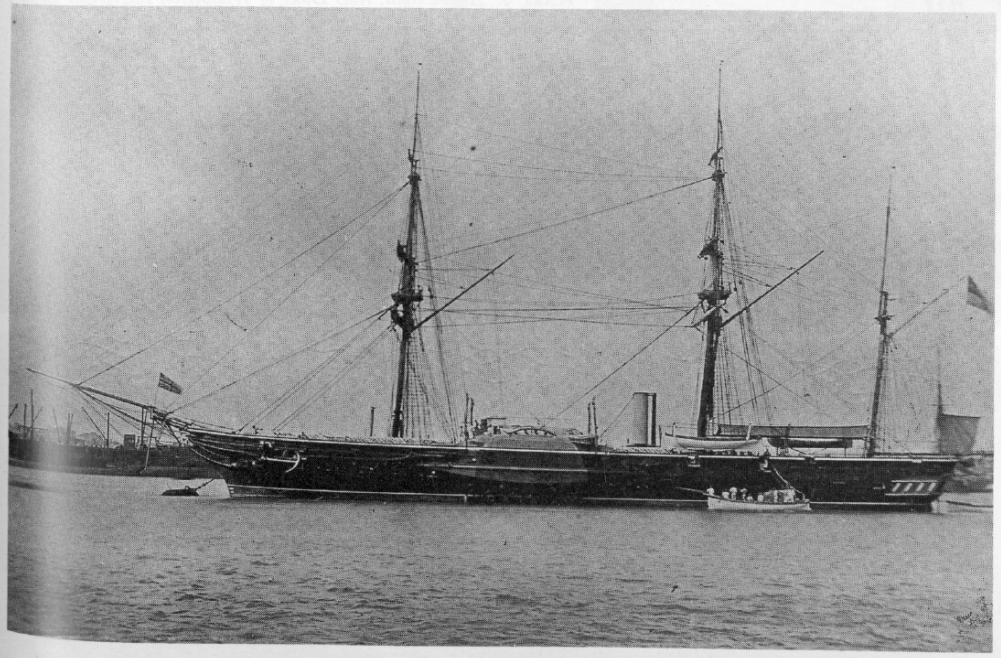


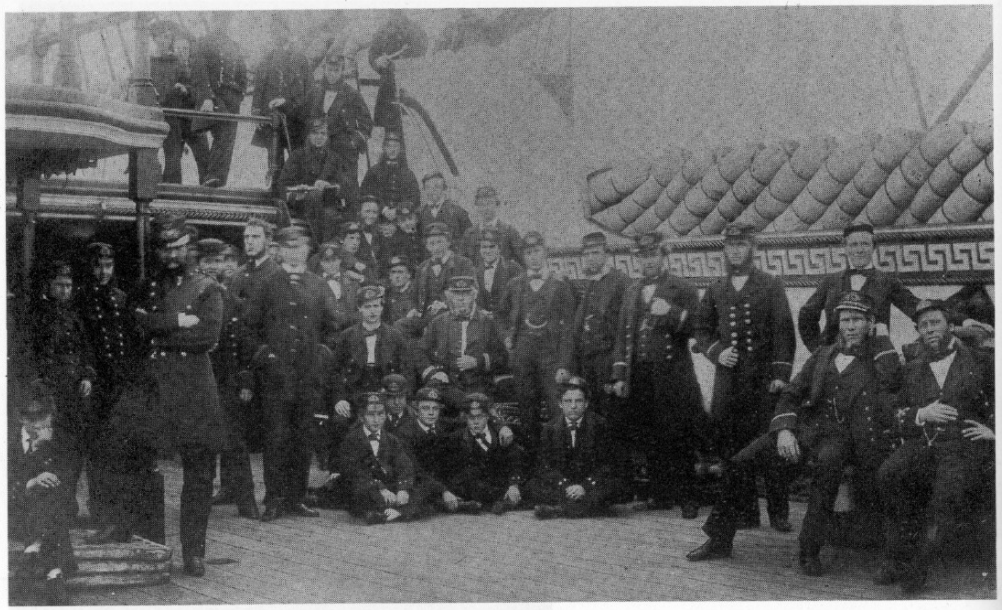
PLATE 5. Bartholomew James Sulivan, 1810–1890, from a photograph by Maull & Fox.

[*From the 'Life and Letters'*]



[*National Maritime Museum*]

PLATE 6. HMS *Valorous*, a paddle frigate of 16 guns, built in 1851 and the last of the type to be built for the Royal Navy.



[*National Maritime Museum*]

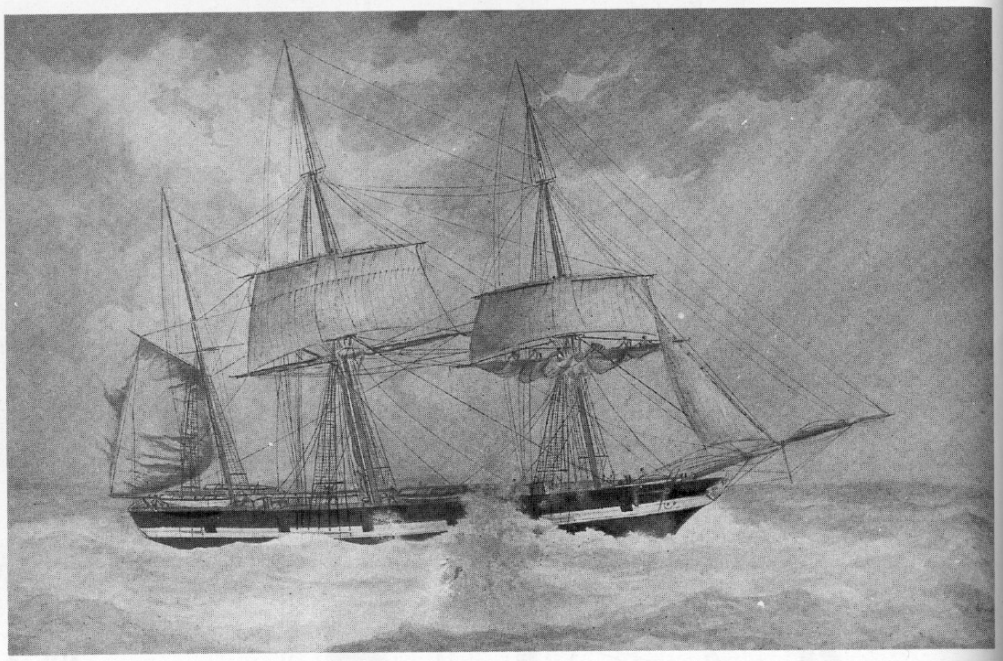
PLATE 7. Some officers of HMS *James Watt*.

PLATE 9. *Above right*: HMS *Duke of Wellington* in March 1854.
[*Plymouth City Museum*]

PLATE 10. *Right*: Main deck of a large ship of the line, possibly HMS *Duke of Wellington*.
[*Plymouth City Musuem*]

PLATE 8. Her Majesty Queen Victoria reviewing the Baltic Fleet from the Royal Yacht *Fairy* (centre) on 11 March 1854.

[*Reproduced by gracious permission of Her Majesty the Queen*]

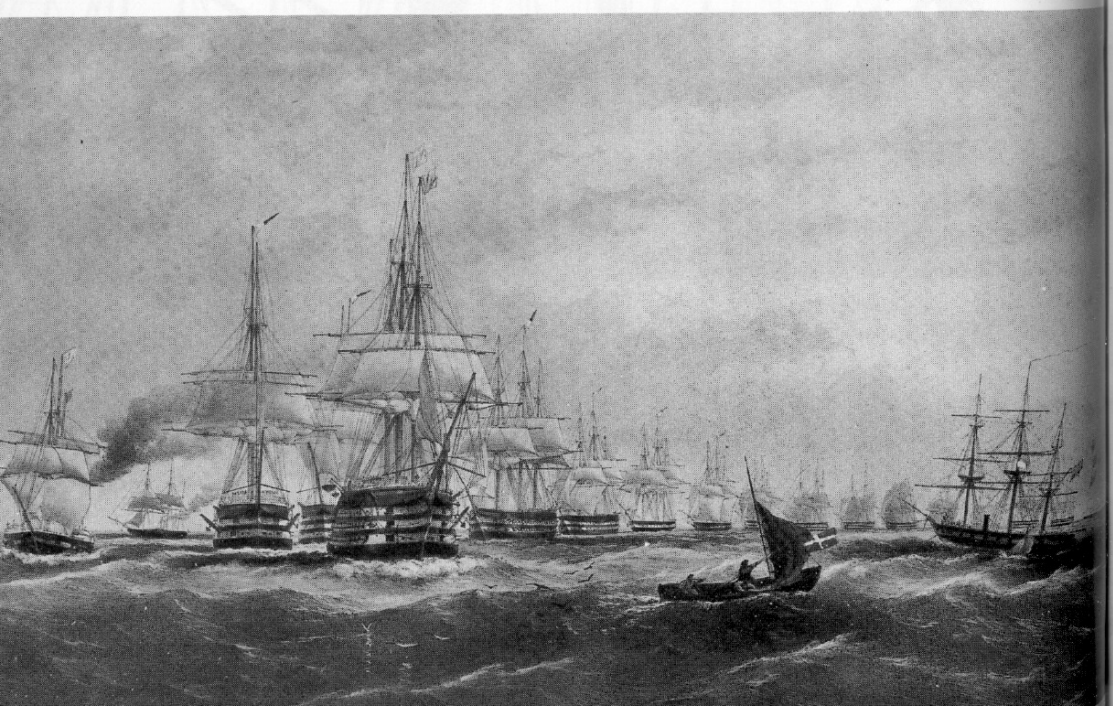


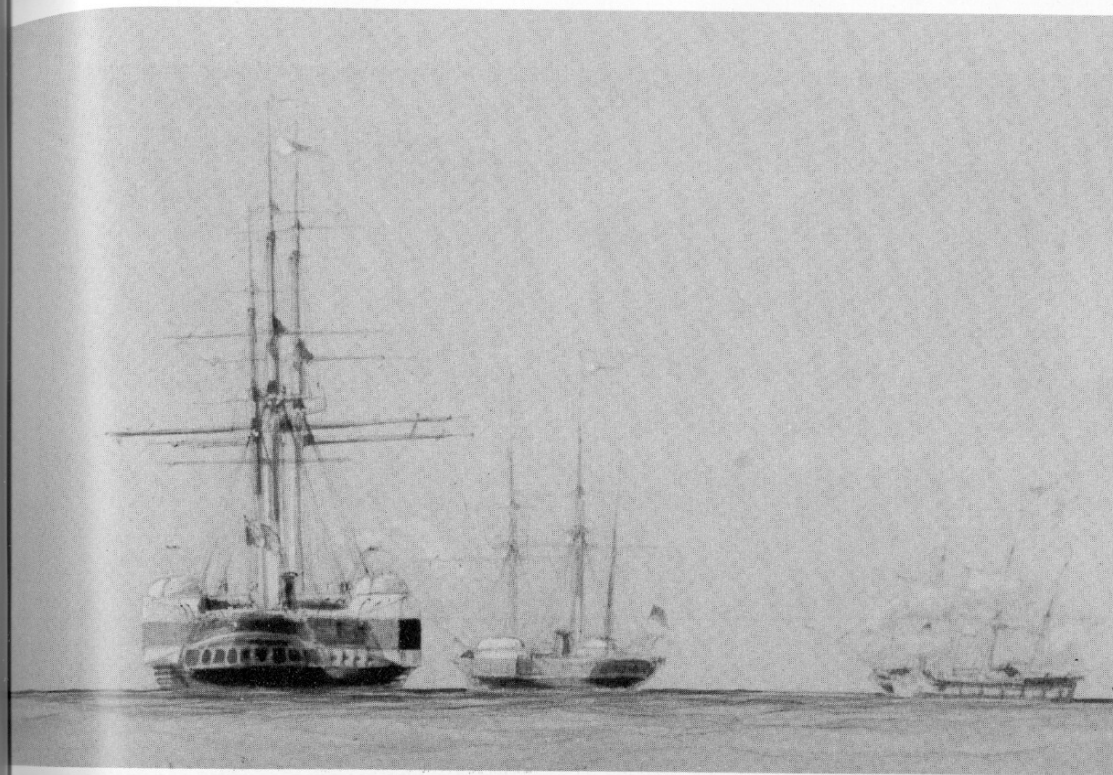
[*Mrs Hugh Cleave*]

PLATE 11. The first Finnish merchant vessel to become a prize of war, *Fröja* of Turku (Åbo).

PLATE 12. The British fleet entering the Great Belt.

[*National Maritime Museum*]



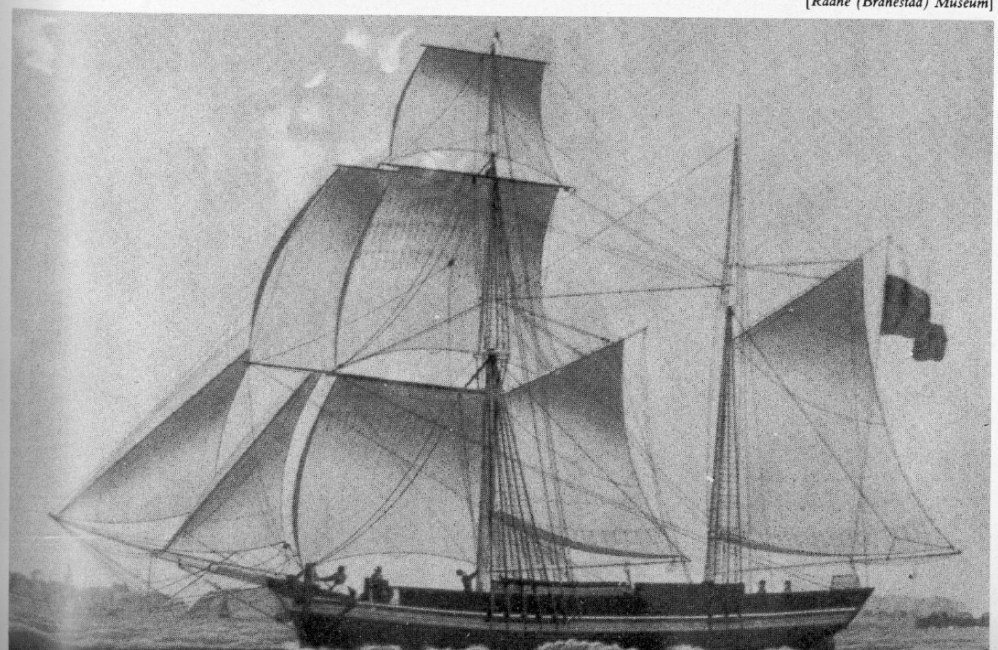


[*Private Collection*]

PLATE 13. Captain George Giffard's paddle frigate *Leopard* with the *Vesuvius*.

PLATE 14. The *Freden*, a *galeas* built at Raahe (Brahestad) in 1818.

[*Raahe (Brahestad) Museum*]



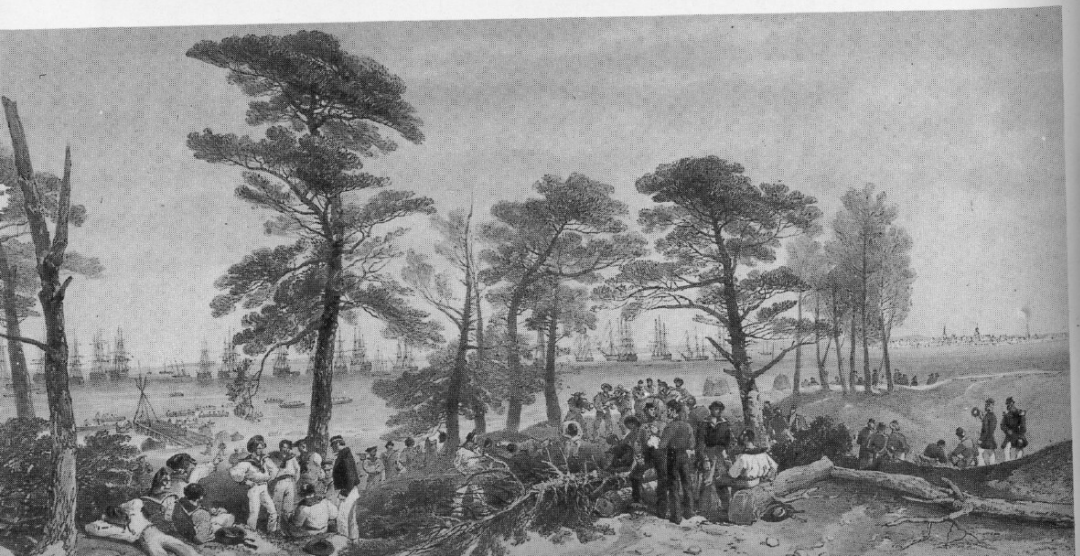


PLATE 15. Surviving tar houses at Oulu (Uleåborg).

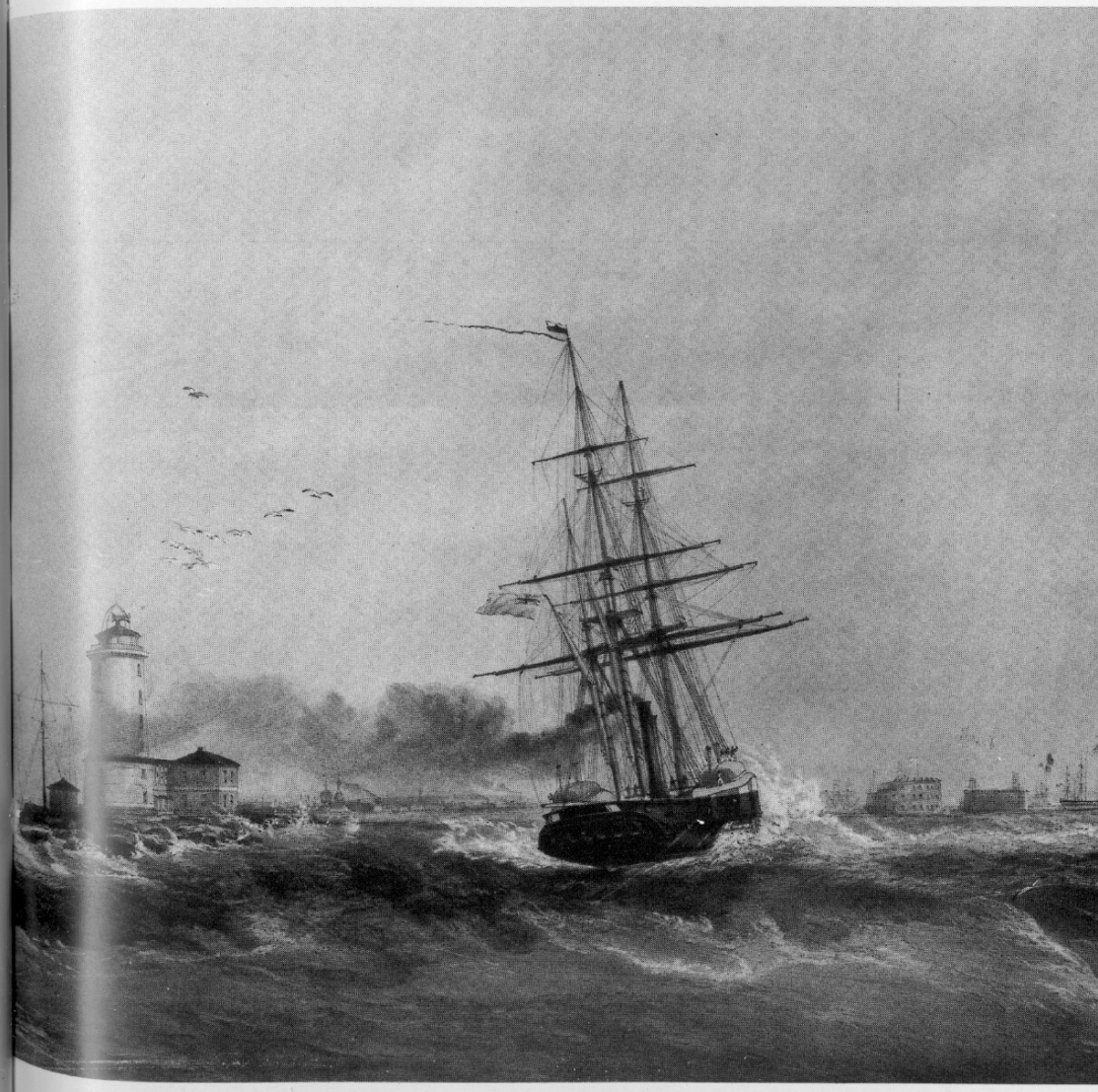
[*Basil Greenhill*]

PLATE 16. When Captain Sulivan made his numerous landings in Åland this was the kind of scene which greeted him.

[*Ålands Sjöfartsmuseum*]

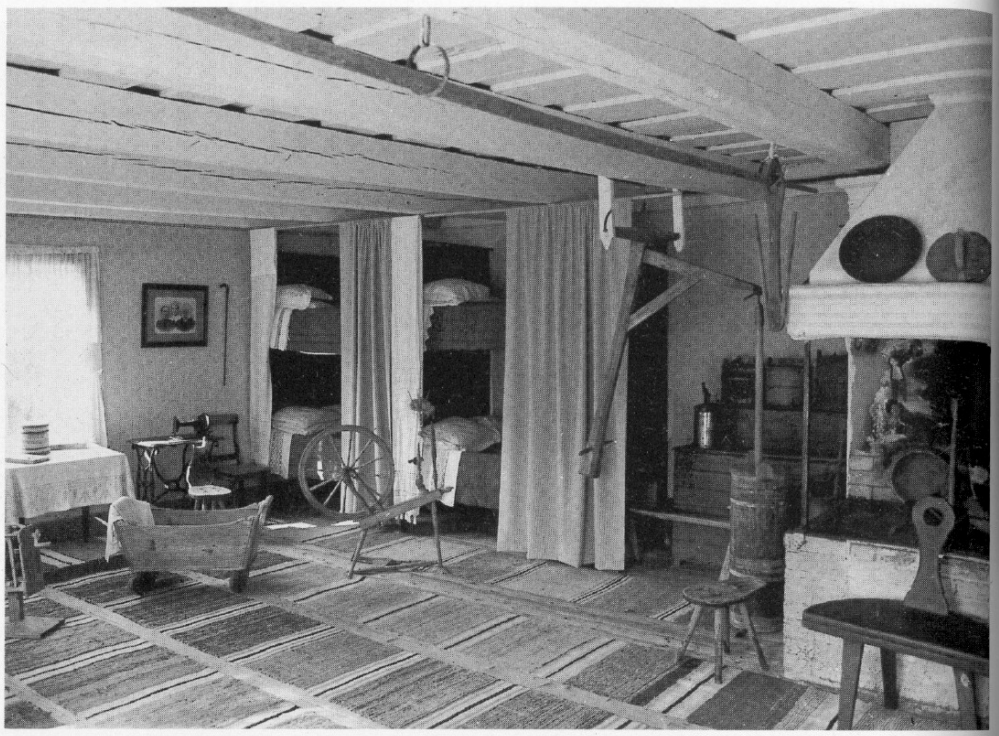
PLATE 17. Elements of ships' companies on shore on the island of Nargen in 1855.

[*Private Collection*]



[*National Maritime Museum*]

PLATE 18. 'The breeze was fresh from the westward, and *Driver* . . . stood in past the Tolbuken Light, and up towards Cronstadt, until all the particulars of the fortifications . . . could be clearly made out from her deck . . .'

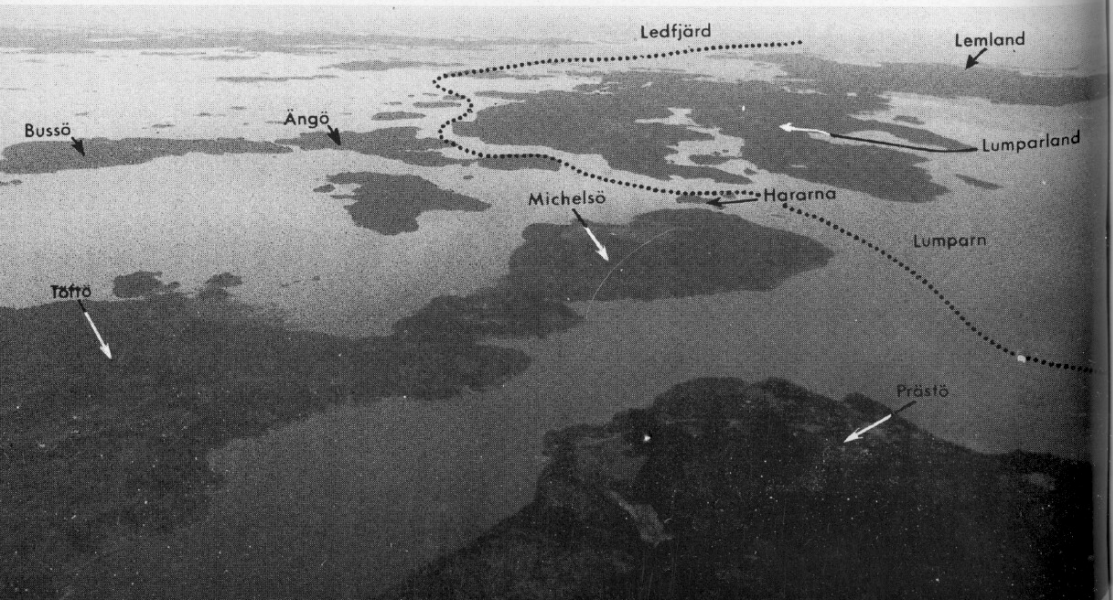


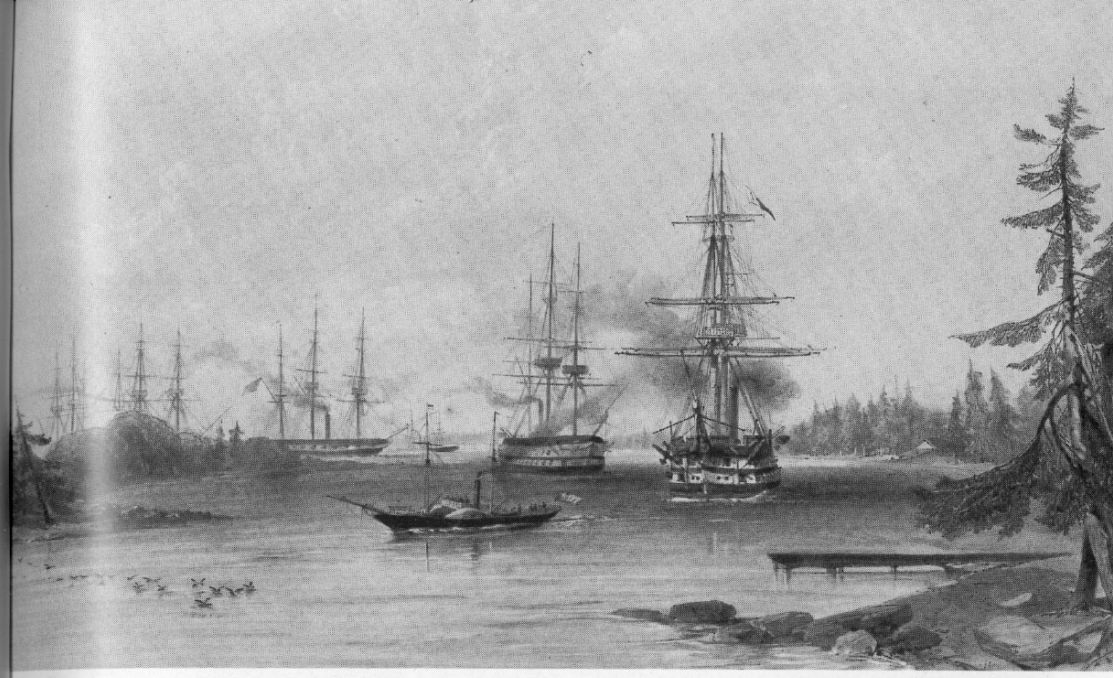
[*Basil Greenhill*]

PLATE 19. The main room of Seffers in Lövö, just south of Simskäla.

PLATE 20. Sulivan's Trail photographed looking due south from over Prästö.

[*Basil Greenhill*]



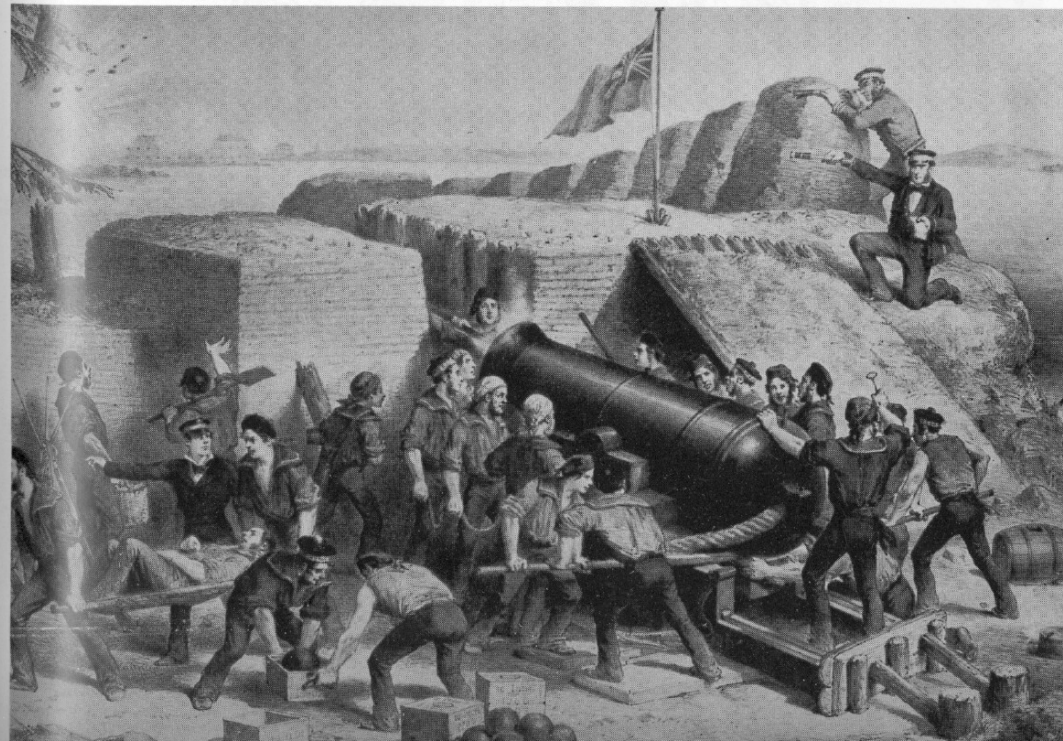


[*Private Collection*]

PLATE 21. *Lightning* leading *Edinburgh*, *Hogue*, *Blenheim*, *Ajax*, *Amphion* and *Alban* through the Ängö Sound on 22 July 1854, on the way to the attack on Bomarsund.

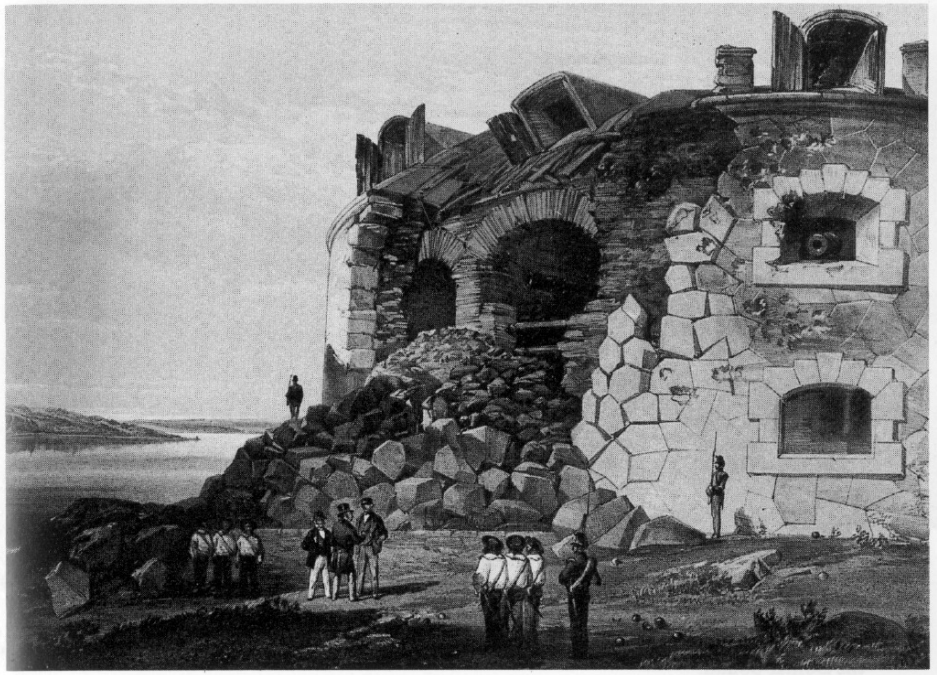
PLATE 22. The mud fort on Grinkarudden where Captain Keppel, having absented himself from his command, met Captain Cooper Key of the *Amphion*.

[*National Maritime Museum*]



[*Public Record Office*]

PLATE 23. 'Position of the Allied Forces at the reduction of Bomarsund, 16 August 1854' drawn by George Giles, Master, HMS *Arrogant*.

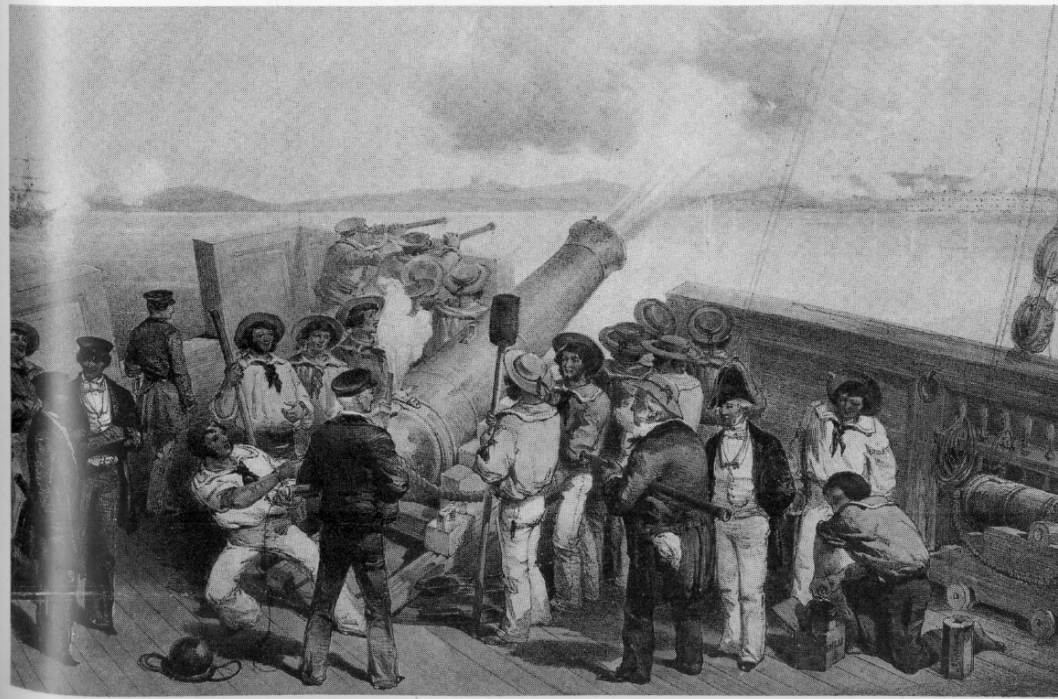


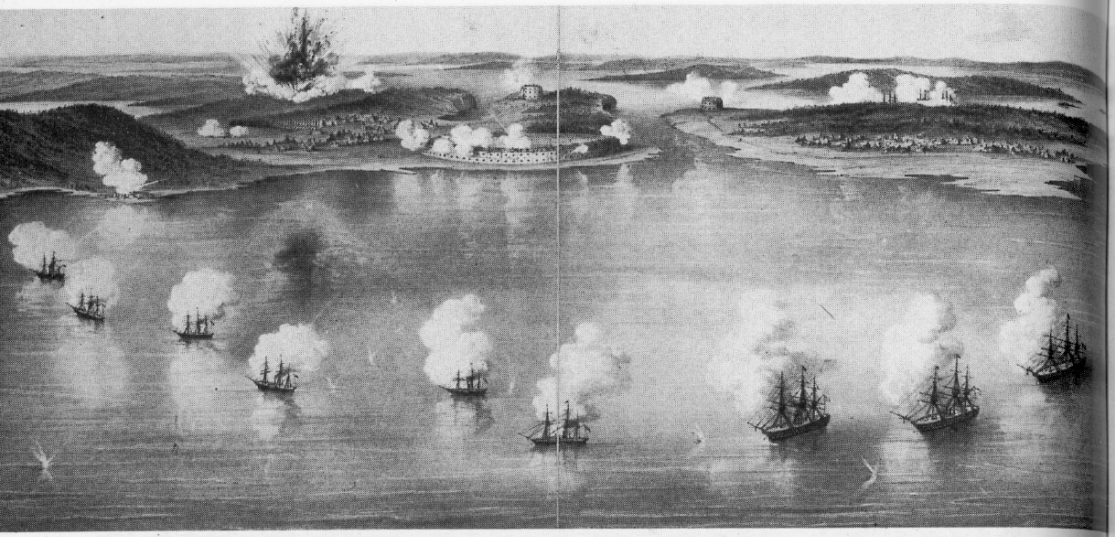
[*National Maritime Museum*]

PLATE 24. Notvik tower showing the breach made by the bombardment.

PLATE 25. 'A sketch on the Quarter Deck of HMS *Bulldog*, 15 August 1854, Bomarsund.'

[*National Maritime Museum*]





[*Musée de la Marine, Paris*]

PLATE 26. The assault on Bomarsund.

PLATE 27. Russian guns from Notvik tower arranged in a serried rank overlooking the north end of the Bomar Sound.

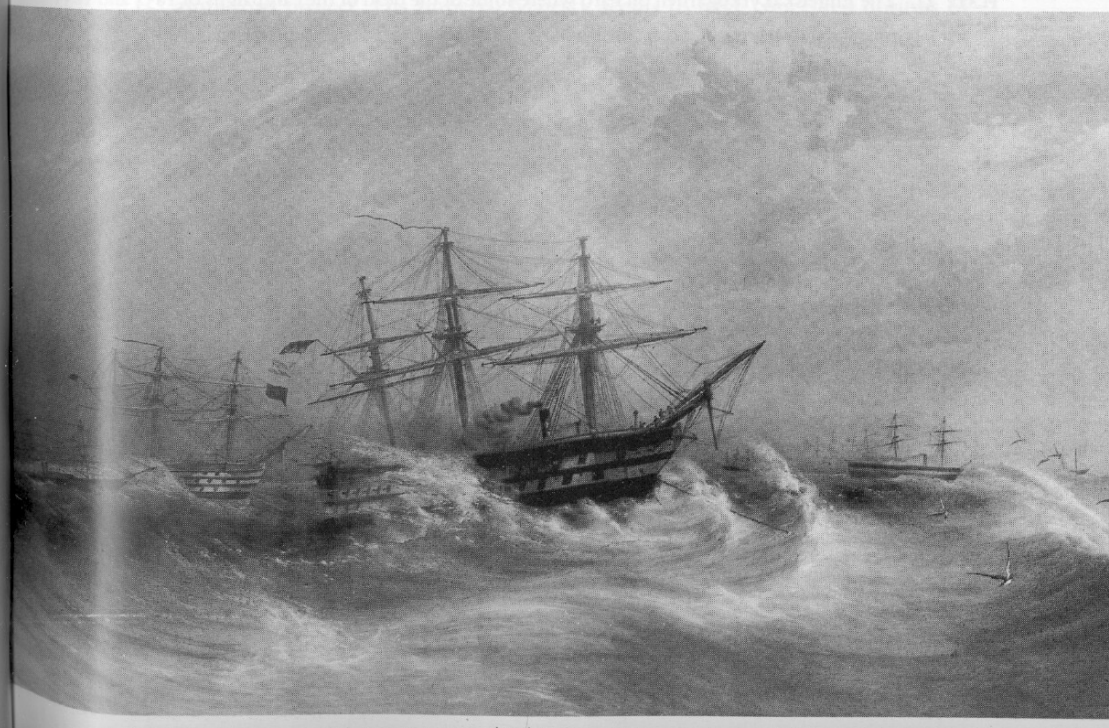
[*Basil Greenhill*]

[*Basil Greenhill*]

PLATE 28. Bränklint tower as it is today.

PLATE 29. 'On 4 September, the fleets being anchored at Ledsund . . . blowing very hard in the squalls, and about 4pm the English ships sent down fore and main-topmasts.'

[*National Maritime Museum*]



[*National Board of Antiquities, Finland*]

PLATE 30. Suomenlinna, Viapori or Sveaborg from the south east, the group of islands in the centre of the picture, with Helsinki in the background.

PLATE 31. The Engelskakyrkogården on Fårö where some of the dead of the campaigns of 1854 and 1855 lie buried.

[*Basil Greenhill*]

The Emperor Nicholas had indeed found on his accession that the money set aside for the navy had been 'improperly diverted', but whether he succeeded in putting an end to the abuses is another matter. At the very beginning of his reign, in December 1825, he set up a 'Committee for the Reform of the Fleet' which included, untypically of such Russian committees under the autocracy, professional naval officers. At the same time, as a Russian naval historian has put it:

> The misuse and embezzlement of funds, which had become standard practice in the Fleet in the last years of Alexander's reign, as a result of weak management and the idleness of those in charge of the affairs of the Ministry of Marine, confirmed the Sovereign's resolve: to appoint as head of the Navy's Administration a man of public prominence having no prior connections with the naval sphere and consequently having no reason for partiality or prejudice because of family or friendly connections.[2]

The man chosen for this key post was Prince A S Menshikov, who was to run the Ministry of Marine for much of Nicholas I's reign.

The new committee found the paper strength of the Baltic Fleet to be 15 ships of the line, 12 frigates, and 31 lesser vessels. Of these, only five ships of the line, ten frigates and 15 to 20 lesser vessels were in a state to be effective. The rowing and sailing fleets of up to 50 vessels, designed for operations in the archipelagos, were also largely incapable of effective action. Nevertheless, against the Turks at Navarino in October 1827 as part of a combined British, French and Russian task force, the hardcore of the Baltic Fleet, less than a dozen vessels under Dutch-born Admiral Heideus was to conduct itself admirably, as it did in a series of subsequent minor actions against the Turks. The Black Sea Fleet was in much better shape, partly because it was not deprived of training and sea-going experience by the ice for over half of each year, partly because it was under the command of a very able officer of British origin, Admiral A S Greig.

The history of the Russian Navy in the reign of Nicholas I can be divided into two parts. During the first, a period of hostilities in the Black Sea area, the Emperor deeply involved himself in naval matters and initiated developments and reform. He took a personal interest in the appointment of senior officers and in the construction of new vessels. He scrutinized the

[2]N Korguyev, *The Russian Fleet in the Reign of the Emperor Nicholas I* (Morskoi Sbornik, 1896), quoted in P I Byelavenets, *On the Necessity for a Navy and the Significance of the Navy in the History of Russia* (St Petersburg, 1909).

drafts of regulations even, according to Russian naval historians, drawing up signals and dispositions for gunboat exercises. He took a particular interest in the reform of naval training establishments.

This interest culminated in a sizeable Baltic Fleet in being in the middle 1830s, but it was of very doubtful efficiency. In July 1836, the Emperor held a Naval Review in the Gulf of Finland. He demonstrated his involvement with the traditions of Peter the Great in unmistakeable fashion. In the words of a contemporary account by H D Seymour:

> The origin of all the numerous naval armaments of Russia in the present day was the little boat built by Peter's own hands, when he returned from his European travels.
>
> In 1836, after a lapse of 113 years, the anniversary of the launching of the little boat was for the first time celebrated with great pomp at Cronstadt. Twenty-six ships of the line, twenty-one frigates, ten brigs, and seven gunboats, were anchored in the roads of Cronstadt, and saluted with 2000 cannon the tiny 'grandpapa', as the little boat was called, which, placed on a steamer, was carried through the lines.[3]

The review was attended by Captain Crawford, Royal Navy, as an observer. He commented on the Baltic Fleet of this time:

> The force of the Russian Fleet is said to be fixed at 5 divisions, 2 of which are to be kept in the Black Sea, 3 in the Baltic – the 2 Baltic divisions belonging to Kronstadt, and 1 being divided between Reval and Sveaborg. Each division is to consist of one 3 decker, 2 rated 84, 6 rated 74, 6 frigates, a corvette and 4 brigs or other small vessels. . . .
>
> The attention that appears to have been paid by those officers who served with our Fleet in the Mediterranean to the way in which everything was done on board our ships, and the accuracy with which they have applied the knowledge so gained is quite extraordinary . . . The arrangements of most of the ships that I visited were quite English. – The storerooms, the tiers, the arrangements of the arms and stores near the guns, all reminded me of an English man-of-war; and from the great attention paid by the Emperor to the Fleet there reigns among both officers and men an 'esprit de corps', a desire to learn and do everything in the best manner possible, that would soon make sailors of them, could their ships remain long enough at sea . . .
>
> They (the ships) are slovenly and careless about their rigging and the fitting of their sails and their ships have a very bad appearance under sail –they are short, heavy-looking vessels, and dull sailers, their 3 deckers especially.
>
> Their firing during the only opportunity I had of judging of it, was very

[3]H D Seymour, *Russia on the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov* (London, 1855).

slow and ill kept up. It is true that it was bad weather . . . but it was excessively weak and ineffectual, nothing could be worse, if they cannot do better, one of our steam 74s in good order would make short work of it with any one of their large ships. . . . Their ships lasting only 10 or 15 years, renders their Fleet very expensive.[4]

Despite the somewhat qualified opinions of Captain Crawford and others who had the opportunity of seeing the Russian Navy at first hand, the creation of a relatively powerful Baltic fleet under the Emperor's personal supervision caused alarm to successive British governments, the expression of which can perhaps best be summed up in a quotation of a Foreign Office dispatch to the Embassy in St Petersburg of 31 May 1836:

> . . . it is certainly impossible for the British Government to see with indifference the annual equipment of a Fleet consisting of 18 sail of the line, and of a large number of frigates and smaller vessels and to observe that Fleet parading up and down the sea within a few days' sail of the British coast, while large bodies of troops are at the same time collected near ports of embarkation at which they might at short notice be put on board that Fleet.
>
> . . . when the ships of war of England are lying in ordinary, and her sailors are scattered over the seas in her merchant service, that nominal pre-eminence would be an unavailing defence against a powerful fleet sweeping along her shores.[5]

The new Russian Baltic Fleet did indeed create something of a scare in Britain in the 1830s and memories of this scare would have repercussions twenty years later when events began to move towards war. The Baltic Fleet at times comprised more ships of the line than the total British force of ships in commission anywhere in the world. In the late 1830s inquiries into the true extent of Russian naval power were vigorously pursued by the British authorities by means open and clandestine in varying degrees. In 1830 the Baltic Fleet was believed to comprise 27 ships of the line, 16 frigates, and 15 smaller vessels; the Black Sea fleet 16 ships of the line, 6 frigates and 10 smaller vessels.

There were grave limitations, however, on their efficiency and on the reality of the potential threat to Britain these ships could impose. Lord Durham, as Ambassador to St Petersburg at the time of the Review, reported to the Foreign Office that Russia had three sources of weakness, inherent and irredeemable. These were Poland, the Caucasus, and the Fleet,

[4]PRO FO 65/225 Correspondence with St Petersburg.
[5]PRO FO 65/221 Correspondence with St Petersburg.

all three depriving her of immense sums of money and large masses of men. Lord Durham said that he found weaknesses where the world imagined strength and strength where the world imagined weakness. The Russian Fleet was impressive only upon paper, or at anchor, and was not equally formidable at sea. The service was forced on officers and men alike and there was no deep sea commercial marine to provide experienced seamen.[6]

> There is, no doubt, to be seen at Kronstadt as splendid a collection of ships of the line, frigates, corvettes, gunboats, etc etc, as can well be imagined, but they are firmly embedded in the ice seven months of the twelve and when at sea for a summer's cruise of three months, the men exhibit all the symptoms of rawness and inefficiency, which must naturally be expected from crews thus circumstanced. In this light is the Russian Navy considered by almost every official person with whom I have conversed on the subject. They all declare it to be a 'toy' and a very 'expensive toy', with which the Emperor delights to occupy himself, but not one of them, from Prince Menchikov downwards, anticipates the possibility of its ever being made use of as a means of attack or defence, and all openly deplore the expense which is occasioned, as weakening their financial resources, and withdrawing large sums annually from the more useful national purpose.[7]

Nevertheless as late as November 1838, Lord Melbourne, then Prime Minister, recorded his view that,

> That Baltic Fleet of hers is a most awkward feature in our present position. It is such an armament as never existed in the world before. The ships are all ready, and the men can be put on board them at a day's notice. All other fleets – at least I believe so – require a considerable time before they can get their crews. It is impossible to consider the country safe while this force is so near. At the same time, to be always in a state of war preparation, if it be not as bad as war, is at least losing half the advantages of peace.[8]

Lord Melbourne went so far as to suggest to the Russians that in return for a British undertaking to make no increase in the naval estimates for the following year, the Russians should commission only part of the Baltic Fleet the following summer. Count Nesselrode, the Russian Foreign Minister, in rejecting this request quite rightly drew attention to a further fundamental weakness in the Russian position when he said that Russia had no merchant shipping industry from which to draw seamen (the Russian

[6]PRO FO 65/225 Correspondence with St Petersburg.
[7]Ibid.
[8]L C Sanders, *Lord Melbourne's Papers* (London, 1889).

merchant shipping industry was, of course, largely Finnish and the Finns were exempt from conscription). The Russian Navy therefore had to take every opportunity to train its men and could not reduce further the brief opportunities to do so presented by the Baltic sailing season.

The Emperor Nicholas I did not sustain his close personal interest in naval affairs. There came a second period in the 1840s and early 50s when long relative quiet in the Black Sea and Mediterranean gave little occasion for naval activity. These were the worst conditions for a fleet with the operational and social difficulties which faced the Russian Navy. The emphasis moved inevitably to the superficialities of appearance and turn-out, with such limited training in home waters in the north as the climate of bases strung along the 60th parallel allowed. The Black Sea Fleet was rather better off and under an excellent commander, Admiral Lazarev, maintained standards which enabled it to destroy the Turkish squadron at Sinope. But the navy's position in the contest for resources was weak, and little or no attempt was made to keep abreast of developments, especially in the vital matter of the introduction of steamships, much less the screw-steamers on which the future of naval warfare was to depend for the next three-quarters of a century. The navy settled down to the building of softwood standard ships of early nineteenth-century design and by 1853 there were only two effective paddle-steamers in the Black Sea fleet, the *Vladimir* and the *Bessarabia*, both built on the Thames. According to a Russian historian of the Baltic Campaign of the Crimean War, Major-General Borodkin, in 1850 the Baltic Fleet comprised 25 sailing ships of the line, 12 frigates, seven steam frigates, 51 smaller vessels, 78 rowing and sailing galleys, 15 harbour steamers and 156 other harbour vessels. In reserve were six more ships of the line, three frigates and a corvette. Two more steam frigates were being built. A contemporary British source, Edwin Galt, gives the names of 21 Russian ships of the line, five frigates, three 'brigs and corvettes' and seven paddle steamers as based at Kronstadt in 1854. Galt also names eight ships of the line, one frigate and two 'brigs and corvettes', together with three paddle-steamers, as based at Helsinki.[9]

This was still by no means an efficient fleet. Galt reports that it was said that not more than 20 of the ships of the line were in a serviceable condition. In the early 1850s an aide-de-camp to the Emperor, N A Arkaf, inspected the fleet. Borodkin reports the results of this inspection as follows:

> During practice shooting aboard one of the vessels, a cannon was loaded according to the book, but after the first shot it blew up, killing nine men and wounding five. During the same Review, the muzzle section of another cannon fell off and several gun carriages ejected their wedges with such force that the lives of the gun crews were endangered. At the Naval council of war held at Kronstadt in the presence of the Tzar on board the ship of the line *Peter I*, the Admirals acknowledged that the crews were very unpractised, especially with regard to sail handling. The Tzar became highly incensed at this and said sharply, 'Is it possible for the Fleet to exist and to draw maintenance, in order for it then to be reported to me, when it is really needed, that is not in readiness?'
>
> An Imperial command followed immediately upon this: to put to sea and to train the crews. The fleet returned to Kronstadt from this excursion in appalling condition. There was not a single vessel that had not suffered considerable damage to rigging and hull. On some vessels the rudder heads and mastheads had been damaged and had to be replaced with new ones. The wind, admittedly, had been fresh, but it had by no means been a storm. Three days later the Tzar himself turned up at Kronstadt and ordered that all vessels should set sail. 'Setting sail went extremely slowly', Arkaf adds, 'Complete chaos reigned on all vessels and this was accompanied by indescribable noise'.[10]

[9]E Galt, *The Camp and the Cutter* (London, 1856).

The Russian Baltic Fleet suffered a further grave disadvantage. As Colonel Reino Aaltonen, drawing on Russian and Finnish studies, concluded:

> During the Crimean War the allied naval cannon had a range of about one kilometre more than the corresponding Russian ones thanks to heavier charges and more efficient powder. . . . The weakness of the Russian artillery was its poor gun powder. It was often in powder form but lumped up due to dampness, and thus it lost its power. The iron of the gun barrels was often also too brittle and could not stand a full charge of powder.[11]

In 1855 a British Member of Parliament, HD Seymour, who had spent a number of years in southern Russia, took advantage of the interest created by the Crimean War to publish a book called *Russia on the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov*, which contained an account of the Russian Navy acknowledged as taken largely from a French work, *Études sur la Russie* by Baron von Haxthausen. Seymour reports that the Imperial Fleet was manned from common conscription, with no special preferences for particular national groups within the Empire. The three divisions of the

[10]Major-General M Borodkin, *Kriget vid Finlands Kuster, 1854–55*, Swedish translation from the Russian (Helsinki, 1905).

[11]Reino Aaltonen, *Hangö Fästning* (Hangö, 1971).

navy, one in the Black Sea, two in the Baltic, were manned by 45 'battalions' or crews, each composed of eight petty officers, 25 musicians and 1000 men under the command of an officer with colonel's rank, supported by two 'superior officers', 12 lieutenants and 12 midshipmen. A single crew was allocated to man a three-decker and one or two smaller vessels, or a two-decker and a frigate, or two frigates and one or two brigs. The first 27 crews were allocated to the Baltic, 28 to 44 were in the Black Sea, 45 in the Caspian and 46 at Kamchatka. Seymour goes on to say:

> There are no marines in the Russian Navy, and the seamen are disciplined like soldiers. The term of service in the navy is, I believe, similar to that in the army, namely, from 10 to 25 years, according to the provinces of the Empire from which the sailors are drawn . . . The sailors are fed upon rye or black bread which they prefer to wheaten bread. They have meat twice a week, and drink 'quaff', a fermented drink, made from the rye flour, and the Russian 'vodka', or brandy which is likewise made from rye. The sailors are all disciplined and dressed as soldiers, wear helmets, and for their common dress the same long drab greatcoats as the army. They are, in fact, more properly sea soldiers than sailors. When the Grand Duke Constantine inspected the Black Sea Fleet, its Admiral was obliged to ask permission for the sailors to take off their proper uniform, as it was found impossible for them to mount the rigging in it.
>
> When a Russian vessel is on a foreign station, which has seldom been the case, except with small vessels having only picked crews, the dress is changed, both of officers and men, and they then, for the time, wear shirts and trousers, like the sailors of maritime nations; and they also then receive extra allowances, to enable them to live like the people of the country where they happen to be. The Russians have a great *amour propre*; and I have often watched them on a foreign station, when they have been moored with French and English vessels at Constantinople and Athens, constantly exercising their men, until at last they succeed in managing their vessels with great quickness.
>
> The immense majority of their ships, however, are confined to the Baltic and Black Seas, in which they are obliged to lay up more than half the year. The Black Sea Fleet is seldom out for more than one month's cruise in summer, and sometimes for an even shorter period. Besides the short time they are out, the cruising in such limited areas with a large fleet of vessels must be a very uninteresting operation, and there is nothing in it to call out the spirit of enterprise or adventure. The sailors are nearly all landsmen, and such they always remain. There is no mercantile marine, notwithstanding the great inducements held out by the government; and although the commerce of Russia is considerable, there is not a single merchantman manned and sent out by Russians Proper, by which I mean the Slavonic population, which forms the real strength of the Russian nation. The Finns are enterprising shipowners, but they are a totally different race, and a conquered people . . . Under all these disadvantages, some of which are inseparable from the despotic nature of the Government, for commerce like genius requires for its development complete liberty, it is impossible that the Russian fleets can ever become formidable by their quality, although the large number of their vessels may prove a source of disquietude to a second rate power.
>
> In the beginning, the Russian Navy was formed entirely by foreigners, and principally by Englishmen . . . There were, in particular, five Englishmen, who had been originally brought up in the English Navy, who rose to be admirals in the Russian Service, and were of great use to their navy – Admirals Crown, Hamilton, Elphinstone, Dugdale and Greig. Admiral Lazarev, a Russian, who commanded when I visited Sevastopol, had been brought up in the English Navy, and fought as a midshipman at Trafalgar.[12]

Some impression of the life on board Russian vessels on foreign stations with their picked crews and special conditions of service can be gained from the narrative of Ivan Goncharov (later to achieve fame as the author of the classic *Oblomov*), who sailed as Secretary to Admiral Putyatin in the frigate *Pallada* from Kronstadt to Irkutsk between October 1852 and February 1855. The frigate, though only 20 years old, was already nearing the end of her useful life. She ran aground in the Sound and had to spend a month undergoing extensive repairs at Portsmouth. She had to receive further dockyard attention at almost every port she put into on the voyage and in the end the exasperated admiral sent a lieutenant back to St Petersburg to request a replacement. She had a crew of 400 who were very well fed. Discipline was strict but with this picked crew there is no indication that it was brutal.

Ivan Goncharov wrote a prophetic passage:

> Woe to the seaman of the old school whose whole mind, science and art, backed by his self-esteem and ambition are centred in the rigging. The conclusion is foregone . . . While we were at the Portsmouth naval docks they half dismantled a completely finished ship and put a steam engine in.[13]

In the mid-nineteenth century, in return for her exports to Britain, Russia imported mainly consumer goods – coffee, sugar, tea, spices, tobacco, salt, textiles and cotton. Not until the 1840s did investment goods begin to play a significant role. Britain remained Russia's most important trading partner, the principal market for her exports. Though Russian grain was being sold to Italy, France, Prussia, Austria, Turkey, and the

[12] Seymour op cit.

[13] Goncharov, *The Voyage of the Frigate 'Pallada'* (London, 1965).

Netherlands, Britain took, for example, three-quarters of Russia's total export of oats. When industrial capital investment began in Russia, inevitably trade looked to the principal partner who was also the first and, at that time the only substantially industrialized nation in the world. There was no other real source for the steam engines, needed both for the infant industry ashore and for driving steam warships. The machinery for most of the seven paddle-frigates listed by General Borodkin came from Britain, as did some of the engineers who maintained and drove it. It was only in 1852 that Britain herself, with all her vast engineering experience behind her, finally adopted, under the pressure of an invasion-scare by her traditional enemy, France, the policy of building a screw-steamer battle fleet. From that year, the construction in Britain of ships of the line unassisted by steam power was suspended. In that same year the Russian Navy started its first experiments with steam auxiliary screw-ships of the line with the conversion to steam of the 84 gun sailing vessel *Oryol* under construction at St Petersburg. An engine made in the British-owned Baird works was eventually installed in her, the machinery ordered for her from the British engineering works of Robert Napier having been seized by the British Government on the outbreak of war in March 1854. The construction and conversion was a prolonged process and the *Oryol* with her locally-made engine was not launched until August 1854.

The first Russian screw-steamship of the line actually to go to sea was the *Viborg*, 74 guns, launched at St Petersburg in 1841 and converted at Kronstadt by March 1854 with a British-built Napier engine. There was, however, no opportunity for sea-going exercises with her before the summer of 1854. The only other Russian auxiliary screw-steamship of the line to become effective during hostilities was the Baltic-based *Retvizan*, built over from a Swedish 84 gun-ship captured in the war with Sweden in 1789–90 and equipped with a steam-engine locally made by the Nobel family in their factory at St Petersburg in 1834–5. The Russian Navy therefore had no effective screw-steamships of the line in the Crimean War.

Captain John Washington, of the Hydrographer's Department of the Royal Navy, made a visit to Denmark, Sweden and Russia in August and September 1853, to discuss with various authorities, in his own words, 'the establishment of an improved form of lifeboat'. He had confidential instructions from Sir James Graham, First Lord of the Admiralty, to avail himself 'of every opportunity to obtain information respecting the Russian Baltic Fleet and the present state and condition of the defences at Kronstadt, Reval, etc'.

Washington's report, dated in London on 3 October 1853, only five months before the declaration of war, makes fascinating reading, even

today. He was clearly a resourceful and enterprising officer. Indeed, although he had relatively little surveying experience, he was to be appointed Hydrographer of the Navy in January 1855. At the same time, it was clear that the Russian authorities had a message they wished to use him to convey to London. He was thoroughly flattered, conducted around Kronstadt by the Grand Duke Constantine, lionized in every possible way, and shown what the Russians wanted him to see. It is likely that Sir James Graham was well aware of this situation. Washington found his way to Bomarsund, of which he reported,

> [The Åland] islands lying half way between Stockholm and Åbo in Finland form the advance post of Russia towards Sweden and as such become of some importance. In Stockholm I could obtain no information that could be depended upon as to what was doing there; I was told that there would be great difficulty in getting to them, that I should be subject to quarantine, that access was jealously guarded, etc; I, however, determined to go on, and after a little rough travelling, and with the aid of a few silver roubles found myself at Bomarsund, a magificent harbour or Sound, fully a square mile in extent, completely sheltered by some outlying islands and commanded by a semi-circular fort of two tiers of guns, twenty in number, thirty-two pounders (at least) pointing towards the bay and the Sound; in addition are three circular towers, say of 10 guns each, placed on the heights around. All the works are in granite, all casemated; the embrasures appeared large. General Bodisco, the officer in command, on whom I called, received me very civilly, told me the garrison was 1000 strong, besides a battery of artillery, and 600 convicts employed on the works; – the foundations of a new circular tower were being laid, and it is said, several others are to be built on the eminences and adjacent islands. Only one small steamer was lying here.
>
> Here then, is a fine capacious harbour, strongly fortified and garrisoned by Russian troops within 100 miles of the capital of Sweden. It is not easy to say for what purpose this strong place can be intended, that is, in the present aspect of political relations. It would seem to point to a future, but in what direction does not appear obvious. Hitherto the place seems almost to have escaped notice; the very name of Bomarsund was new to many of the persons (even in authority) to whom I applied for information. It was the far-seeing Hydrographers to the Admiralty who put me on its scent. The approach to the harbour, both from the North and the South is intricate but I believe there is sufficient deep water. I obtained a boat and pulled through the chief channel to the southward, about 15 miles, to the Island of Degerby where I waited for the steamer from Stockholm to Åbo and thus continued my voyage to the latter place.

The main part of Washington's report covers his visit to Kronstadt.

The approach to Kronstadt from seaward is very imposing. Fully 300 guns, chiefly of the largest calibre on either side and in front command the channel. Fort Constantine with 50 guns, Fort Alexander of three tiers, 72 guns, Fort Peter 1st with 24 guns lie on the North side, Fort Rysbank with 50 guns, and Kronslott 36 guns are placed on the South, while in front and raking the channel is the new battery named Menschikoff, having 44 guns of the largest calibre in four tiers; there are also at least 70 guns, 24 pounders and 12 mortars on the western face of the ramparts which surround the town, all of which bear upon the approach . . .[14]

Of Fort Rysbank Captain Washington wrote later in his report,

This same [training frigate] *Amphitrite* is the frigate that was ordered to turn her guns against one of the new granite batteries, Fort Rysbank, at Kronstadt in July 1852, when she fired 26 guns at a distance of 450 yards, the shot penetrated the granite only from 2 to 4 inches when it struck full, when it struck on edge it made a hole 8 inches deep, in all cases the shot split to pieces. A drawing showing the effect of this practice was given me by the Grand Duke . . .[15]

Washington's report continues:

We walked round the dockyard where I observed 7 docks for repairing line-of-battleships, in two of them a line-of-battleship and a frigate were having a screw-propeller fitted to them, to be ready in the Spring. Here is a magnificent ropery, a stand of arms for 30,000 man (flintlocks), mast and boathouses and all the usual requirements of a dockyard. Within the last year a steam factory has been added, the exact counterpart of that at Woolwich, the building is up and roofed in but none of the machinery is yet ready. It is intended for repairs only. We then embarked, rode round the *Port Militaire* in which were 22 line-of-battleships, two of them 3-deckers, six of 84 guns, and the remainder 74 guns. Of these ships nine were still fully rigged having only gone into port a short time before, seven may be termed 'advance-ships' with the lower rigging over the mastheads and the topmasts pointed; and six with only their lower masts in. I went on board the *Empress Alexandra*, a fine 84 gun ship (of the *Powerful* class) armed with 32 pounders (percussion locks) with 10 Paixhans 68 pounders on the lower deck, 24 pair carronades on the upper deck; the ship seemed in good order and owing to having no gunroom bulkhead on the lower deck presented a noble battery. I also went on board a paddle-wheel steam frigate, the *Olaf*, a fine new vessel (of the *Valorous* class, I think) engines of 450 Horse Power nominal, or about 1200 indicated

[14]National Maritime Museum (hereafter NMM) RUSI/NM 86 (28).
[15]Ibid.

(American?) with 10 *main* deck guns, and two pivot guns on deck. After rowing round the man-of-war harbour we pulled to the Merchant's Harbour; on our way we passed close to the new Menschikoff battery, when Count Lamsdorff said 'Would you like to see our new fort'? 'Of course', I replied 'if such a thing is permitted' – 'By all means, go anywhere you like'; we landed accordingly and walked all over it. It is a fine specimen of granite masonry, casemated, in 4 tiers, with 44 Paixhans guns chiefly 120 pounders; the embrasures 3ft 4in wide by 4ft in height; all the guns point directly down the channel and if well served by artillery men this fort alone ought to sink any vessel that might attempt to approach Kronstadt by day; and the nights in summer in the lattitude of 60° North are very short . . .

I have mentioned that I counted 22 line-of-battleships in the Mole at Kronstadt, nine of these have been at sea this summer, nine others were advanced and were ready to go, the other four are probably too old. Besides the above a 74-gun ship was in dock at Kronstadt fitting for a screw-propeller, also a 50-gun frigate. At New Admiralty at St Petersburg an 84-gun ship the *Orel* (Eagle) is building, begun in June 1851, ordered to be fitted with a screw on 1 January 1853, to be launched next spring; and a 46-gun frigate the *Maria* begun in December 1852, also a screw propeller; and the new frigate *Palchau* (?) just arrived from Archangel; this makes two line-of-battle and three screw-frigates to be ready in the spring if the 'engines' arrive in time. While I was in St Petersburg a contract was signed with Mr H W Webb, the well-known shipbuilder of New York, US, for a screw-propelled 90 gun-ship on two decks, to be sent over with shaped timbers on board for two more line-of-battleships; rumour said that the cost was to be £200,000 for the whole. Whether this was the sum or not Mr Webb, whom I saw repeatedly, told me he was quite satisfied with the terms of the contract. . . .

Six steam vessels are lying at Kronstadt, the *Kamtchatka*, *Christina*, *Olaf* and *Diana* with guns on her main deck; and six steam corvettes . . .

. . . I cannot conclude without expressing my conviction that we should be unwise to underate the naval resources of Russia. Her officers are intelligent, active, spirited men, the sailors if not so much practised at sea are hardy, docile and obedient to orders whatever that order may be; – and such men well commanded should not be treated too lightly. Steam, too, has altered the character of naval warfare, artillerists are as much in request as sailors and there is no reason why the Russian sailor should not become an expert artillerist in smooth water . . .

. . . Should circumstances require an English Fleet in the Baltic I venture to suggest that the Island of Gottland should not be lost sight of; in the Harbour of Slite on the North East coast there is said to be a depth of 24ft water with supplies of fresh provisions and fresh water in abundance; – and I am informed by some recent travellers in the Island that there is a very friendly disposition towards the English on the part of the inhabitants.[16]

[16]NMM RUSI/NM 86 (28).

It is apparent that the Russians were out to impress Captain Washington, but more perhaps, since they were effectively without screw-steamers, with the impregnability of the inner defences of St Petersburg than with the powers of the Russian Navy itself to defend the capital city. The message implicit in the news that the training frigate *Amphitrite* had turned her guns on Fort Rysbank and succeeded in penetrating the granite facing for only two to four inches was not to be lost on the Admiralty in London. Nor, and perhaps even more important, was the demonstration of the presence in the forts guarding Kronstadt of French Paixhans shell-firing guns of the type which had played a part in the destruction of the Turkish fleet at Sinope.

The Nobel family, emigré Swedes who had settled in Russia and established an engineering works where the engine for the ancient *Retvizan* was made, played an important part, as manufacturers of mines, in a further demonstration by the Russian authorities during the Crimean War of lack of confidence in the Imperial Navy as a weapon of attack or defence. For the first time in history submarine mines were used in carefully planned minefields as a major part of the planned defences of harbour works and fortifications, principally at Kronstadt.

Experiments in the development of remotely fired submarine mines were conducted in Britain and the United States as well as in Russia in the early nineteenth century, but it was to be the Russians who first had occasion to employ this new defensive technique in actual warfare. The accounts vary as to how much credit should be given to the Nobel family, how much to inventors of Russian birth, in the development of the new weapon. However that may be, its development was slowed by the ponderous bureaucratic machine of the autocracy and by squabbles between the army and navy as to which force was to be responsible for work on the new weapon. In 1839 a committee on underwater experiments was established. In the words of an American historian 'This seems to have been the first permanently organized underwater warfare institution to enjoy official status within a military hierarchy'.[17] The committee appraised and encouraged the work of Boris Semenovich Jacobi, described by Soviet historians as an outstanding Russian scientific worker of the time. To him modern Soviet historians give the credit for inventing the electronically-fired mine, fired either from the shore or by contact with the hull of the

[17]A Roland, *Underwater Warfare in the Age of Sail* (Indiana, 1978).

ship. In both cases the power was supplied from the shore. In fact, Jacobi was a German physicist, Moritz-Hermann Jacobi, who provided most of the drive and knowledge of other countries' work in the field.

For the Nobels is claimed the credit for the invention of another type of mine used in the defence of Kronstadt, the chemical contact mine. It was this type of mine with which the British Fleet was to become most familiar in 1854 and 1855. It comprised

> . . . chemical contact mines, conical-shaped 2 foot containers made of strong zinc, fifteen inches wide at the top and charged with eight pounds of powder which was detonated by an ingenious slide-bar, lead-and-glass tube mechanism protruding from the mine. The glass tube, about the size of a pencil, was filled with sulphuric acid suspended over a mixture of chlorate of potassium and sugar and enclosed in an outer casing of lead which extended from the top of the mine. The mine itself was moored a few feet below the surface and held in place by sinkers and lines of rope. When the lead was bent by direct impact or by one of two slide bars that crossed the top of the container, the inner glass tube broke and the mixture of the chemical caused an instant heat and flame which fired the main charge.[18]

All three types of mine were to be used in the Crimean War. According to Soviet sources 165 electric mines were laid in the approaches to Kronstadt in 1854, 300 in 1855.[19] To quote Roland again.

> Generally speaking the mines themselves were sophisticated and comparatively reliable, but they were mismanaged and achieved little. In one instance off Sveaborg in 1855 a barrage of electrical mines was poorly prepared and hastily planted, and all the preparations were accomplished in the face of material shortages . . . An effort at Kronstadt with contact mines enjoyed hardly more success. The mines detonated correctly when run upon by British ships, but they contained such small charges that they did virtually no damage to the vessels.[20]

Robert Tols quoted a remark by a Russian, General Politkovsky, to the effect that Nobel's mines were dangerous to the enemy, but also to the Russians, while Jacobi's were dangerous to neither.[21] Be that as it may, officers of the British Fleet were to become much preoccupied with these early and experimental devices, or 'infernal machines' as they called them.

[18]Robert W Tols, *The Russian Rockefellers* (Hoover Institution Press).
[19, 20]Roland op cit.
[21]Tols op cit.

Elements in the Russian administration gave support to other important experiments under water. Albert Röhr has summarized the achievements of Wilhelm Bauer, a German inventor who worked for years towards the construction of a practical submarine. In 1852, through a German contact at Court, Bauer was able to demonstrate a model of his submersible vessel to Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. Despite, or even because of, great interest by Prince Albert, Sir James Graham, First Lord of the Admiralty, gave Bauer no encouragement and after various vicissitudes, as the Crimean War approached he fled to Russia, where in due course a contract was signed for the construction of a submersible vessel. This vessel was built, although it was not completed until just after the war was over. Named *Seeteufel* she did in fact make over a hundred successful test runs before she was sunk as a result of an error of judgment on the part of one of the crew, all of whom escaped.[22]

[22]Albert Röhr, *Wilhelm Bauer – Ein Erfinderschicksal* (Munich, Deutsches Museum, 1975).

5

The Royal Navy

British naval policy in the years between the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the outbreak of the Crimea was determined largely by the successive Boards of Admiralty which, it so happened, attracted few men, either politicians or naval officers, of the first rank of ability. It was fortunate that in the two years immediately before the outbreak of war the First Lord of the Admiralty had been Sir James Graham, a man of considerable energy, while at the same time the Surveyor of the Navy, an all-important post in determining the policies for the construction of new vessels and the refitting of old, was an outstandingly able officer, Captain Sir Baldwin Walker.

Born in 1792, descendant of a long line of landowners on the English side of the Scots border, Graham entered Parliament at the age of twenty-six. In the coalition government under the premiership of Lord Aberdeen which led the country into the Crimean War, his position as First Lord was one he had occupied in an earlier administration. For although an able administrator, debater and effective, though idiosyncratic, speaker in Parliament, his political achievements appear to have been limited by a degree of diffidence and inherent pessimism by which he disqualified himself from the highest office. He was a man whose apparent coldness and self-sufficiency made enemies. When he first assumed the office of First Lord of the Admiralty in 1830, much of his energy went into the campaign for the first Reform Bill of 1832. Nevertheless, he worked hard to bring about some administrative and financial reforms during his three years at the Admiralty, creating a structure with five permanent departmental heads: the Accountant General, the Storekeeper General, the Comptroller of Victualling, the Physician of the Navy and the Surveyor of the Navy. He also introduced a Merchant Seamen's Registration Act which was meant to facilitate recruitment to the navy on the outbreak of war, but which proved of little use in manning the fleets in 1854. He returned to the Admiralty in 1852 and remained First Lord until a short time after the fall of Lord Aberdeen's coalition government early in 1855. He had great influence with

Aberdeen and was described by the latter's son, Arthur Gordon, as 'at once rash and timid, a warm friend and a dangerous adviser'.[1]

Consider now the British Fleet of the mid-nineteenth century, first in the matter of steam. In contrast with the Russian Navy, the British Fleet in 1850 was already equipped with numerous vessels fitted with steam propelling machinery. They were of two kinds. Those which were contemporarily known as *steamers* were propelled by machinery driving rotating paddles on either side of the hull, roughly amidships. This form of propulsion of powered ships is now almost obsolete, but there are several paddle-steamers in service as tourist attractions in different parts of Europe and a number of others preserved as static exhibits.

The other vessels with steam machinery were called *screws*. Their machinery drove a shaft running from the engines, which were more or less amidships, to the stern of the vessel, well below the water line. Originally, on the end of this shaft was one of a number of different kinds of device, designed to push the vessel through the water by a screwing action, in the same way as a wood screw pushes itself out of the wood when it is unscrewed. In a very short time, however, these screws were developed into something very like the modern ship's propeller, but the name, screw, stuck and is still used in the full technical description of the most modern diesel-driven cruise liner, luxury car ferry, or quarter-million ton bulk carrier.

By 1851, according to Robert Murray's *Rudimentary Treatise on Marine Engines and Steam Vessels*, published the following year, the Royal Navy was thought to have no less than 190 steam vessels of all kinds, of which about 125 were armed, the sea-going ones carrying some 800 guns between them. Of these vessels 39 were screws, mostly large vessels. Of these, ten or so were 'rigged and fully equipped for sea'. The rest were either in a late stage of construction, undergoing alterations to improve their performance or to convert them to screws from pure sailing vessels, or only partly ready for sea. For this was very much an age of experiment, in which the technology of steam and all that went with its application to the propulsion of ships was advancing very rapidly. The history of this technology and of the complementary industrial development ashore is extremely complex. Economic, political, and technical historians have lacked the multi-disciplinary approach necessary for a comprehensive interpretation and explanation of developments which were partly concerned with the minutiae of mechanics and steam technology; partly with maritime

[1] J B Conacher, *The Aberdeen Coalition* (Cambridge, 1968).

technology and the economics of merchant ship operation; partly with the rapidly changing industrial structure; partly with government financial policy; and partly with the social and political attitudes of politicians and officials and the deeply entrenched attitudes of seamen. Such a study has yet to be made, though there are some good partial examinations of the subject.

It was long asserted by some naval historians that for a variety of reasons the introduction of the steam warship made relatively slow progress, even in Britain, then by far the most advanced industrial country. During the nineteenth century, the running was largely made, in the application of steam power at sea, by the merchant shipping industry as a matter of commercial enterprise, but the work of, for example, Bartlett[2] and Lambert[3] has shown that the Admiralty and the naval service generally were, on the whole, realistic and practical in their approach to the problem of developing and introducing powered ships for naval service.

As Lambert has pointed out,[4] the machinery had to be compact, economical in fuel consumption by the standards of the times, and reliable by those same standards, before it was viable as steam assistance to sailing warships which had to have a potentially world-wide range of operation. When these requirements were achieved in the early 1850s, machinery was substituted for water tanks and ballast and the ships were somewhat enlarged.

A small boom in merchant shipbuilding activity took place in Britain when, at the end of the Napoleonic Wars, a period of industrial expansion led to the relatively ready availability of materials and facilities for engine building. Forty steamers were operating on the river Clyde by 1820. By 1822 the *James Watt* was in regular service between London and Leith and soon every obvious coastal and near-continental route had its paddle packet. By 1827 there were 225 steamships registered under the current Merchant Shipping Acts as of British ports. Ten years later there were 624, and the sheltered sea routes around Britain on which steamers could be made to pay were saturated. In 1833 the *Cape Breton*, built at Blackwall earlier in the same year, made the first steam assisted crossing of the North Atlantic and in the difficult direction, from east to west against the prevailing weather, from Plymouth to Sydney, Nova Scotia. Steam technology had reached the point in 1838 at which it was possible for the Great Western Steamship Company of Bristol to inaugurate the first regular steam transatlantic

[2] C J Bartlett, *Great Britain and Sea Power 1815–53* (Oxford, 1963).
[3] Andrew Lambert, *Battleships in Transition* (London, 1984).
[4] Ibid.

service, with a vessel propelled almost entirely by her engine – a vessel in which the large area of sail carried, with its very sophisticated rig, was entirely secondary to propulsion by the engines. In modern terms, she was sail-assisted. All these vessels were paddle-steamers.

The first steamer built for the Royal Navy is usually said to have been the *Comet*, launched in the Royal Dockyard at Deptford in 1822. During the next few years, the navy built or acquired a dozen or so small steamers for general purposes, including towing and service as mail packets on overseas routes taken over from the Post Office. The earliest British steamers engaged on active service abroad were the *Lightning* (of which a great deal more will be heard later in this book), the second steamer ever to be built for service in the British navy, and the *Diana*, engaged respectively in the bombardment of Algiers in 1824, and in the first Burma War. HM steamers *Lightning*, *Echo*, and *Meteor*, commanded by lieutenants appointed with commissions signed by His Royal Highness the Duke of Clarence, as Lord High Admiral, were, in January 1828, the first steam vessels to appear in the quarterly Naval List, thus marking the official birth of steam in the Royal Navy and as an element in naval power.

But there were great forces operating against the further development of the use of the steamship in the merchant shipping industry and against its rapid adoption as a ship of war. Some of these were technical and applied to both commercial and military application of steam power at sea. Some may have been social and political and may have applied particularly to the navy. To take the technical problems first and to explain them as simply as possible.

Propulsion by paddle was unsatisfactory, both for vessels of war and for merchant ships. Murray summed up one of the objections very well when he wrote:

> The grand objection to the paddle wheel is the unequal 'dip' or immersion of the boards, consequent upon the varying draught of water, as the coal and stores continue to be consumed on the voyage. A vessel, for instance, with a displacement of 12 tons per inch of the load line, burning perhaps 460 tons of coal during a long run, will swim 3ft 6ins lighter, from the consumption of the fuel alone, at the end than at the beginning, so that it is only in the middle of her voyage that the wheels can have the best dip calculated for them.[5]

Another major difficulty with the paddle-steamer is obvious. In anything of a rough sea, as the vessel rolled, one paddle or the other was out

[5]Robert Murray, *Rudimentary Treatise on Marine Engines* (London, 1852).

of the water for much of the time and the system was working at half, or less than half, efficiency. The vessel had to roll very little to bring about this situation for, to quote Murray again:

> The most advantageous dip varies with the diameter of the wheel, the speed of the vessel, and the service on which she is employed, as for sea or river navigation. Sea-going steamers of the first class are usually allowed 18in to 21in of water over the vertical float at the mean draught and smaller vessels may have 12in to 15in.[6]

In addition to these obvious difficulties there was a less obvious, but fundamental one. It concerned the limitations imposed by paddle propulsion on the cargo and fuel-carrying capacity of the merchant paddle-steamer and the fuel, armament and stores capacity of warships. The difficulty is best summed up in the words of Campbell McMurray, Director of the Maritime Museum of Scotland, in his delightful study *Old Order, New Thing*.

> It concerns the nature of the flow of water to the paddles, and is twofold; in the first place steps have to be taken at the design stage to ensure that the wave profile abreast of the paddle should be reasonably flat, or at least, not likely to form a hollow immediately in front of the floats. Should the latter take place, the thrust of the float takes place in something less than the full, free, flow of water, leading to excessive slip in the action of the float and consequent loss of efficiency. The second point is related: it is vital to ensure that the bow diverging waves trail aft *outside* of the paddle, since when they come inside, serious vibration is encountered in the running gear, bringing attendant damage. The solution to these and associated problems is often related to the fineness of the entrance and run, combined with their length vis-a-vis the total immersed length of the vessel. The outcome is usually to provide such ships –ie fast, passenger-carrying paddle-steamers – with much lower block coefficients than would be thought acceptable for general deep sea work.[7]

The low block coefficient simply meant that the vessel had to be long, lean, and narrow, with the kind of sharp, slim shape (to use the technology of the historians of naval architecture, 'a sharp entrance and a fine run aft') which can be seen today in the tea clipper *Cutty Sark* preserved at Greenwich. Such a shape strictly limited the carrying capacity, and therefore the commercial viability, of a merchant vessel and the range and weight of armament of a naval vessel.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Campbell McMurray, *Old Order, New Thing* (London, 1972).

This leads on to one of the principal difficulties experienced with the steamer. The presence of the great side paddles meant that instead of being able to mount a broadside of guns – and the broadside had dominated naval tactics since the seventeenth century – her armament was limited to the fore and after parts. The fact that she could not fire a broadside rendered the steamer useless as a main-line fighting ship for the naval tactics of the 1840s; the more so since her paddles were highly vulnerable and she had to avoid placing herself in a position which would expose them as a ready target to the enemy. Lying parallel to the enemy and slugging it out with broadsides of solid shot was out of the question, and that was what the naval tactics, inherited from the days of sailing vessels, were still concentrated on, shell-firing guns or no shell-firing guns.

To carry her heavy guns in her ends meant that the naval steamer had to have, not the sharp hull at the ends which made for efficient working of the paddles, but full-bodied, round ends, like the old sailing warships, because sharp ends simply did not have the buoyancy to support the heavy guns. It follows that the naval steamer at her best could only be a design compromise of limited function. No wonder Captain Byam Martin, when offered the command of a squadron of paddle-frigates in the Baltic in 1854, wrote in his private journal, 'I do not anticipate that the command of the paddle-steamers can bring much distinction – occasion may arise when they will act in a body and form an important arm of the fleet; but generally they will be detached in twos and threes – towing – looking out – and carrying letters . . . Paddlers cannot go into action'.[8]

Common to the merchant ship and the naval steamer was another and even more fundamental problem. Although in the 1840s and 50s steam-engine technology advanced very rapidly indeed, nevertheless all steam-engines suffered from a fundamental defect which imposed strict limits on their use and development as a means of propulsion at sea. There is a parallel with the history of aviation. A century later the piston engine imposed limitations on aircraft development which could not be broken through until the turbo-prop and the jet engine became available.

Put in very simple terms, these early marine steam-engines were single cylinder reciprocating engines, like a modern small petrol engine, with cylinders and pistons and a crankshaft to convert the reciprocating action of the piston into rotary motion to turn the paddles. Steam was introduced into the top of the cylinder from a boiler at a pressure of about 5lbs per square inch. Higher pressures could not be developed because

[8]NMM JOD 200/1 and 2 Captain Byam Martin, *Baltic Journal* (1854).

boiler design, boiler construction, and the metals commercially available for making boilers and steam pipes were none of them capable of withstanding greater stresses. The steam expanded in the cylinder head and forced the piston down. At the completion of the downward movement the steam was condensed by introducing a jet of cold water into the cylinder, a partial vacuum resulted, and atmospheric pressure on its lower side aided the upward movement of the piston. With this kind of working, the steam was used once only and about 95 per cent of its potential power was, in fact, wasted. This in its turn meant that the vessel had to carry perhaps ten times as much coal as she would have done if her engine had worked at, say, 60 per cent efficiency. Every ton of coal carried meant that a ton of cargo could not be carried, so it will at once be obvious that the merchant steamship had very strict commercial limitations.

It was for this reason that the commercially successful use of the merchant steamship was limited to short passages, or to longer, but still strictly limited, passages with light valuable cargo or passengers. The North Atlantic crossing with passengers represented the ultimate reach of her commercial viability and even on this route, to pay satisfactorily, she needed the subsidy provided by a contract from the government to carry mails. Samuel Seaward FRS read a paper to the Institute of Civil Engineers on 9 February 1841 which put the problems nicely and in contemporary terms:

> Notwithstanding the numerous improvements which have been made in the form and dimensions of the hulls of steam vessels, and the perfection to which the machinery has been brought, still the weight of the latter, together with the space required for the fuel, has rendered it hitherto impractical to extend the duration of the steam voyage beyond the period of twenty days, without the necessity of taking in a fresh supply of coal. It must therefore be concluded that until some great reduction can be made in the weight of the engine and the amount of fuel required to keep them in motion, the use of steam as the sole moving power must be limited to voyages of three weeks duration, periods of time wholly inadequate for the performance of an Indian or South American voyage.[9]

Similarly, the range of operation of a warship under steam was strictly limited, while under sail her performance was often gravely impaired because the paddle boxes and the paddles imposed limitations on the

[9]Samuel Seaward, 'Memoir on the Practicability of Shortening the Duration of Voyages by the Adaptation of Auxiliary Steam Power to Sailing Vessels', *Journal of Institute of Civil Engineers* (Feb 1841).

spacing of the masts, so that she was a poor sailer and could not keep station with sailing ships on naval manoeuvres. The spacing of the masts of the paddle-frigates of the 1840s like the *Leopard*, which will feature later in this book, looks very odd to eyes accustomed to the conventions of the sailing vessel.

By 1840 or so, therefore, it looked as if the steamship had reached a plateau of development. Indeed, in many ways she had. Not until a light, small, economical engine became commercially available could the steam vessel compete with the small wooden sailing ship in world trade. This development was not to happen until 1865, when iron of sufficiently good quality became available on the market to build boilers which could withstand the high steam pressures necessary to expand the steam twice, in two cylinders, and thereby greatly increase the efficiency of the propulsion unit. In 1850 all this was still a decade and a half away and expanding world trade was conducted very largely in wooden sailing ships, most of them very small, from 100 to 150 feet long. In these little vessels small consignments of raw materials and manufactured goods were carried from port to port, loaded and discharged by hand, or at best by primitive cranes, not many of which were yet driven by steam.

The steamship, with her limited commercial applications, had made very little impact on the merchant shipping industry. In 1850, 3,400,000 tons of sailing vessel property were registered as of home ports in the United Kingdom, only 168,000 tons of steam vessel property. The steamers represented about 4.7 per cent of the whole. The economy which was to be disrupted in various ways by the war between Russia and the Western Powers was an economy dependent on sailing ships. The trade about to be blockaded by the British and French fleets was carried on in wooden sailing ships, largely British, Finnish, German and American. Most of these vessels were square-rigged, that is, their sails were set from horizontal spars, technically known as yards, pivoted on the fore – the front – side of the masts. All the vessels illustrated are rigged in this way. The *Grefve Berg*, shown in one of the photographs reproduced, is a perfect example of the sort of vessel which in the middle 1850s made up most of the worlds' merchant fleets. One vessel of the 1840s, the American whaling barque *Charles W Morgan*, is still afloat at Mystic, Connecticut, USA, and although much rebuilt, conveys a very good impression, both in her general appearance and in the accommodation for her people, of the ordinary merchant ship of the Crimean War period.

Given this background, the Royal Navy's adoption of steam propulsion for warships seems, if anything, remarkable for its speed rather

than the reverse. The period round about Queen Victoria's accession was not a time of naval expansion. It was one of extreme parsimony in government spending on defence. Quite apart from anything else, therefore, there was simply not the money available to spend on large scale experiments with steam vessels and the navy was content to let the private sector bear the development costs.

But once the private sector had shown the way, the navy was by modern standards very quick indeed to adapt to naval requirements the experience gained. Indeed, it is difficult to see how it could have been otherwise. The whole spirit of the age was one of immense technical confidence. Stand in the engine room space of the pioneer ocean-going screw-steamship *The Great Britain* as she lies restored in her building dock in Bristol and you realize the enterprise, the confidence and the sheer creative exuberance which, in the age of the small wooden sailing ship, in one bound produced in the early 1840s this sophisticated modern structure for commercial service on the North Atlantic, one hundred feet longer than the largest warship afloat and in a new material, never handled on this scale before. The society which produced this structure is not one likely to have been laggard in adapting its new technology for naval purposes.

Consider, too, that technical advance was something entirely new to these people. We are today accustomed to change at a rate which makes equipment obsolete before it is in production. Men and women in the second quarter of the nineteenth century were experiencing high technology for the first time in the history of the human race. They were faced with a new experience of profound importance which they had no means of recognizing, of judging, of assessing. For the first time in human experience the speed of transport and the speed of communication were changing from that set by the wind, the horse, the runner and the optical telegraph to the speeds of electricity, efficient steam railways and, over short distances, the steamer at sea. For the first time in history communication was faster than that which the Romans had known.

The entirely new, life-changing forces of technology brought in their train even deeper changes. The men who conceived, the men who built, the men who operated the new machines were in some cases becoming very powerful, but they did not operate within the social structure as it had gradually developed over the centuries, and often they were no part of that structure. They were not men of the Establishment. The long business of the gentrification of the entrepreneur, his absorption into the older traditions of a landowning society, a process which discouraged the able and the educated from entering industry and blunted the raw aggressive

contemporary machinery, able under steam to penetrate waters hitherto closed to the line-of-battleship and, in action, possessed of a manoeuvreability which made the sailing warship obsolete within a year or two.

There were many gifted officers who enthusiastically advocated the steamer in the navy and who saw that the future was with steam. These post captains, commanders and lieutenants were very proud of their technical knowledge, which was amazingly detailed and extensive. There has been a tendency among naval historians to assert that these men were despised by their contemporaries, but their subsequent careers would suggest the contrary. It is possible that later generations have projected backwards their own standards on a group of pioneers who were not inhibited by the social contempt for technology which was later to become so prevalent in Britain.

Indeed, as early as 1839, Commander Robinson had written in his book *The Nautical Steam Engine Explained* published in London in that year,

> It is hardly necessary to say a word on the importance of the subject to us all. Every officer must feel that a knowledge of the natural properties of the steam engine has become as essential as a knowledge of seamanship or gunnery. It is evident that, whatever of dash, whatever of enterprise, whatever of combined prudence and skill, is to be performed in a future war, will be performed through the agency of steam.

Since the number of steamers in the navy was inevitably expanding, officers who were ready to specialize in steamer service were ensured of continuous employment at a time when the great majority of lieutenants were without it. There were many such men. Captain Robb had powerful support when he was recommended to the First Sea Lord by Admiral of the Fleet Sir William Parker in a letter of 18 January 1854.

> If you should at any time want a good working man, ready for any service, I venture to mention Captain Robb, whose heart and soul are in his profession. He is a good seaman, well practised in steam, and dying for employment. His courage in the Battle of Navarino, where he commanded the *Hinde* cutter as a lieutenant, excited admiration, and he has been brought up in good schools.[13]

Given the near certainty of war, the captain's experience of steam must have helped in his appointment within a week as captain of the *Caesar*, a new 91-gun screw-battleship which was to play her part in the Baltic during the coming war. Two years earlier, when in search of re-employment, Captain Codrington, who will feature many times in later chapters of this book, had written to Vice-Admiral Hyde Parker,

[13]Admiral Sir Augustus Phillimore, *Life of Admiral of the Fleet Sir William Parker* (London, 1867).

> Neither of us [Captain Maitland and himself] claim to be what the world calls steam captains: but of myself I may say that long ago in days when steam was not so fashionable as it is now, I did make it my study at the Poly-class (our present official steam school not then being established) and though I did not 'lodge my steam certificate at the Admiralty', yet the Board in 1845 had sufficient confidence in me to send me with Robb and Coffin in the *Black Eagle* with the *Victoria and Albert* and the *Rattler* [the first screw-steamer] to report on their comparative merit. . . .[14]

Even so socially distinguished a figure as Captain the Hon Harry Keppel, later to become Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Keppel, saw that the future was with steam. A son of Lord Albemarle and later to be a close friend of King Edward VII and his Queen, one of the most adventurous and among the best known of nineteenth century naval officers, Keppel took a house at Greenwich in the mid-1840s in order to be near Penns' engine works and to be able to study steam.

Captain William Hall, later to become a knighted admiral, who also features in this book, entered the Royal Navy in 1811. He was continuously employed, yet in 1836 was still not yet a lieutenant. He, too, turned to steam, working in engine shops in Glasgow and then serving in Irish Sea steamers and on the river steamers of the Hudson and Delaware rivers in the United States. As an acting lieutenant, he was appointed to the *Nemesis*, an iron East India Company steamer in 1839. In this vessel he distinguished himself in Chinese waters and elsewhere in the Far East to the extent that he was promoted lieutenant and within three years was made post-captain and in command of the *Hecla* in the Baltic.

Captain Cooper Key who achieved post-captains' rank at 27 in 1850 did so after concluding, '. . . that the only way to get on in the service by one's own exertions, in these times of peace, is to join a steamer and to follow it up'.[15]

These men served in vessels which were mechanically crude. They were dirty. Their proper use was not understood. The role and status of the engineer was not understood either. Engineering was only at the beginning

[14]NMM, COD 108–113 Correspondence of Admiral Sir Henry Codrington (hereafter Codrington Papers).

[15]Vice-Admiral P H Colomb, Memoirs of Sir Astley Cooper Key, GCB, OCI, FRS, etc (London, 1898).

of the long road, the end of which, some would argue, has still not been achieved, towards the full status of a profession. Engineers ashore were recruited largely, though by no means entirely, from enterprising and intelligent members of the working class. Though some became famous, relatively prosperous, and widely influential, the great mass of the engineering work in a Britain in which industry, and in consequence the prosperity and power of the nation, was expanding at an explosive rate, was done by men whose origins, let alone their social customs, manners, accents, and very way of speaking, totally and forever cut them off from the classes from which the deck officers of the navy were drawn.

The engineer was to have a long, hard, and bitter struggle for professional equality with deck officers and ratings, a struggle which, even now, in the late twentieth century, is still perhaps not fully resolved. For years the engineer in the navy seems to have been underpaid, under-ranked and badly accommodated on shipboard. The fact that his presence presented a threat to the very being of the sailing ship seaman – to the religion of seamanship – ensured at least for some of them a tradesman's status on board. Thus, 'when steam was first introduced the engineer was considered as a kind of engine-driver or superior stoker, and when it was necessary to consult him he was summoned as one would call in the advice of a plumber or glazier'.[16] In the early stages of steam navigation he may not have thought this position inappropriate.

It is not surprising that to a degree the situation became self-perpetuating. There were good, well-paid jobs ashore for competent engineers, and plenty of them. For those with a wish to broaden their experience by spending time at sea (and, unlike the seamen, they were not forever tied to a life afloat) there were well-paid jobs in merchant ships in which food and accommodation were good and on board which they were given reasonable status and good pay – more than the mates in some cases. Some good engineers did enter the navy. Captain Giffard, an enthusiastic steamship commander even in the early 1840s, wrote at that time, when he was in command of the paddle-steamer *Vixen*,

> The intermediate shaft of the engines showing weakness, where it had been previously repaired, a new one had been sent out from England, and the waste water pipes and valves, requiring cleaning and repair, there being no dry dock or slip in this part of the world, I proposed to the Admiral, to beach the ship in

[16]Matheson, *Naval Engineers*, (1897) quoted by Campbell McMurray in *Working Men Who Got Wet* (St Johns, 1980).

> the mud at Singapore, to examine her bottom and do the repairs there; for I had every confidence in my chief engineer, a very clever active officer.[17]

For the steamship to become viable in the merchant shipping industry four elements were required. The first was a small, light, and economical engine. As we have seen this did not come until 1865. The other three elements were necessary preliminaries to the effective use of the efficient engine when it came. A more efficient method of propulsion than the paddle was essential, and this was the screw. But the power of the screw had to be transmitted down a rotating shaft for something like half the length of the ship. A big wooden ship comprised thousands of relatively small pieces of wood joined together with even more thousands of wood or metal fastenings, and such a structure, always flexible, always leaking, was torn to pieces by the transmission of 500 or more horse power down a shaft. So the second requirement was for metal, which in those days meant iron, construction strong enough to absorb the twisting loads imposed by the action of the screw. The third requirement was for size; size big enough to make economical use of the new method of propulsion, bearing in mind that shipping, more than most industrial activities, benefits from the economies of scale. The merchant shipping industry, linked with the most advanced engineering techniques ashore applied by one of the greatest engineers of all time, had by 1845 achieved all three of these basic elements in *The Great Britain*.

Though iron construction was not available to the navy because the metals in production were simply not of the quality to withstand the impact of shot, at least, not at the low temperatures which would necessarily sometimes be encountered in war, the power for a screw could be transmitted through wooden naval hulls because they were built to higher standards of strength than vessels which had to earn their livings at sea, and the costs of their maintenance did not come out of the return on capital invested. The screw had tremendous advantages for naval vessels. Gone were the fatally vulnerable paddles. As Murray put it in 1851:

> The value of the screw in vessels of war, not only as an auxiliary, but also in full powered steamers, seems to admit of but little doubt. – A clear broadside for the gun; the comparative safety of the machinery from shot from its low position; the increased stability of the ship from the same cause, enabling her to carry a marine armament on the upper deck; and the freedom of these decks from the machinery, and finally, the power of arranging the masts, sails and

[17]Admiral Sir George Giffard, *Reminiscences of a Naval Officer* (Exeter, 1892).

rigging, so as to make her an efficient sailing vessel, are advantages of such moment that even if a considerably higher power were required to realize the same speed as would be obtained from paddle wheels, the adoption of the screw would appear to be justified.[18]

In fact, the screw driven by steam and used intermittently in bad weather, in calm, entering or leaving harbour, in manoeuvering in restricted waters, and above all in action, was the short-term answer to the problem of applying steam power to the wooden naval vessels of the period. It produced a revolutionary new weapon which for a short time – for the explosive shell had already rendered it obsolete before it was developed – was many times more formidable than anything which had ever existed before at sea. The series of trials off Lisbon in 1851 demonstrated that, unlike the paddler, the screw-propelled vessel, as she was developed, could sail as well as a contemporary sailing war vessel, though her sailing range was somewhat restricted by the fact that she had to carry coal and extra water in place of stores. Given the very limited range at the time (the reasons for which have been explained) of the paddle-steamer, which was not a fully effective sailing vessel, and given the fact that the ships of war of expanding industrial Britain might have to operate anywhere in the world at short notice (there was not yet the widespread pattern of coaling stations which would be on the trade routes of the world twenty years later), operational range under sail alone was of fundamental importance. The significance of the conservation of the old sailing school, the very real product of the programming to which we have already referred, has perhaps been exaggerated by some naval historians. There were strong practical operational reasons for the retention of full rig and full sailing skills in the crews, as there still were to be for a few short years more until naval gunnery changed out of all recognition, for the full broadside which the screw could present and the steamer – the paddler – could not. On the other hand, twenty years later when sails should have been completely obsolete in ships of war, the naval establishment was still clinging to them because their best ships were incapable of maintaining the operating speeds under steam of the merchant ships they were supposed to protect and they still made long passages under sail. It was at this stage and later that the deeply ingrained attitudes of earlier generations led to irrational waste of resources, both material and human.

British naval policy in the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century was based more than anything else on fear of the French. Because of

[18]Murray, op cit.

their smaller industrial base the French could never again really challenge a Britain fully geared for war but they took to the steamer as a potential threat to the might of the Royal Navy. It was a French invasion scare that led to the development in the 1840s of the big paddle-driven 'frigates' – the term was adopted from the old sailing navy, but now meant simply a large paddle-driven steamer with very heavy guns fore and aft of the paddles. It was fear of the French, of a France that was emerging with the growing power of Louis Napoleon, that led to the creation of the steam battle fleet which was to face the Russians in the Baltic in 1854. A French policy of expanding screw-ship construction – and the French with shorter ranges of operation in mind were content with simpler, less heavily rigged vessels than the British – led to a rapid British response. Indeed, throughout the war British naval constructional policy remained orientated against her ally, France.

The ships of the powerful fleet which emerged looked, to the layman, and in old photographs still look, like Nelson's *Victory*, built in 1765 and still with us. They were in fact very different: bigger ships with greater capacity to carry coal, water, supplies and guns, and with much better guns. Designed as to hull form to enable the screw to work to maximum advantage – for the shape of the old sailing hulls, particularly in the stern, was not suitable for the new propulsion – even more strongly built than their ancestors, using new systems of construction, they were fitted with steam-engines which, for all their inefficiency by later standards, were relatively reliable and were as advanced as the technology of the period could produce. These engines gave them a short-range mobility and manoeuvreability, and hence formidableness, never previously achieved in ships of war. They remain probably the least studied of all Royal Navy ships.

The steam battle fleet of the early 1850s had two fundamental weaknesses, one of which, potentially important as events proved, was never fully brought to the test. The other was to prove very important in the coming war. With their wooden construction and without any form of metal armour plating these ships were potentially highly vulnerable to explosive shells and to red hot shot. But they were not to meet either of these hazards. The second weakness was to prove more important. Though the politicians, faced with French threats, real or imaginary, were ready to grant the money to build these ships, the navy was by no means ready to receive and use them. The navy now had an effective steam battle fleet but it had no steamer drills, no established tactics for handling these vessels to the maximum advantage. The situation was to be well summed up forty-five

years later by Sir Astley Cooper Key, he who had linked his career with steam. When in July 1853, Queen Victoria reviewed the Western Squadron, which consisted of seven screw line-of-battleships, three sailing line-of-battleships, four screw frigates, four paddle frigates, four screw corvettes and sloops and one paddle corvette, Key wrote:

> But the idea that three Navies and not one were assembled can scarcely have presented itself to any officer who was assisting in the display. We shall see good reason for knowing that such thoughts were absent; and perhaps the Navy could not be what it is were not the immense majority bent on accepting things as they are, and making the very best use of them that could be made. Without doubt – just because the ships were there – it was to the Naval Officers present the most natural and appropriate thing in the world that the Fleet should be composed of sailing ships, screw ships and paddle ships. The belief that sailing ships were to go, and that paddle ships were almost gone, would have been impossible to inculcate. All minds would have turned away from that form of reflection to consider how the heterogeneous elements could best be combined, and to become assured that they would never pass away, because uses had been invented for them.[19]

On this occasion Prince Albert, wiser than many of the Queen's naval officers, wrote to Baron Stockmar of the steam screw vessels, 'This is the greatest revolution effected in the conduct of naval warfare which has yet been known. Steam [ie paddlers] as well as sailing vessels will of necessity be set aside as useless and men-o'-war with the auxiliary screw will take their place.'[20]

There were contemporary officers and others who were well aware of the situation, which was to become very obvious during the two summers of naval campaigning in the Baltic. Captain, later Vice-Admiral, C R Moorson, was captain of the *Prince Regent* in the 1820s but never employed at sea again. He turned to employment on land and became chairman of the London North-Western Railway and was much involved with the operation of steam packets across the Irish Sea. He wrote in March 1853 to Sir Baldwin Walker:

> Having during the last ten years appealed to successive First Lords on the subject which seems now of more importance than at any time within that period, I beg to address you also and to direct your attention to what would be the state of things supposing a fleet, say of 15 sail of the line or more, were

[19]Colomb, op cit.
[20]Colomb, op cit.

> to be suddenly collected and brought into the presence of an enemy of equal force.
>
> The steamships would probably be all screw-steamers, of more or less efficiency in their *material* very superior to anything which the last war presented; their morale nothing inferior, to say the least, and, as single ship against single ship each would no doubt give a very good account of her antagonist.
>
> But who is the Commander now prepared to handle such a collective mess – a steam fleet? Where is the system of tactics by means of which the squadron are to be moved with the rapidity and precision that each ship is capable of?
>
> Where are the signals to convey the orders for movement so entirely unprecedented, for combinations so new and so complete, as a steam fleet will effect?[21]

The rapid progress of steam technology also created difficulties since a new wooden battleship necessarily took four years to construct if her timbers were to be properly seasoned throughout the building process and in that time developments in steam engines and in the design of ships for power could overtake her. And there were other difficulties to be overcome. As Lambert has pointed out,

> The introduction of Grant's cooking and distilling galley in place of the old fire hearth effected a vital improvement in the endurance of steamships, hitherto reliant on their tanks for boiler feed water. One week's supply could now be distilled from seawater in a day. Steam machinery raised the internal temperature of ships, especially below the waterline, which necessitated improved magazine arrangements, most significantly the adoption of metal lined powder cases. Therefore Dells' cases were specified for the magazines of all steam warships. The coal bunkers were also lined with sheet iron to cut down the risk of fire . . . the new factors introduced into the wooden structure by the steam engine, heat, damp and vibration, were well calculated to point up any weaknesses and accelerate the process of decay. . . .[22]

Nevertheless in view of the rapid progress being made with the application of steam propulsion at sea all work on new naval sailing vessels was stopped in 1849. After the end of 1852 Britain was committed to a battlefleet of wooden steam screw ships of the line with full sailing rig.

This steam-screw navy differed from Nelson's navy in many other ways, notably in the matter of gunnery. In this respect also the Royal Navy generally had the advantage of the Russians, for more powerful guns capable of firing exploding shells had been steadily introduced into service after the adoption of the Paixhans gun by the French in 1824. Although the

[21]NMM WWL/II Correspondence of Admiral Sir Baldwin Wake Walker.
[22]Lambert, op cit.

Russians had the Paixhans gun at Kronstadt and elsewhere, the fire power of British vessels was substantially greater than that of most of the Russian defence works ashore. The trouble was that even with their superior armament the British ships could not get close enough to do real harm to granite and earth fortifications without risking their wooden hulls against shells and red-hot shot.

There was another side to the navy altogether and one which was to be of the greatest importance in the coming war in the Baltic. The navy, and individual naval officers, far from rejecting technical advance, was heavily involved in scientific research of many different kinds. The most important of these was hydrography. In the eighteenth century the merchant shipping industry and the navy between them had produced the greatest explorer in the history of mankind. Captain James Cook's second voyage of discovery between 1772 and 1775 was a feat of brilliantly organized search and record which has perhaps only one parallel in the story of the exploration of the earth – Fritjof Nansen's Arctic drift between 1893 and 1896. Cook set standards of accuracy and thoroughness in his surveying work which were profoundly to effect the quality of British hydrography down to the present day. By the mid-nineteenth century officers engaged in hydrographic work all over the world were also involved of necessity in botany – as they had been since Cook's day – in geomagnetism, in geology, in astronomy and in other disciplines. Nicholas Rodger has recorded that there were sometimes twice as many survey ships as battleships at sea.[23] Conducting the greater part of the world's trade and policing involved knowing in great detail the hazards to navigation worldwide and it was the job of the hydrographers to find them and to record them on charts. Though the work was hard and exacting and the risk considerable, the service attracted some of the most intelligent men in the navy.

The attraction can best be summed up anecdotally. The authors were recently in discussion with a commander, long retired, who was of such an age as actually to remember the navy before the First World War. He was both a hydrographer of distinction and a superb practical seaman who in the 1930s, when the navy decided that work on terrestial magnetism with its long voyages and long periods on station would best be conducted under sail, had been selected to command the brigantine which was to be built for the purpose. By way of training he made a passage round the world in two four-masted barques – by historical chance vessels from the Åland Islands – and we were subsequently told by one of his ex-shipmates in Finland that he

[23]Rodger, op cit.

was quite different from most of the romance-seeking foreign hands they sometimes had on board. He was 'a fine shipmate to have alongside with you on a yard in bad weather' as high a complement as these men could pay. When we asked him why he had opted to specialize in hydrography with, in the twentieth century, poor promotion prospects, he answered simply, 'Because it was the constructive side of the navy.'

This 'constructive side' was to produce in the Crimean War two outstanding hydrographers, one in the Black Sea, one in the Baltic, who were profoundly to influence the course of the war and to make a greater contribution to its successful outcome perhaps than any other officers. Spratt in the Black Sea and Sulivan in the Baltic were most intelligent observers, more aware of the naval possibilities than their contemporaries. Sulivan, almost alone, understood something of the differences between the Ålanders, the mainland Finns and the Russians.

Bartholomew James Sulivan was a Cornishman, born at Mylor on Carrick Roads, part of Falmouth Harbour, in 1810. He entered the navy in 1822 and in 1828, as a midshipman, was appointed to HMS *Beagle* under Commander Fitzroy. He was later to serve in her on the famous voyage with Charles Darwin, an experience which determined the course of his naval career for he showed himself a brilliant surveyor, acting in this role throughout the long voyage. As a result, he was appointed in command as a lieutenant of the ketch *Arrow* surveying in the Falkland Islands and, though his 'interest' was weak, was promoted commander on his return in 1841. In command of the brig *Philomel* on further survey work interspersed with active service in South American waters, he gained the reputation of brilliant ship handling combined with humane but efficient discipline and leadership. He went two years without having to impose punishment of any kind – a remarkable achievement at any period.

On his return home Sulivan was appointed post-captain; but then spent eight years on half pay. Only his connections with the Hydrographer of the Navy, Sir Francis Beaufort, obtained for him in 1854 the command for which he was so eminently suited. He was appointed captain of the surveying vessel, the paddle-steamer *Lightning*, three guns. Of his brilliant work in this vessel, and in the following year in the paddle-steamer *Merlin*, this book will have a great deal to say.

After the war, Sulivan, who knew his interest to be too weak to expect much further employment, accepted the Civil Service post of Professional Officer at the Board of Trade. In this work he inevitably slowly rose in seniority to the rank of full admiral and was knighted. He died in 1890 at the age of seventy-nine. and was buried at Mylor.

6

Manning the Royal Navy

Apart from the matter of steam, what was the state of the navy from which the fleet which went to fight the Russians in the Baltic in 1854 was made up?

The navy in the mid-nineteenth century was in transition in many ways besides that of the introduction of steam propulsion. Once peace came in 1815, the cost of maintaining the vast naval establishment which had been created in the long wars could scarcely be justified. The effects of the consequent changes were very practical. Moreover, in the long years of relative peace between 1815 and 1914 the navy's role became that of guarding the interests of the predominant power world-wide, the process which has been called 'policing the world'. Although the Royal Navy's very existence acted as a discouragement to any potential aggressor, and for much of the period its development was designed to match a potential French threat, it was no longer called upon to act as 'the shield of Britain's defence and the spearhead of her attack' – to quote Professor Michael Lewis.[1]

The worst horrors of life at sea in Nelson's day did not continue unameliorated into the mid-nineteenth century. The majority of sailors still endured what was, by the standards of the late twentieth century, a squalid, brutal, and narrow life, but there had been many changes.

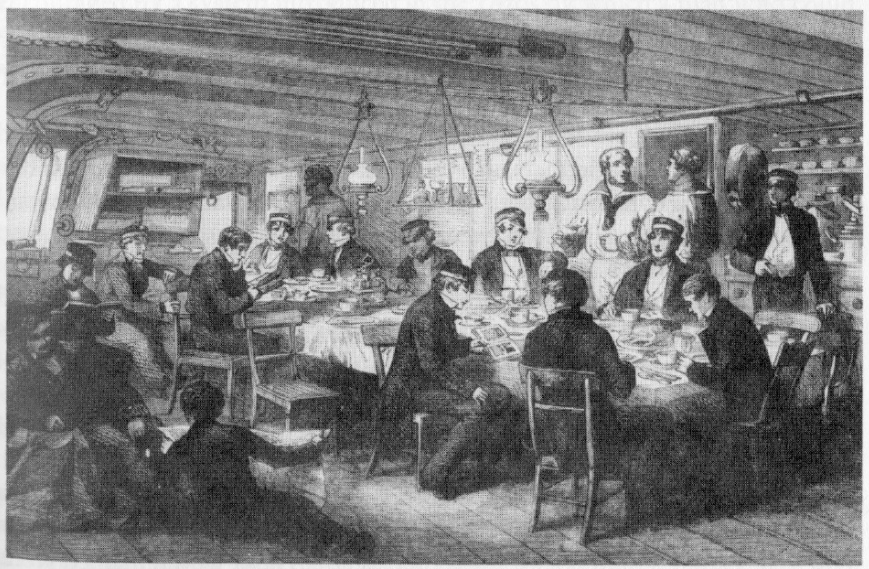
To start with the lower deck, as the navy called – and still calls – the great majority of its members who hold neither commissions nor warrants as officers, the first and biggest change was the elimination of that rough and ready form of conscription, the press-gang. The pressing of seamen was never used again after 1815. The navy became dependent on volunteers. But the old attitude to manning remained for many years. There was no organized naval service as far as the lower deck was concerned. There was simply a national pool of seamen, the majority in merchant ships, from which the navy sought to draw its recruits when a

[1]Professor Michael Lewis, *The Navy in Transition 1814–1864* (London, 1965).

ship of war was commissioned. Only very gradually did this attitude fall into disrepute. When a ship was commissioned, the captain and junior officers had to find the crew. As, after 1815, they could no longer rely on the press-gang, they had to attract volunteers, who were recruited for the one commission only. There was little continuity.

Even if the ship was lucky and recruited prime professional seamen, rather than a mixture of humanity, the crew were, in literal fact, a gang of craftsmen and labourers of differing degrees of skill recruited for the one job of taking the vessel around for three years or so. The great majority of them had no sense of the naval service or career, and there was nothing to encourage them to have it. The first year of a ship's commission was spent in attempting to build the gang into an effective fighting team. For the second year, the ship was reasonably efficient. During the third things ran down as the end of the contract approached and at the conclusion of the commission the crew was dispersed and the whole process had to be gone through again. The navy was under no obligation to these men. There was no question of continuous employment ending in a pension.

However, while the men were bound to their three years' service they were subject to harsh discipline. Whatever may have been the true position at earlier periods, in the early nineteenth century it appears that because of



This drawing is titled Gun Room – Midshipmens' Mess, Breakfast. HMS Caesar – Baltic Fleet. *HMS* Caesar, *Captain John Robb, was a 91-gun steam screw battleship*. Illustrated London News

the risks of desertion, little or no shore leave was allowed. The ships were in a way floating prisons. Women had been carried on board, unofficially, at earlier periods and post-1815 the wives of some officers and petty officers were still carried. At the Battle of Navarino in 1827 there were no less than nine of these women present in one ship, the *Genoa*, and one of them was killed. The practice of carrying 'unofficial' women on board fell into disrepute. Nevertheless, when a ship came into harbour there was a period when it was recognized that the officers would virtually lose control. Here is Admiral Hawkins, writing in 1822:

> It is well known that immediately on the arrival of a ship of war in port, crowds of boats flock off with cargoes of prostitutes. Hundreds come off to a large ship. The whole of the shocking, disgraceful transactions of the lower deck it is impossible to describe – the dirt, filth, and stench; the disgusting conversation; the indecent, beastly conduct and horrible scenes; the blasphemy and swearing; the riots, quarrels, and fighting, which often takes place, where hundreds of men and women are huddled together in one room, as it were, and where, in bed (each man being allowed only 14 inches breadth for his hammock) they are squeezed between the next hammocks and must be witnesses of each others actions; can only be imagined by those who have seen all this. Let those who have never seen a ship of war picture themselves a very large low room (hardly capable of holding the men) with 500 men and probably 300 or 400 women of the vilest description shut up in it, and giving way to every excess of debauchery that the grossest passions of human nature can lead them to; and they see the deck of a 74-gun ship the night of her arrival in port.[2]

The navy was dramatically reduced in size after the end of the Napoleonic Wars. In 1814 there were 936 ships in the navy of which 713 were in commission. By 1820 there were 496 naval vessels of which 134 were in commission. The number of men had dropped from 140,000 to 23,000. From the Admiralty's point of view the reduction in the number of men presented no problems. The ships were simply not commissioned. The crews were not recruited. The pressed professional seamen returned to the merchant shipping industry with relief. They had better quarters, better pay, better food, better prospects and much better treatment. Whatever shore people thought of the navy, the operation of the press-gangs had made it hated in the whole maritime community. The pressed landsmen and the quota men, men sent in by parishes (mostly those the parish was glad to be rid of), could not escape soon enough. Those who remained were

[2]Quoted in M Mason, B Greenhill and R Craig, *The British Seafarer* (London, 1980).

volunteers, professional warship seamen, living in the closed world of the sailing ship man, totally inward-looking, cut off from the normal life of their society, with no interests outside their craft and their shipmates and usually unable to talk about any other topic. Such men remained as long as there were sailing ships. The very last of them, the survivors of the British and American merchant schooners and of the later Finnish deep-sea merchant sailing ships, were still to be met with a few years ago.

With the great changes, social, political, technical, of the first half of the nineteenth century, it is obvious that this system of manning the navy had to change. Engineers were not the only specialist ratings for whom this hit-or-miss system was completely inappropriate. Gunnery was advancing rapidly and the introduction of the explosive shell into the Royal Navy called for a new dimension of skill. The very threat of Paixhans' ideas resulted in the setting up of a gunnery school at Portsmouth as early as 1830. It became more and more apparent that the untrained merchant seaman was going to be of less and less use aboard a ship of war. Gradually, a pool of volunteers began to develop who tried to go from one naval ship to another. Some of them, graduates of the gunnery school, were engaged for five or seven years, renewable, with extra pay and good prospects for promotion in the non-commissioned rates. A very few of them were encouraged by a system introduced in the 1820s by which a man who could show a total of 21 years' service in the navy – not necessarily continuous service – qualified for that unheard of thing, a small pension.

Conditions for ratings slowly improved. There was more room – the height between the decks was increased in ships built in the 1830s and 40s – and the food became better. Relations between officers and men tended to become better because, although the officer class retreated into itself as the century advanced, officers were no longer dealing with crews of whom only a quarter were volunteers. For the same reason, discipline became less brutal. Of course, conditions ashore were becoming less brutal also. To get things in proportion, if Jack the drunken and insubordinate naval seaman, had less chance of being flogged on board ship, Jill, the thieving milkmaid, was not now likely to be whipped on the village green – though it could still happen.

The rum ration was halved in 1834 from one half pint to one quarter pint a day, with consequent improvement in behaviour and competence, let alone health. Many of the seamen of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries can rarely have been sober. Many of them were worn out and unfit for further service at 40. The ration was halved again in 1850 and by then tea and sugar could be taken instead of the spirit ration. All this meant

that the navy could man its ships in peacetime, more or less. But although some men tended to stay with the navy, being a naval rating was not yet a profession. Seafaring was the profession and the majority of men moved from one side to the other, from the merchant navy to the Royal Navy, backwards and forwards. Should a war occur, should the number of ships in commission have to be expanded from 150 or so to 500 or 600, the naval authorities had literally no means of manning them. Even in peacetime a newly-commissioned ship in the 1830s might still spend three months lying at anchor while her officers desperately tried to collect sufficient volunteers to man her.

This kind of practice would never work with steamers, and it was the gradual introduction of steam which, at last, brought about some change, although not in time to be of much use during the war with Russia. All the time the fear was of war with France, where there was a system of compulsory naval service which would, in theory, make it far quicker to man ships with trained ratings than could ever be hoped for in Britain – though it was not to work very well in the coming war. The navy's unpopularity, the fruits of the methods of recruitment and the treatment of crews during the long Napoleonic wars, took many, many years to overcome. In 1846 leave with pay between commissions was introduced, though whether the seaman joined a new ship was entirely up to him. An attempt to create a reserve of men who signed a contract to serve afloat in wartime was a failure. These men were to be coastguards and seaman riggers in the naval dockyards, ex-seamen and petty officers. The latter would not sign on for service afloat and the former were not available because the necessary clause had not been included in their contracts. Not until 1853 was a really serious effort made to create a regular peacetime naval service for ratings. However, it came too late to help the navy man the ships of the Baltic Fleet, and it was to be another six years before a proper war reserve was created, from which a fleet could rapidly be manned for wartime expansion.

In 1849 it was estimated that to man the fleet ready for sea some 46,000 extra ratings would be required. When the war broke out, the great majority of seamen were far away in merchant ships all over the world and were simply not available to volunteer for the navy, even in the remote eventuality of their wishing to do so. Britain was not dominant in the world's sea-carrying trade for nothing. Prince Albert wrote of this situation, 'Our calamity is our prosperity'.[3]

[3]Bartlett, op cit.

If the navy had a problem with manning its ships with ratings, it had an even bigger problem with its officers and for reasons which go back equally far in history, if not further. Gradually, the naval service had become a career for those appointed as officers; but the process left a strange legacy, the extraordinary system, still persisting in the mid-nineteenth century, by which potential officers were recruited, not by the Admiralty, but by individual captains. The system was not as bad as that which prevailed in the army. There was no purchase of commissions. You certainly could not buy a warship, as you could buy a regiment. The only way to the command of a warship was through years of very arduous training – though how many years, and whether you ever got to command at all, still depended in 1850 on who you knew – in the current phrase, on 'what your interest was'. The navy was altogether more professional than the army, and more middle class, though it had plenty of members of aristocratic families in its wardrooms. At the beginning of the century the shortage of officers resulting from the long wars had resulted in the recruitment of officers from a relatively broad band of society and many promotions, in the eighteenth century style, from the lower deck. The contracted navy of the post-war period was, to quote Professor Lewis again, 'considerably more class-bound, considerably less democratic, than the wartime Navy . . . more stodgily class-bound than, perhaps, it had ever been before'.[4] the process, which lasted well into the present century, by which the wardroom became a middle-class preserve, with virtually no promotion from the lower deck, had begun.

The potential captain of a ship of war joined his first vessel as a first class volunteer at the age of 13 or 14. He came on board at the captain's discretion and was appointed by the captain. The start of the career depended on parental connections with the captain of a ship who could be persuaded (perhaps sometimes in the form of a consideration) to take young Johnny as a volunteer. The Admiralty had no control over either the numbers or the quality of those entrants, and so no control over the rate of recruitment of potential officers, or the sorts of human being who were recruited. Once accepted, the training these young men received depended on the captain's organization. They lived in squalid conditions far down on one of the lower decks.

It was a rough and ready business. Potential naval officers received no real education, even by the standards of the times. The wonder is not that many of them were so lacking in a broader culture beyond seafaring but

[4]Lewis, op cit.

that, as the letters and journals quoted later in this book show, many of them were, in fact highly literate, open-minded and aware of wider issues. The drop-out rate was probably high and the training process was one which produced natural survivors.

After two years or so, the recruit could qualify as a midshipman and two or three sea-going years later, take a lieutenant's examination. When he was appointed to the office of lieutenant on board one of His or Her Majesty's ships depended again on his 'interest', though perhaps to a lesser extent than his first and next appointment. What happened at the stage after lieutenant depended virtually entirely on his 'interest'. The legacy of the over-recruitment of officers during the Napoleonic Wars was truly dreadful. In 1824 84 per cent of qualified lieutenants were not employed, but on half pay ashore, or serving as masters or mates in merchant ships. As late as 1842 the unemployed were still almost 65 percent of the qualified men. Many of these were now elderly and would never go to sea again and the young man coming in as a first class volunteer, the officer of the future, still had a much better chance of sea service than these figures suggest. Nevertheless, as Professor Lewis puts it, 'every stage in the process of advancement . . . meant an individual contest with neighbours to "catch the selector's eye" '.[5] The next stage, after sea service, was promotion to post-captain, that is captain of a ship of war of substantial size. This depended entirely upon 'interest' as to whether it took place at all, and if so, when. Sir Richard Dundas, of whom there will be more to say in this book, son of a First Lord of the Admiralty, was a post-captain nine years after first going to sea, and was almost never without naval employment of one kind or another. Another man might take twenty years or more and spend a good deal of this time ashore. Hundreds never rose above lieutenant's rank, or the rather unsatisfactory half-way house of commander, in charge of a small vessel without a post-captain's prestige, status, or privileges. Of post-captains it was said in the 1840s that nearly half of them had never served afloat in their rank.

The careers of the six post-captains, Keppel, Paget, Codrington, Giffard, Martin and Sulivan, all men of above average ability, whose letters, diaries, journals and autobiographies have provided much of the material for this book, show a very close correlation between family connections, rate of promotion to post-captain and the extent to which they were employed ashore or afloat rather than being left unemployed on half pay. Sulivan, the son of a post-captain with little family influence, arguably the

[5]Lewis, op cit.

best all-round officer of the six, went most slowly up the promotion ladder. He was for eight years on half-pay before the Crimean War, and took what was essentially civilian employment after the peace. Giffard, the son of a knighted East India Company judge and with a mother who apparently had some connections at court, was almost continuously employed (partly, perhaps, because he gained early experience in steam), until he became a post-captain at 30. He was then unemployed until appointed to the screw-frigate *Termagant* and then to the paddle-frigate *Leopard* in 1853. After 1858 he was not employed again. Codrington, son of one of Nelson's captains at Trafalgar, was a post-captain at 28, having been almost continuously employed, and remained in employment for much of his career. Paget, son of Lord Anglesey, was also found more or less continuous employment and became Secretary to the Admiralty and then Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Squadron from 1866 to 1868. Martin, second son of Admiral Sir Thomas Byam Martin, was posted within 11 years of joining the navy in 1816 and was employed at sea for about half his time before 1850. In 1854, during the campaign, as senior captain he was promoted rear-admiral and transferred from the steam-screw ship of the line *Nile*, which he had commanded, to Giffard's *Leopard* as flagship of the paddlers. Keppel, a son of Lord Albemarle, seems to have been employed almost whenever he wanted, was a post-captain at 28 and actively involved in all the trouble spots he could find. Of his successive promotions he wrote late in life, 'I never got a step that was not a job.'[6] After a career as distinguished as it was privileged, in 1902 he was one of the first recipients of the Order of Merit. All these officers died as knighted admirals.

The greatest of the post-captain's privileges was automatic promotion. Once on the post-captain's ladder, short of dismissal from the service in dire disgrace, there was absolutely nothing except death which could stop the relentless move up the seniority ladder to full admiral. It had nothing to do with merit, with experience, with sea service. It was purely a matter of seniority. As men died so those below them moved up, eventually becoming the most senior captain and at next step the most junior flag officer. Nothing could stop it, nothing could by-pass it. The most brilliant of junior captains had no means of acquiring higher rank until his turn came, though the Admiralty had, and used, the power to appoint individual officers to fill particular posts, ignoring men senior to them. This power was of limited use, however, because a man could not be appointed to, say, a rear-admiral's post, until he was a rear-admiral on seniority. Then he

[6]Rear Admiral Sir William Jameson, *The Fleet that Jack Built* (London, 1962).

might be appointed to sea in preference to rear-admirals senior to him. No officer ever retired. They went on rising in rank and seniority until they died. Thus it was perfectly possible for an admiral to have served two years at sea as a post-captain thirty years before and never to have been to sea since. There he was, blocking the promotion of men with far greater experience and still in the prime of life. The system seems completely crazy to us now, but there were tremendously strong forces to ensure its perpetuity and no government had succeeded in breaking it in the first half of the century, though they had nibbled at the edges of the problem.

This, then, was the state of the Royal Navy at the beginning of the war with Russia. There were the beginnings of a cadre of professional naval ratings, but no way of expanding the navy's manpower quickly for war. Entry for officers depended on the favour of existing captains. Promotion and employment in the junior ranks and promotion to the all-important rank of post-captain depended on 'interest'. Thereafter promotion was entirely on seniority and, given the contraction in the size of the navy after the long wars and the long period of peace which followed, the senior ranks were filled with gentlemen in their late sixties, seventies, or eighties, who had not held active command at sea for a score or more years. The navy was in the throes of a period of rapid conversion, under fear of a real or imagined French threat, from a sailing navy to one of ships equipped with auxiliary steam-engines and firing exploding shells; developments which changed the nature of sea warfare completely. But the implications of the changes were not widely understood.

In the circumstances the navy was not well placed for going to war. But when have British armed forces been properly prepared for the outbreak of war?

Part II

7

The Commander-in-Chief

The man who was to be chosen to be Commander-in-Chief of the Baltic Fleet of 1854 was Admiral Sir Charles Napier. He was the second son of Captain the Honourable Charles Napier RN and he was born in 1786. He joined the navy at the age of thirteen in the manner already described for young gentlemen intent on a career, as a first class volunteer in the *Martin*, a small vessel under the command of his patron, Captain the Honourable Matthew Sinclair. His early career in the navy appears to have been spent in service of various kinds in the Mediterranean and the North Sea. In July 1805 he was promoted lieutenant and appointed to the *Courageous*, 74 guns. Only a year later he was promoted commander and given charge of the brig *Pultusk* in which he saw action in the West Indies, and in due course of the brig *Recruit* in which he played a leading part in the capture of the French 74-gun ship *d'Hautpolt*. He was rewarded with her command (as the *Jason*) and the rank of post-captain.

Further service in the Mediterranean followed, at first in command of a 32-gun frigate, the *Thames*, in which he distinguished himself to the degree that he was soon appointed to the command of the larger frigate *Euryalus*. In this he took part in the blockade of Toulon in the winter of 1813–14 – the blockade which was to be the subject of Joseph Conrad's late romantic novel *The Rover*. Subsequently the *Euryalus* took part in the expedition up the Potomac to attack Alexandria, an incident in the inglorious war of 1812 against the Americans. On half-pay after the ending of the long war in 1815, Napier lost his family fortune in business speculation and was forced to seek further command and, though he grumbled mightily at the smallness of the ship and at her age, he was fortunate, in this period when so many naval officers were without employment, to be appointed to the 42-gun frigate *Galatea*. His service in this vessel lasted from July 1829 to July 1832 and was notable in two ways. Napier had devised a system of manually-driven paddles for propelling the vessel in a calm. What the crew thought of these devices is not recorded, but

they were used on a number of occasions during the three year commission, with success, according to his biographer.[1]

It is to be noted, however, that the Vulcan Gold Medal of the Royal Society of Arts was awarded to Captain James Burton, RN, in 1820, 'for a method of propelling Ships of War'.

The correspondence and drawings associated with this award show that Captain Burton had devised and successfully demonstrated with trials in the Solent using HMS *Active*, a system of propelling the vessel with side paddles driven by three capstans worked by 180 men. The *Active* was propelled 'through the water with a light air on the beam, and against the tide (which was running at a full half a knot) at the rate of nearly two miles and a half an hour'.[2]

More significant in the long run was Napier's success, largely by virtue of the presence of his ship and her crew in the anchorage, in preventing a breakdown of law and order at Fayal in the Azores where British residents were in some potential danger during disturbances accompanying civil strife in Portugal. This incident led to his becoming known to the leaders of the political group who were challenging the reigning power in Portugal. Napier was offered command of the Portuguese rebel fleet and, having negotiated satisfactory terms, he accepted the post. Mercenary employment of this kind was by no means unknown among British officers of both army and navy in the nineteenth century. In this way, the ambitious and aggressive could find both a better life than that offered by half pay, and an outlet for their frustrated energies. In a hard-fought action off Cape St Vincent, in which he himself led a boarding party, Napier succeeded in defeating the naval forces of the ruling group. Although this victory resulted in the apparent predominance of the rebels and in the recognition of their government by the British, in fact a prolonged civil war followed. Napier, now Admiral and Major-General of the Portuguese Navy and with the title of Viscount Cape St Vincent of that kingdom, felt himself committed to take part in it. He did so in a well-conducted land campaign for which he was rewarded with the title of Count.

The Portuguese adventure left Napier in a state of reasonable prosperity. He returned home to stand for Parliament twice unsuccessfully and to purchase a small estate in Hampshire. From this house he conducted

[1] H Noel Williams, *The Life and Letters of Admiral Sir Charles Napier, KCB.* (London, 1917).
[2] *Transactions of the Royal Society of Arts* Vol 38 (1820).

a private war with the government and the Admiralty, in particular, over the promotion of his stepson, his own appointment to a ship, and over what he considered to be the inadequate statement of his services which appeared in the naval estimates when he was awarded an admiral's good service pension – a mark of commendation at the time. In view of the criticism to which he was to be subjected by his captains in 1854 for his apparent complete inability to understand and appreciate the power of steam, it is ironical that Napier pressed upon the naval authorities his ideas for the proper design and building of steam vessels, even advocating such revolutionary ideas as the dropping of the broadside, the mounting of guns amidships, and, following merchant-shipping practice of which *The Great Britain* is a surviving example, the adoption of the schooner rig for vessels with steam-engines.

Despite his belligerency, Napier was in due course appointed post-captain of the *Powerful*, 84 guns, in December 1838. She was shortly ordered to Malta to reinforce the Mediterranean fleet. Napier was appointed commodore in charge of a squadron of six vessels, four of them ships of the line. With this formidable force at his disposal, he endeavoured unsuccessfully to persuade the Egyptians to withdraw their forces from Syria. Britain declared war on Egypt, risking hostilities with France, and a very powerful naval force of British, Austrian and Turkish vessels assembled off Beirut. Napier was placed in command of an invasion force which captured the town of Sidon with almost no loss of life and defeated the Egyptians in the land battle of Boharsef, fought ashore by Napier with units of the Turkish army after he had ignored instructions from his admiral to withdraw his forces. Successful as he was, his insubordination was overlooked and on his return to his squadron he was highly complimented.

Napier took an active, if somewhat controversial, part in the subsequent bombardment of Acre. His conduct then became extraordinary. Acting without authority and entirely on his own initiative, he negotiated an agreement with the Egyptian ruler, Mehamet Ali, under which the latter withdrew his forces from Syria and returned to Turkey her fleet, which had gone over to the Egyptian side, in return for the recognition by the Turks of his heredity government of Egypt and the cessation of hostilities by the British against his forces. In the event, Napier was promoted Commodore First Class and made a Knight Commander of the Bath for his role in the capture of Acre, while the Government endorsed the terms of his agreement with Mehamet Ali. By his initiative in this affair he brought himself to the attention of the First Lord of the Admiralty, then Lord Minto, and of the Foreign Secretary, Lord Palmerston, on the whole favourably. But, as the

comments of some of his captains quoted later in this book clearly show, he made enemies as well, and his conduct was by no means universally admired by his juniors in his fleet.

On his return to Britain in March 1841, Napier found himself something of a popular hero. He was awarded decorations from Russia, Austria, and Prussia; he received the thanks of both Houses of Parliament for his services; he was given the Freedom of the City of London and invited by two constituencies to stand again as a candidate for Parliament. Placed on half pay at his own request, he was elected one of the Members for Marylebone. He took his parliamentary duties seriously and frequently spoke in the House. On one occasion, in 1842, he made a long speech on the Navy Estimates which included a strong attack on the naval system of promotion which, as has already been seen, ensured that most senior officers were of advanced years. He attacked the employment of elderly admirals at sea, saying that the greater part of them if sent to sea, would require nurses to take care of them. He was to live to regret this intervention.

In November 1846 Napier, on seniority, was promoted rear-admiral and shortly afterwards made Commander-in-Chief of the Channel Squadron. Trouble had broken out again in Portugal and Napier's squadron was soon ordered to Lisbon. Here he appears to have played a useful role in support of the British Minister in Lisbon in bringing about the stabilizing of the situation. He was, however, attacked in *The Times* with an allegation that he had used his official position to persuade the Portuguese authorities to pay his arrears of a pension awarded for his previous services in that country. After service in connection with disturbances in Ireland and against pirates on the coast of North Africa, Napier, having declined a command in Ireland, was superseded in command of the Channel Squadron, much to his fury, by his own second-in-command. Napier took his supercession as a personal insult and expressed his resentment in angry letters to the First Lord of the Admiralty and, even less judiciously, to *The Times*. He denounced various aspects of naval policy, including, even more unwisely as events were to prove, the reforms in naval administration initiated by Sir James Graham in 1832–33.

This correspondence and Napier's general attitude at the time indicated a growing instability and want of judgment, verging on megalomania, which should have given warning to the authorities. The Prime Minister, Lord John Russell, in reply to an appeal from Napier told him that although he had a high opinion of his professional character, he shared the First Lord's doubts as to his discretion. When command of the

Mediterranean Fleet became vacant in 1851, Napier put forward his claims in strident terms and when the appointment went to Admiral J W D Dundas, an officer with far less active service, Napier again complained violently, putting forward his own claims in immoderate terms and denigrating Dundas. He received a first-class snub from the Prime Minister in a letter written in October 1851:

> Sir, I have received your letter of 29th September, and, considering its contents, I am far from disputing the value of your services, but in making the appointment of a successor to Sir William Parker in the Mediterranean Command, it will be necessary to choose an officer who will possess the full confidence of the Government, as well as the Board of Admiralty; he must be an officer on whose secrecy and discretion the Queen's Ministers can fully rely. I am sorry to say that, notwithstanding your many brilliant exploits, I could not place in you that implicit confidence which is required.
>
> I remain, Sir,
> Your most obedient Servant,
> John Russell.[3]

Even this did not silence Napier, who sent his correspondence to *The Times* under cover of a letter attacking the Prime Minister in abusive terms. John Delane, then editor of *The Times* and in due course to become the scourge of the government over scandals and maladministration revealed in the southern campaign of the Crimean War, published a leading article attacking the Prime Minister and the Government for discriminating against an officer, not on grounds of professional incompetence but because in Parliament and elsewhere he had criticized the administration of the navy. The argument has a ring about it both very old-fashioned and very modern and, since Napier was still something of a popular hero, it appears partly to have vindicated him in the public eye; but he had lost the Mediterranean Command.

The truth is that Napier had long shown signs of instability. He was a man of small stature, dark in comparison with his brothers and sisters to a degree which earned him the nickname of Black Charlie and even at times caused his legitimacy to be privately questioned. Some saw him as Mad Charlie. He appears to have been intensely ambitious, arrogant, and conceited. His career, even as narrated by his most loyal biographer, is littered with incidents in which he appears to have shown an inner insecurity by personal eccentricities, in behaviour and particularly in dress.

[3]Williams, op cit.

In adopting a course of independent action more appropriate to the eighteenth century than the middle of the nineteenth, Napier had been lucky that events had more often than not gone with him, enabling him to carry the day. As his youth faded, lacking the intellect to use his experience to contribute in broader fields, he became an increasingly embittered old man, unable to rest content that he had achieved as much as he had. In a navy less obsessed with seniority he would have been relegated to a retirement in which his strident proclamations of his own merit would have taken him into eventual obscurity. Had he been alive today he would perhaps have had a second career as a successful television personality. As it was, he was offered command of the Baltic Fleet of 1854.

The circumstances which led to this, at first sight extraordinary, appointment are worth examination. In 1853–4 Sir James Graham had composed a memorandum in which he assessed the naval problems of war with Russia, pointing out that any conflict was bound to take on a naval character both in the Baltic and in the Black Sea. 'It is not' he warned, 'in the power of England to strike a decisive blow to the heart of Russia in either of these seas'.[4] In this he was at one with Napier; Napoleon's experience loomed large in the thinking of both. Graham considered the capture of Sebastopol to be impossible at this stage, but that while it remained in Russian hands control of the Black Sea could be only temporary. As regards the Baltic, his assessment was that easy victories were unlikely to be won. Not only had Russia a large fleet and fortified bases but operationally, the Baltic was a difficult area.

The extent to which these people were living on the edge of an entirely new situation created by rapidly advancing technology is expressed by Graham's caution. It was going to be difficult, he said, to get large screw-steamers into the Baltic and to keep them coaled while they were there. Despite the true state of the Russian battle fleet, which was soon to be revealed in the coming war, the almost obsessive fear was of Russian naval raids on the British coast. One way of preventing such action by the potential enemy would be to close the Baltic by blockading the Sound and the Belts between the Danish islands. But that, said Graham, would not be in any way 'a brilliant operation' and would certainly lead to dispute with neutral nations which would force the Baltic trading countries into an alliance hostile to Britain. Worse still, such a blockade could bring Britain into conflict with the United States.

The Americans had a large vested interest in trade with the Baltic

[4]'Graham Papers', 22 January 1854, quoted in J B Conacher, op cit.

countries, which was to be expressed in very real terms only a year after the Treaty of Paris ended the Crimean War. In 1857 they exerted pressure to bring about the end of the Sound Dues, the taxes levied by the Danish authorities on the cargoes of all vessels passing into or out of the Baltic through the Sound between Helsingør and Hälsingborg. Graham ended his memorandum by saying that he was anxious to discourage any extravagant expectation that England would humble Russian pride or strike a decisive blow against her by naval means alone. He went on to write, 'In concert with France, she can confine the Russian Fleets within the Baltic and the Euxine, but Prussia and Austria must co-operate to compel the evacuation of the Principalities (Moldavia and Wallachia) and to prevent the sure success of the passage of the Danube and the march on Constantinople'.[5]

This memorandum is important, not only because it presents a much more realistic assessment of the general possibilities of war with Russia than was generally current at the time, but because of what it reveals of the thinking behind the dispatch of the Baltic Fleet. It may seem to us, in the late twentieth century, incomprehensible that the main effort, early in the war with Russia, should not have been directed towards presenting a threat to St Petersburg. Clearly, not only was this not considered technically possible, even a few months before the outbreak of war (so limited was the appreciation of what could have been achieved with the resources Britain had already available at the time) but the objectives the Baltic Fleet might successfully attain were also considered extremely limited.

The appointment of Napier as Commander-in-Chief stemmed from two considerations. The first was that the size of the fleet which it was intended to send to the Baltic and the fact that the French were expected to contribute a strong element to it, in the Government's view made the appointment of an admiral or vice-admiral absolutely necessary. Indeed, it was in a telegram from Paris published in *The Times* on 28 December 1853 that the first public intimation of the sending of a Baltic fleet was made. The telegram reported that:

> The English and French Governments have now very little hope of a pacific solution of the Eastern question, and that both France and England were about to make preparations for an expedition to the Baltic early in the spring. Sir Charles Napier was to command the English Fleet in that sea.

It is, of course, possible that Napier himself inspired this report since

[5]Conacher, op cit.

he was already in private correspondence with Sir James Graham in which he sought command of a Baltic fleet, should one be assembled. On 28 January 1854 the *Illustrated London News* announced:

> Rumour is busy with her hundred tongues as to who shall be the Commander-in-Chief of the Baltic Fleet. The name most generally received is that of Vice-Admiral Sir Charles Napier, and that he will hoist his flag in the *Duke of Wellington*, supported by Rear-Admirals Corry and Chads. Certain it is that 15 sail of the line, with a corresponding number of frigates and corvettes, will be in the Baltic by 6 March, or, at all events, ready to enter. We also hear that 10 sail of the line (French) will co-operate with the British Fleet. Rear-Admiral Chads has hoisted his flag (blue) at the mizzen of the *Princess Royal*, 91, screw, Captain Lord Clarence Paget.

The second consideration the Government had in mind was a matter of naval seniority. There were only two full admirals available and both, because of the seniority system, were of advancing years. One was Lord Dundonald, Thomas Cochrane, an officer whose career was perhaps more distinguished than that of Napier but who, like Napier, was an individualist and an eccentric and who had even greater ups and downs in his life. Of him, Sir James Graham submitted to the Queen after a Cabinet Meeting on 8 February 1854:

> Lord Dundonald is 79 years of age; and though his energies and faculties are unbroken, and though, with his accustomed courage, he volunteers for the Service, yet, on the whole, there is reason to apprehend that he might deeply commit the Force under his command in some desperate enterprise, where the chance of success would not countervail the risk of failure and of the fatal consequences, which might ensue. Age has not abated the adventurous spirit of this gallant officer, which no authority could restrain; being uncontrollable it might lead to most unfortunate results. The Cabinet, on the most careful review of the entire question, decided that the appointment of Lord Dundonald was not expedient.[6]

Lord Dundonald was, however, to attempt to play a part in the war. He wrote to Sir James Graham in July 1854, pointing out that the seizure of Kronstadt was the one great and early defeat which could be inflicted on Russia. He proposed the use of the smoke of burning tar and sulphur, under cover of which Kronstadt would be seized and its defences, in his own words, 'however strong against ordinary means of attack, may be captured, and their red-hot shot and incendiary missiles, prepared for the destruction

[6]Williams, op cit.

of our ships, turned on those they protect'.[7] A special committee of admirals was convened to consider this plan, which was frequently mentioned in contemporary documents as 'Cochrane's secret weapon'. It was rejected, but in infinitely tactful terms.

The other available admiral was Sir William Parker, aged seventy-two, whose health was such that he refused the command. There were two possible vice-admirals. One was Sir George Seymour, an officer of great experience and sound judgment, who was, however, employed as Commander-in-Chief of the North American and West Indies station and, although shortly to be relieved, would not be available for duties – the assembling of a Baltic fleet – which were becoming daily more urgent. Andrew Lambert has pointed out that his Tory affiliations may not have recommended him to Sir James Graham.[8] Sir James Graham insisted that, 'not a day should now be lost for completing the equipment and arrangement of a squadron for the Baltic, the first step is the nomination of a commander-in-chief'.[9] As the likelihood of war became more evident, it became clear that, as always, preparations had been left far too late. It was, indeed, only on 21 January 1854 that the Prime Minister, Lord Aberdeen, had informed the Queen that the Cabinet was to ask Parliament for an increase of money sufficient to provide 10,000 more seamen and 3000 more marines for the navy – the necessary increase to mount a Baltic fleet and put the Mediterranean Fleet on a war footing.

Sir Charles Napier was the only vice-admiral left as a potential candidate for the Baltic command. The Paris news leak of his likely appointment had caused adverse criticism. Sir James Graham was somewhat diffident in his submission of Napier's name to the Queen, saying, 'The choice would seem to fall on Sir Charles Napier, and though his appointment may be open to some objections, it is strongly recommended by many considerations.' He described Napier as an excellent seaman. Perhaps more surprisingly, he said that he 'combines boldness with discretion'. He went on to say:

> As a second, he may not have been submissive, as a chief, he has been successful in command. This appointment will give confidence to both officers and men, and his name is not unknown both to enemies and allies. If he has the faults of his family, he is not without their virtues. Courage, genius, love of country are not wanting, and the weighty responsibilities of a

[7]NMM PAR/163/8.
[8]In an oral communication.
[9]Conacher op cit.

high command, without depressing him, would give steadiness to his demeanour.

He behaved ill to Lord John Russell, and to Sir Francis Baring, and on shore he has given just cause of complaint. Out at sea and in command he is a different person, and Lord John Russell, in the Cabinet yesterday, regardless of all former displeasure, pronounced an opinion favourable to the appointment. Lord Aberdeen also, together with the entire Cabinet, came to the same conclusion; and Sir James Graham, on their behalf and in concurrence with his own opinion, ventured to ask the permission of Your Majesty to appoint Sir Charles Napier to this important naval command.[10]

Then as now the bureaucratic machine ground slowly. London was full of rumours of Napier's appointment before he was officially told of it. His correspondence appears to indicate that he had no official intimation until 23 February, when Sir James Graham summoned him. The appointment was not announced until two days later. Besides the slowness of the bureaucratic process, the announcements may well have been delayed because the appointment could be taken as another step towards the inevitability of war, and also for fear of a critical response. The diarist Richard Greville had noted, for instance, on 9 February 1854, 'Great difference of opinion exists as to the wisdom of committing our Baltic Fleet to Sir Charles Napier. It was, however, decided at the Cabinet yesterday that he should have it'.[11]

There were indications of the Government's anxiety to counter opinion adverse to Napier's appointment. At a banquet at the Reform Club on 7 March 1854, which was later to become notorious, Lord Palmerston, the Foreign Secretary, and Sir James Graham were both much too fulsome in their praise of Napier. Palmerston spoke of Napier's ability to calculate many moves ahead. He not only calculated, Palmerston said, he had the spirit and genius to execute, and the country which placed its fortunes in his hands might well feel confident. Sir James Graham went even further, saying that he looked on Sir Charles as a most discreet commander, who had his entire confidence and whose selection to the post was approved by the Service and by the country. Unfortunately, wine seems to have flowed too well on this occasion, and Napier demonstrated that he was flamboyant and excitable and anything but discreet. He said, according to the report in *The Times* next day:

I cannot say we are at war, because we are still at peace – (Great laughter) – but I suppose we are nearly at war, and probably when I get into the Baltic I'll

[10] Williams, op cit.

[11] L Strachey and R Fulford eds, *The Greville Memoirs* (London, 1938).

Sir Charles Napier speaking at the Reform Club banquet which later became notorious. Napier is on Palmerston's right. To Napier's right are Sir Thomas Graham and Admiral Berkeley. The Turkish Minister in London is on Palmerston's left. Illustrated London News

have an opportunity of declaring war. (Loud cheers, laughter, and a cry of Bravo Charlie!). Certainly, if I have that opportunity, I hope it will end in a prosperous war, for I may safely say that this country never sent out such a splendid fleet as will sail for the Baltic in a very few days. I think My Right Honourable friend (Sir James Graham) and his coadjutors at the Admiralty deserve the greatest credit for having fitted out such a fleet in such a manner after so long a peace. (Cheers).[12]

The statement that Napier could himself declare war, although endorsed immediately by the First Lord in what appears to have been an attempt to cover up the indiscretion, led not surprisingly to a question in Parliament as to how and by what authority the power to declare war, vested exclusively in the sovereign, had been delegated to Sir Charles Napier; a question unconvincingly fobbed off by Sir James Graham. But worse than that, private accounts of the dinner, which soon spread around London and were to be given widespread credence, spoke of Napier's intemperate boasting and of an alleged statement, later to become notorious, to the effect that, 'Within a month he would be either in

[12] *The Times* 8 March 1854.

Kronstadt or in hell!' A *Times* report of the function the following day quotes this phrase and indicates a general level of excitement and bibulous jollification which brought much contemporary criticism.

In the cold light of day Napier struck an altogether more realistic note in an address to the people of Portsmouth when he said:

> I know a great deal is expected from the Fleet, but, gentlemen, you must not expect too much. We are going to meet no common enemy; we are going to meet an enemy well prepared. I am sure every officer and man in the Fleet will do his duty gloriously; but, at the same time, I warn you that you must not expect too much. The Fleet is a new one; the system of warfare is new; great consideration is required to ascertain how it is best to manage a Fleet urged by steam. The system of warfare is entirely different now to what it was formerly; but we will do our best. . . .[13]

That patriotic journal, the *Illustrated London News*, rallied to Napier's support with a purely laudatory account of the Reform Club dinner, accompanied by an engraving of the occasion.

This little campaign of support for Napier culminated in the publication in the *Illustrated London News* on 18 March 1854 of a poem by Charles Mackay, entitled *The Baltic Fleet*.

> Don't you know the wrong you're doing?
> Mighty Tzar! Mighty Tzar!
> Don't you see there's mischief brewing?
> Mighty Tzar!
> French and English, one in counsel,
> Are impatient for the day,
> And are steaming to the Baltic,
> Right and ready for the fray.
> We have hearts that never fail us,
> So look out for wounds and scars;
> For there's Charlie Napier coming,
> With his gallant Jack Tars!
> With his gallant Jack Tars!
> With his gallant Jack Tars!

Captain Giffard's reaction, however, was less enthusiastic. He wrote,

> Early in March, we heard with regret, that Sir Charles Napier was appointed to the command. A more unfortunate selection was never made, I had seen a good deal of Napier in Syria, where his conduct was not that of an able officer, and he was now thirteen years older and from all accounts very nervous. I could not but feel that the fine steam fleet would be useless in his hands. The other Admirals chosen it was said, by him, were also past work, and not one of the four had ever commanded a steam-ship. Common sense should have told our rulers that an officer to command a steam fleet, should know something of what they were capable of doing; but Brag carried the day.[14]

[13]Williams, op cit.

Commodore Byam Martin, who had also been with Napier on the Syrian campaign, was even more specific. He confided to his private journal,

> The selection of Sir Charles Napier to command the Baltic Fleet is remarkable; – and one which both the profession and the public appear to view with distrust. He has had very little experience and has shown no capacity for the command of a fleet; – and he is said to be wanting in the two most necessary qualities for command, discretion and nerve. He has gained notoriety as a lucky and successful buccaneer; but I doubt if the Russians are to be intimidated by a *name* . . .[15]

And a day or two later, after meeting Napier:

> I did not think Napier in good spirits. He seemed to be depressed; as if, for the first time in his life, he felt the weight of a heavy responsibility; and as if he had discovered that something more than gasconnade will be required to bring his fleet home in triumph.[16]

And then a little later,

> A stronger man than I, might shrink from being the hack of such a useless, uncertain, capricious man as Napier . . .[17]

And again,

> I am sorry to hear, for it is very injurious to the Service, that Napier has already made so many enemies among the officers he commands, as well by his offensive manner, as by the coarseness of his language. I am told that he has left off drinking, but that he is irritable and petulant – nervous – frequently saying he does not know why the Admiralty have sent him so many ships . . .[18]

[14]Giffard, op cit.
[15,16,17,18]Byam Martin, op cit.

When he had been promoted to rear-admiral and was in the *Leopard* as his flagship, with George Giffard in command, Byam Martin recorded,

> Napier came on board and sat three hours with me and lunched to the great satisfaction and pleasure of Giffard's little dog, which kept *smelling* him the whole time.[19]

And on 20 May, in the Baltic,

> I gathered from Corry, *who was cautious*, that my friend Napier is playing the old game, notoriety seeking, by sham eccentricity, mix'd up with a good deal of vulgarity.[20]

Sir Charles Napier was certainly not the last officer of the armed forces of the Crown to adopt this particular technique.

[19,20]Byam-Martin, op cit.

8

The Fleet Assembles

Given the nature of the process by which Britain drifted into war with Russia in 1854 and the late date at which financial authority for expansion of the manpower of the armed forces was sought, it is not surprising that the government, the bureaucracy and the armed forces themselves, were even less ready than has been usual in history when the conflict did eventually begin. As far as the navy was concerned, the position was further complicated by the fact that, despite the accelerated building programme following the French invasion scare of 1852, there was still a shortage of screw-steamers, steam battleships. Both Sir James Graham and the Surveyor of the Navy, Sir Baldwin Walker, considered the Russian threat a transient phenomenon and that the real long-term threat to Britain came from the navy of France. While the navy fought alongside the French Navy against the Russians, the new construction programme, the long-term programme of building screw-battleships, continued to be based on the assumption that France was the most likely enemy. The greater part of the resources of the navy in 1854, and to an even larger extent in 1855, were used in this way rather than in providing the equipment needed to deal with the peculiar problems presented by the Russian campaigns in the Baltic and in the Black Sea.

In the words of a recent historian:

> . . . Walker decided that the only method of creating further ships for war service lay in converting existing tonnage on the simple plan applied to the *Majestic*. Not wishing to modify First or Second Rate Ships in this fashion he turned to the Symondite 80s that were either complete or in an advanced state of construction. On January 17, 1854, he ordered the conversion of the *Colossus* and followed this with the *Centurion* and *Mars* and the incomplete *Brunswick* and *Irresistible*. These conversions were not part of Walker's long-term plan for the development of a steam battle fleet. He had a low regard for the 80-gun ships and preferred to meet the sailing fleets of Russia with hurried adaptations of these second-class ships while continuing work on new and

converted First and Second Rates to counter the growing threat from France. Walker and Graham shared a conviction that after the war France would resume her role as Britain's principal rival at sea, and both men considered that only a long term programme of new construction could provide a suitable fleet.[1]

The fact that the war with Russia was regarded by those in effective control of the navy as a temporary diversion from the long-term rivalry with France was to determine the course of the war and to prolong it. When the fall of Sebastopol did not end the war and the resources of both British and French navies were diverted to provide the sort of equipment, that is, gunboats and armoured floating batteries, which were needed to present a real threat to St Petersburg, the war rapidly came to an end. This obsession with the French threat does not imply a belligerent Britain. For all the popular public enthusiasm which greeted the declaration of war with Russia, Britain was in no sense aggressive at this time. Had she been so, then a competent, professionally-officered standing army would have become socially and politically acceptable, yet neither was the case. Had she been so, the navy would have been well-financed instead of undermanned and undertrained.

In the event, Sir James Graham simply had not got enough of the new screw-steamers for two battle fleets, and two were required, one in the Black Sea to counter the threat believed to be imposed by the Russian Black Sea Fleet, victorious at Sinope, and the other to counter the imagined threat of attacks by the Russian Baltic Fleet on the coast of Britain, to gain control of the Baltic and thereby limit Russian trade and her influence on other north European nations. In the end, the bulk of the British screw-steamships were sent to the Baltic and only two steam battleships went to the Black Sea. The total force of the first division of the Baltic Fleet was reported by the *Illustrated London News* on 11 March 1854 as comprising 23 ships, 1326 guns, 13,326 men and 8340 horse power. The *Illustrated London News* pointed out that this first division of the Baltic Fleet exceeded that of the whole force of the Black Sea Fleet in gun-power and in the number of men embarked.

The fleet had to be hastily collected together from vessels from Lisbon, Portsmouth, Plymouth, Sheerness, Chatham and Cork. Contemporary accounts vary as to which vessels sailed and when. Lambert, who has studied the development of the steam-screw battle fleet more closely than any other modern historian, gives Napier, when his whole force was

[1] Lambert, op cit.

assembled, nine vessels he classifies as steam battleships: the *Duke of Wellington*, 131 guns, the *Royal George*, 120, and the *St Jean d'Acre*, 101, the *Princess Royal*, *Caesar*, *James Watt* and *Nile*, 91s and the *Cressy* and the *Majestic* 81s. O'Byrne's *Naval Annual* for 1855, listing the Baltic Fleet of 1854, gives all these and the four screw 'blockships', that is, old 74-gun sailing ships of the line given engines and intended for restricted coastal operations, as *Edinburgh*, *Blenheim*, *Hogue* and *Ajax*. It also lists four steam-screw frigates – single gun-deck vessels carrying from 32 to 60 guns – the *Imperieuse*, 51, *Arrogant*, 47, *Amphion*, 34, and the *Euryalus*, 51.

Besides these screw vessels, there was the steamer or paddle-frigate *Leopard*, 18 guns, and a number of smaller paddle-steamers including the *Valorous* and the *Odin*, 16s, the *Dragon*, *Hecla*, *Vulture*, *Driver* (which already had behind her the achievement of being the first steamship to sail around the world) and *Gorgon*, 6s. Not listed in O'Byrne is the survey ship, *Lightning*, the little paddler which was the second steamer ever to be built for the navy. This historic little vessel was to play a crucial role in the development of the campaign of 1854, and was later to make a voyage of great importance in the history of oceanography.

Sir Charles Napier sailed from Spithead with the first squadron of his hastily assembled fleet on 11 March 1854. This squadron comprised four screw-ships of the line, the four blockships, four screw-frigates, the *Leopard* and two smaller paddle-steamers. In due course his fleet was to be completed with six sailing battleships and the rest of the vessels listed above, which followed as fast as they could be got ready for sea.

If it was one thing to prepare the vessels for their new role in what must have been an emergency operation in some ways comparable to that mounted for the Falkland Islands Task Force 130 years later, it was another thing to man them. According to a contemporary, the sailing vessel *Prince Regent* had to be left behind, 370 short of her complement of officers and men, together with the *Boscawen*, 105 short on her complement.[2] Manning problems were to feature continuously in controversy about the fleet's activities. In an exchange in the House of Lords reported in the *Illustrated London News* on 11 March 1854, Lord Ellenborough asked for some returns relating to the manning of the navy and observed that he believed the Crown had experienced considerable difficulty in obtaining the requisite number of seamen to man the Baltic Fleet. He expressed the view that the difficulty could be at once surmounted by holding out greater inducements to seamen to enter Her Majesty's service than the merchant shipping

[2] G Butler Earp, *A History of the Baltic Campaign of 1854*, (London, 1857).

industry was offering. In reply the Prime Minister, Lord Aberdeen, said that he, 'had the highest testimony for saying that the fleet that was to set out for the Baltic was adequately and efficiently manned. There were certainly some landsmen among the seamen employed, but he was authorized to say that the proportion was not greater than at any former time'.

The situation was, in fact, quite other. As has already been said, although it was still legally possible to employ the press-gang, public opinion would no longer tolerate it. As a recent historian has put it:

> The political and moral state of society had changed so radically that statesmen in the 1840s feared the consequences of resort to it. Few people thought magistrates would back press warrants, and if they did, public opinion was expected to support the seaman in his resistance to the brutalities of the gang.[3]

The reforms in naval manning of the early 1850s had had no time to take effect. It was to be years before these changes worked their way up through the Service. In early 1854 men were needed at once, but the navy's reputation was still such that seamen would not volunteer for it. Wages in the merchant shipping industry began to rise as the prospects of war, with the almost inevitable accompanying shipping boom, came nearer. The war was to give a tremendous fillip to commerce, creating one of the greatest shipping booms of the century, and free trade had already brought prosperity to the industry. The navy could not offer money enough to compete, much less to compensate for the altogether harsher and more circumscribed life a warship usually offered in comparison with an average good merchant vessel.

Various further concessions and reforms had very recently been introduced. Pension terms were improved. Men were given the right to choose their first ship. The rate of leading seaman, a step above the able seamen in pay and with other privileges, gave incentive to the more ambitious who perhaps would normally have looked for the rank of bo'sun in a merchant vessel. The rate of chief petty officer was created. But still the navy met grave difficulties in manning the fleet. It is not known how many merchant seamen joined the navy because the figures recorded by the Admiralty and the figures recorded by the Registrar-General of Shipping and Seamen do not agree, but all the evidence is that the numbers were small.

[3]R Taylor, 'Manning the Royal Navy; the Reform of the Recruiting System, 1852/1862', *Mariners' Mirror* volume 44, No 4.

The Mediterranean Fleet, already largely in being, was more or less adequately manned. The new Baltic Fleet, however, was another matter. It was as if the navy had reached the point at which, despite the improved terms of service, it had recruited all those disposed to make a living on board one of HM ships. Recruiting depots were set up in London, but many of those who came forward (and were perforce accepted for lack of anything better) were very poor material and many of them not seamen at all. Contemporary accounts give the impression of almost desperate attempts to recruit, even among country lads far from the sea.

In an attempt to strengthen the manning of the fleet, HMS *Cumberland*, a 70-gun sailing vessel, due to return from the American station in April 1854 after three years away, was detailed to join the Baltic Fleet in the belief that many of her men had the experience to qualify them for promotion to petty officer, whereupon they could be distributed to the fleet to stiffen the crews of inadequately trained men. Despite the prospects of promotion, this change of programme did not go down well with the *Cumberland*'s crew. On 7 April 1854 *The Times* reported that Rear-Admiral Berkeley had gone out to Spithead to address the men in the following terms:

> My men – I am sent down here by the Board of Admiralty to acquaint you that we are at war with Russia. Had there been no war you would not have come home until June, as your time of service would not have expired till that period . . . It is not likely that your services will be required longer than October next, because at that period the ice will prevent further operations.

Nevertheless, there was considerable disquiet in the mess decks of the *Cumberland* and on 10 April *The Times* reported,

> The *Cumberland*, 70, Captain Seymour, sailed from Spithead on Saturday, mutinous symptoms we are sorry to say, being manifested on board to the last . . . The crew received 3 months' pay prior to sailing.

Even the flagship, the great *Duke of Wellington*, had trouble. As *The Times* reported:

> We regret to find that strong symptoms of insubordination were evinced by the crew of this ship on Saturday night and Sunday, when they destroyed the whole of their mess utensils, and took shot from the racks and rolled them about the decks . . . numbers of men made off by scaling the walls of the yard . . . One fellow, a marine, managed to chalk the stripes of a sergeant on his

arm, and marching a party to the gate, where going through all the forms of a picquet sent to look after stragglers, was with his party allowed to pass.

On 8 March 1854, Captain Byam Martin confided to his journal,

> I mustered the crew of the *Nile* on board the *Bellona*, hulk, – they consist of 110 landsmen and about as many more from the *Excellent*, Coastguards and Pensioners – the two latter lots mostly old worn out men . . .[4]

And again on the 28 May:

> It is a melancholy thing to see the poor old men whom Berkeley has dragged from the coastguard stations to man the navy. They are too old to learn, and too stiff to move; sending them aloft would be murder . . . I was more than ever struck with the badness of the crew of this ship; so many infirm old creatures and so many raw uncouth savages from inland! It is a hopeless task.[5]

Butler Earp quotes Rear-Admiral Berkeley as saying later that,

> If you find 300 able-bodied seamen on board each ship I shall be agreeably surprised – that is out of a crew of from 750 to 1200.[6]

According to Professor Michael Lewis, the 84-gun sailing ship *Monarch* put to sea with only eight able seamen in a complement of 850[7] (O'Byrne gives 750). Rear-Admiral Chads, as the junior flag officer, was responsible, according to his memorialist, for 'the organization of the motley crews which we sent to sea, and the scandal arising from whose inefficiency did more to enforce subsequent improvement than all the remonstrances which our Admiral never failed to ply'.[8]

The correspondence between Sir Charles Napier and the Admiralty is rich in references to manning problems. Leave was stopped, ships were to accept a reduced number of mates and midshipmen, dockyard riggers and coastguards were drafted into the fleet. Nevertheless, Admiral Berkeley's correspondence showed the desperate situation. On 18 March 1854 he wrote,

> I hope that the *Caesar* will leave Spithead to join you on the 21st and that the *James Watt* will leave Devonport on the same errand on the 26th, then *Prince Regent* and *Majestic*; but men are wanting and it is impossible to say how long it will be before they are completed.

[4]Byam Martin op cit.
[5]Byam Martin op cit.
[6]Earp op cit.
[7]Lewis, op cit.
[8]*Memoir of Sir Henry Ducie Chads, by an old Follower* (Portsea, 1869).

On 30 March,

> Notwithstanding the number of landsmen entered, we are come nearly to a dead stand as to seamen, and after the *James Watt* and *Prince Regent* reach you, I do not know when we shall be able to send you a further reinforcement, for want of men. Something must be done, and done speedily, or there will be a breakdown in our present ricketty system.

On 9 April he went on,

> I hope that the *St George* will now follow the *Cumberland*, but men – men – men – are wanting. The Emperor of Russia should burn his Fleet or try his strength with you, while he must have double your numbers, and while your crews are so miserably raw.[9]

On 27 March Sir Charles Napier had written to Admiral Berkeley with reference to the *Monarch*,

> The *Monarch* is in a most deplorable state; she ought not to have been sent to sea. There is hardly a man in her who knows the ropes. You may suppose I am anxious to be reinforced, as, by all I hear the Russians will be in great force, what with their ships and gunboats. I warn you to beware that, if accidents happen to us for want of men it will be no joke; especially *Ajax* and *Monarch* are badly manned – *Monarch* abominably so. None are fit to go into action as they ought to be. Be sure you send us powder and shot.[10]

In June 1856, Admiral Berkeley in a speech in Parliament admitted, 'We had got to the length of our tether, and what we should have done if we had had a maritime war he really did not know'.

Sir James Graham had himself piloted a bill through the House of Commons some years previously which empowered the government to pay a bounty to men volunteering for naval service and there was a great deal of contemporary opinion in 1854 which saw the use of this time-honoured device as a solution to the problem. Sir Charles Napier appealed for the powers to be brought into effect, only to be told by the First Lord that such suggestions looked to him like 'signs of distress' and that the

[9]Williams, op cit.
[10]Williams, op cit.

recent manning concessions should prove enough to attract men of the right kind. The real difficulty in adopting the obvious course of action of offering a bounty – the law had been designed to meet exactly the Crimean situation – was that it had been so worded as to make it possible for ratings already on board HM ships to claim it and to pay the bounty would therefore have cost the government dear. Butler Earp suggested in his book that half a million pounds might have had to be voted by Parliament on the Admiralty's application.[11]

Sir James Graham actually wrote to Napier instructing him to seek foreign mercenaries for the fleet. Admiral Berkeley pursued the same theme when he wrote, 'Have any of your ships tried for men in a Norwegian port? It is said that you might have any number of good seamen from that country'. This instruction to seek to recruit foreign seamen for service in the fleet was most clearly expressed in a letter to Napier from Sir James Graham of 11 April 1854 when, after discussing the filling of vacancies that would be created in the *Cumberland* by the distribution through the fleet of some of her ratings on promotion, he went on,

> I hope, however, to hear that you have been able to enter them in the Baltic. A proportion of Swedes and Norwegians, or even of Danes, would strengthen you, for they are hardy seamen and brave; and their enmity to Russia is undoubted. The only difficulty will be with their respective Governments; but, if the men enlist freely and come to you outside the harbours I cannot see why you should be over nice and refuse to take on board good seamen without much enquiry as to the places from whence they come.[12]

It would appear that the true function of the Baltic Fleet at the time it set out was seen, realistically, to be to provide a naval presence, but one which was not expected to have to demonstrate its power in large-scale combat. Of the two possible occasions for major operations, one, fleet action with the Russian Navy in which the British steam-screw ships of the line were challenged by the sailing vessels of Russia, was rightly seen to be most unlikely to occur. The other, attack by wooden warships on the forts guarding Kronstadt and St Petersburg with their explosive shell guns, although given the right equipment, armoured gunboats, it might have been the cheapest and quickest way of bringing the war to a rapid and successful conclusion, was again seen, and again rightly, as impracticable with wooden ships of the line.

[11]Earp, op cit.
[12]Williams, op cit.

This view that the Baltic Fleet of 1854 was at the time it was dispatched and before the outbreak of hostilities meant to be no more than a naval presence, able to enforce a blockade in the event of hostilities breaking out, tends to be confirmed by the nature of the orders Napier received before and after sailing. Initially these were in an Admiralty letter of 10 March 1854 to proceed to 'Wingo Sound'. This was in fact Vingå, an anchorage in the vicinity of Göteborg. There the admiral was to wait for further instructions. He was, in the meanwhile, to dispose his fleet so as to preclude the possibility of any Russian ships of war passing out of the Baltic into the North Sea, and to conform in all respects with the instructions contained in a letter, enclosed with the Admiralty's orders, from 'The Earl of Clarendon, Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, signifying the Queen's commands as to the line of conduct to be followed by you in the present state of the relations between this country and Russia'. The letter from the Foreign Secretary to the Admiralty stated, *inter alia*, that,

> Your Lordships are aware that Her Majesty's Government have addressed a summons to that of Russia, and upon the answer which may be returned to that summons the question of peace or war between England and Russia now depends. That answer will not in all probability be received by Her Majesty's Government until the expiration of a fortnight from this time; but, judging from the tenor of a manifesto published by the Emperor of Russia on the 9th of last month, there is unfortunately no reason to suppose that the answer will be otherwise than unfavourable to the maintenance of peace. Nevertheless, until the decision of the Emperor of Russia is made known, Her Majesty's Fleet will not be authorized to assume an attitude of positive hostility to Russia, or to seek occasions for conflict with the fleets of Russia in her own ports. But short of this and in the present state of the relations between the two countries, it will be the duty of Her Majesty's Fleet to take care that no Russian ship of war passes out of the Baltic into the North Sea, where its presence, in the event of war, might be attended with serious inconvenience to the commerce of the country. I need not dwell on the disappointment which would be felt if, by any overstrained forbearance on our part, any portion of the Russian Fleet should be allowed to place itself in a position to inflict injury on British interest on sea or land.
>
> Your Lordships will therefore enjoin Vice-Admiral Sir Charles Napier so to dispose the fleet under his orders as to preclude the possibility of any ships of war passing out of the Baltic into the North Sea. If any Russian ships should attempt to do so before war is declared, Sir Charles Napier would apprise their commanders of his instructions, and, failing to persuade them to abandon their intention, will apply force to compel them to do so.
>
> If any such ship should seek shelter in a neutral port, Sir Charles Napier

will watch them and take such precautions as under these circumstances he may deem sufficient to effect the object contemplated by his instructions.

It will be my duty to give your Lordships the earliest information as to the result of the communication which has been made to the Russian Government.[13]

After the declaration of war on 27 March 1854, Sir James Graham instructed Napier to establish a close blockade of the Gulf of Finland and to prevent the Russian units based on Kronstadt and Sveaborg from joining one another, while at the same time interrupting the trade of Tallin (Revel) in Estonia and Riga in Latvia. At the same time, Graham went on to say specifically:

> I rely on your prudence in not knocking your head against stone walls prematurely, or without the certainty of great success or the fair prospect of obtaining some most important objects worthy of the risk and of the loss, which, when you attack fortresses with ships, are serious and inevitable.[14]

Thus it would certainly seem that at this stage, whatever may have been thought later, it was not the intention of the Government that the fleet that it had sent out, ill-equipped for the purpose as it was, should mount the major operation of an attack on Kronstadt.

When the Baltic Fleet sailed in March there was, as yet, no 'Crimean War'. The precipitate dispatch of the fleet was intended to prevent the Russian Navy breaking out into the North Sea, to convince the Scandinavians and the Germans that we were in earnest, should war break out, and to discourage the Danes in particular from linking themselves with the Russian autocracy. In the public mind there was strong anti-Russian feeling. At many levels the memory of the destruction of the Turkish Fleet at Sinope was regarded almost as a challenge to the very deeply entrenched conception of British naval supremacy.

The Turks had declared war on Russia, the Russian forces had occupied Moldavia and Wallachia, two principalities under the Turkish suzerainty which now largely comprise modern Romania. The British and French Black Sea fleets had entered the Dardanelles at the request of the respective ambassadors in Constantinople. 'At the Sultan's request and in virtue of my instructions' were the words of the British Ambassador, Lord

[13]PRO ADM/5624 and 5625. Reprinted by Navy Records Society (1943) (hereafter NRS 1854 or 1855).
[14]Williams, op cit.

Stratford de Redcliffe. On 3 January 1854 the fleets had entered the Black Sea and the British Fleet had lain at Sinope. At the same time Admiral Menshikov, the Russian naval commander at Sebastopol, had been notified that the Allied navies would protect the Turkish Fleet and Turkish territory and that all Russian warships at sea would be compelled to return to a Russian port.

Even with this provocation the Russians did not declare war, but the Russian ambassadors in Paris and London were instructed to ask the governments to which they were accredited whether they would protect both Russia and Turkey equally. When the Russian Ambassador at the Court of St James spoke to Lord Aberdeen, the latter admitted that the fleet had secret instructions to help the Turks and to 'favour the Turkish flag'. Aberdeen reproached himself for sending the fleet into the Dardanelles and for having, greatly against his own inclinations, led Britain to the verge of war. Diplomatic relations between Britain and France on the one hand and Russia on the other were then broken off.

The next stage in the relentless progress towards war was a letter from the Emperor Napoleon to Tzar Nicholas in which the Emperor asserted that attempts to bring about peace had failed because of the Russian occupation of Moldavia and Wallachia and because of the battle of Sinope, which had been an outrage and an affront to the military honour of France and Britain. He proposed that Russia should withdraw from the Principalities and that the Anglo-French fleets leave the Black Sea, after which there should be a four-part conference. The Tzar's conciliatory reply neither declared war nor accepted the French proposal. On 27 February a summons was sent to Russia to demand that she should, within a week, agree to withdraw her forces from the two Principalities by the end of April – the French stipulated the middle of that month. This ultimatum contained no reference to peace terms. In the words of Bernadot Schmitt, a most thorough historian of the events of this period,

> the truth is, the French and British Governments in February, 1854, did not desire peace . . . it is clear that she (Russia) was not given a last opportunity to accept the terms of peace acceptable alike to Turkey and to the powers.[15]

Britain and France declared war on 27 and 28 March respectively, Russia at last responded on 11 April. The day before, a Treaty of Alliance had been signed between Britain and France. Turkey acceded to it five days later.

[15]B E Schmitt, *American Historical Review*, (October 1919) quoted by Curtiss, op cit.

In June a British and French military force which had been assembled at Gallipoli on the north side of the entrance to the Dardanelles was moved to an area of flat land inland of the port of Varna in what is now Bulgaria, not far south of the Danube delta. From here, it was to operate against the left flank of the Russian army when it advanced beyond the town of Silistria on the Danube, on what is now the frontier between Bulgaria and Romania. The town lay in the way of the Russian advance south and was under siege. However, the Russians raised their siege and withdrew in the face of Austrian pressure.

There was nothing for the British army to do. It had been sent to aid the Turks against the Russian advance south across the Danube. It had been hastily raised and equipped for a short summer campaign. By now it was in very poor shape, riddled with cholera and other forms of sickness and it was clear that it was inadequately equipped, badly organized, incompetently officered and in no way fit for a prolonged operation.

However, there was still a good deal of summer left and there was Sebastopol, the base of Russian seapower in the south and the home of the fleet which had triumphed at Sinope against one of Britain's friends – however strange it might seem that the corrupt and decaying Turkish Empire was one of those friends. Public opinion in Britain demanded the destruction of Sebastopol and of the Russian Black Sea Fleet, and so did naval thinking. Sir James Graham expressed his views in a letter to Sir Edmund Lyons, second in command of the Black Sea Fleet, on 13 June when he wrote,

> I am of your opinion that no decisive blow will have been struck by the allied Powers in the East while Sebastopol remains intact and the Russian Fleet unassailed. . . . Sebastopol is the point to which our views and ultimate efforts should be directed, and I am persuaded that you will never lose sight of it. Every preparation should be quietly made which is necessary to the success of disembarkation in the Crimea; so that if at any moment the opportunity should present itself the means may not be wanting.

Again on 2 July, he wrote,

> My fixed purpose from which I have never swerved is the capture of Sebastopol, and the destruction of the enemy's fleet. . . . The choice of the best place for disembarkation in the Crimea is a matter of great urgency. . . .[16]

[16]Eardley-Wilmot, op cit.

With such a powerful influence so persistently at work, it is not surprising that in late June a Cabinet of which, according to Kinglake's canard, half the members were possibly asleep, agreed the drafts of a private letter from the Secretary for War, the Duke of Newcastle, to the Commander-in-Chief at Varna, Lord Raglan, and of an official dispatch instructing him, 'unless . . . you should be decidedly of opinion that it cannot be undertaken with a reasonable prospect of success',[17] to lay siege to Sebastopol. Given this degree of discretion, and bearing in mind the state of the British army and the fact that the British and French commanders had to agree to the landings in Russia, it is perhaps not surprising that, despite Graham's urgings – he wrote to Sir Edmund Lyons on 4 September saying of Sebastopol, 'If this grand attack be indefinitely postponed, nothing will be left for me but to retire with shame and disgrace from a post where I have failed to command the service which this nation has a right to expect'[18] – it took until September before the landings in the Crimea were actually made. Although the opposition the allied armies met was significantly less than it would have been had the Baltic Fleet not been holding substantial Russian forces in the north, the raid soon turned into a long siege. It was rapidly apparent that the ill-equipped and worse-organized army was there for the winter. The tragedy of the Crimea had begun.

When the Baltic Sea fleet sailed all this was six months away. There was no Crimea, only a general war with Russia in the immediate offing. Though the Government appear to have thought otherwise, to the public the Baltic Fleet was the centre of action. As the summer went on and no action developed elsewhere this opinion became stronger and the controversy as to what might be achieved by the fleet, as opposed to what it was equipped and intended to achieve, grew to the point at which the Aberdeen Government was driven to deny its own intentions and make the fleet a pawn in the game for its own survival. In this it was greatly assisted by the personality of Sir Charles Napier, whose increasingly schizoid behaviour and general unpopularity gave the Government an easy scapegoat. And yet, in fact, the fleet achieved a very great deal. Had it not been there, bad as things were in the Crimea, they could have been worse to the point of defeat.

What was the Russian view of all this? The Russian answer to the British ultimatum was as might be expected in the circumstances, to the effect that the Tzar did not judge it proper to give any reply to the letter of

[17]Christopher Hibbert, *The Destruction of Lord Raglan* (London 1961).
[18]Eardley-Wilmot, op cit.

Lord Clarendon. Russian plans for an advance on Constantinople down the Balkan peninsula, starting with the occupation of Moldavia and Wallachia and the siege of Silistria as vital stages in bringing about a Turkish defeat, were dependent on Austrian neutrality. To a degree they depended also on the assumption that Serbian and Bulgarian subjects of the Turkish Empire would rise in revolt against their masters. The Russian campaign towards Silistria was led half-heartedly by a field-marshall who feared the danger to Russia of Austrian intervention. Austrian hostility to Russian war plans was based on the necessity to Austria of control of the Danube and on the large numbers of Slavs in the Austro/Hungarian Empire who might, if the Serbs and Bulgars rose against the Turks, equally well rise against their Austrian rulers. It was the fear of war with Austria which forced the Russian army to withdraw from the Danube. While the raid on the Crimea and the siege of Sebastopol went on, and the Allied fleets blockaded the coasts of Finland and Baltic Russia, discussions and feelers towards peace went on continuously, mainly in Vienna; but a very great deal was to happen before peace was achieved some two years later.

By April, the fleet had arrived at the gateway of the Baltic and, in the words of Curtiss,

> The St Petersburg/Kronstadt area, the seat of the Russian Government, was vital to the nation's functioning. Hence the Emperor and his advisers massed great numbers of troops there which, if sent to the Crimea, might have ensured a Russian victory. If only a quarter of the 200,000 regular troops with their vast supplies of ammunition and cannon had gone to Sebastopol, the Russians probably could have withstood the Allied attack there. Although the British and French Fleets left the Baltic in August and September 1854, the authorities, because of the lack of railways, sent few of the Russian troops to the south, so they fully expected that in 1855 there would be another, stronger attack on their Baltic defences.[19]

The Russian authorities did what they could to prepare for the coming onslaught. The Grand Duke Constantine, second son of Tzar Nicholas I, was appointed as the Commander-in-Chief of the Baltic Fleet. Inspections of the condition of coastal fortifications were at once begun and the Grand Duke himself visited Sveaborg in February 1854 in what was described by a contemporary as a 'dreadfully rigorous inquisition'. It was found that many guns were unusable and some of them dated back even to the days when Finland was part of Sweden before the Napoleonic Wars. Hand guns were

[19]Curtiss, op cit.

out of date, powder was damp and neglected. Embezzlement and maladministration were prevalent. As for the fleet itself, it was hardly seaworthy. As with the British, the senior officers were all of advanced age.

Prince Menshikov was the Governor-General of Finland at the time and as he was the Commander-in-Chief in the Crimea an acting Governor-General, Rokasovski was given 'in view of the present political circumstances' full powers and authority, but he did not last long. He supervised the defence of Finland in 1854 and then tended his resignation.

In March the Tzar himself visited Finland. Defensive works were then going on everywhere. Over a thousand men were working at Sveaborg and guns were being cast at the foundry at Dahlsbruk at the rate of two a day. Forty gunboats were under construction. Troops with guns and baggage were being dispersed by road all over the country. Soon people began to bury their treasures or send them into the interior from the coast and when they could they moved into the interior themselves. A business depression began with a fall in exchange rates and rising inflation. Wages increased and there was a shortage of provisions. All coastal lighthouses were extinguished and the navigational markings of the complex channels of the archipelago either removed or deliberately displaced.

A 'second Finnish marine corps' consisting of 500 men was formed to serve on the 40 gunboats which were being built, and in the fortresses the Russian garrisons were increased, often, however, under Finnish commanders. At least half of the Finnish merchant fleet, probably more, was outside the Baltic and the Press urged shipowners either to sail their vessels home quickly or to re-register them in neutral ports or to sell them. Because of the contraction in the size of the merchant fleet, the Russian authorities had no difficulty in manning the new gunboats, though there were difficulties in communication between the Finnish and Swedish-speaking crews and their Russian officers. It was announced that everyone who lived on the coast was duty bound by their oath of allegiance to report enemy movements and that the Governors and Director-General of the Pilot Service would pay rewards for reports made in time about enemy operations, as well as for removing any navigation marks the enemy might lay down themselves. Telegraph lines were run along the north shore of the Gulf of Finland; in 1854 from Kronstadt to Hanko (Hangö) and in the following year right through to Uusikaupunki (Nystad) via Turku (Åbo). The little relay posts manned by a single telegraphist were to provide practice targets from time to time for British ships off the coast. A chain of observation posts was set up along the entire Finnish coast, each post containing five men and horses, two of which were always saddled.

By the spring of 1854 the troops, principally Russian, in Finland amounted, according to Borodkin,[20] to 24½ battalions, six squadrons and 36 cannon. In June 1854, Borodkin reports, General Rokasovski, then Acting Governor-General of Finland, submitted to the Tzar the proposal that a national defence force of Finns should be created. He said:

> There is no doubt that the enemy will seize on every opportunity of making the people of the coastal areas of Finland waiver in their feelings of duty and loyalty . . . [A national defence force would form] a powerful obstacle not so much physically as morally. To drive the enemy back is a natural wish. When the people have their own sons and brothers among these troops, they too must sincerely wish them success.[21]

A small national defence force was set up with limited conscription, each battalion consisting of 16 officers and 719 NCOs and men. The Russians had great difficulty organizing the defence of Finland's long coast and detachments of troops had to be moved from one place to another as circumstances demanded. The British enemy with their steamships could slip in and out of the inlets of the deeply indented coast with ease; sailing vessels of any size could scarcely operate there. Of 32 cities and towns on the coast some 21 were vulnerable to enemy attack. As Borodkin wrote,

> The archipelago, with its intricate shipping channels, ought to have been a serious obstacle to this, but the British overcame the attendant difficulties, partly by their experience in everything to do with the sea, and, unfortunately, also with the co-operation of native Finnish pilots. The British resorted to both violence and cunning in order to get hold of such men. According to contemporary accounts they acquired a number of pilots in the following manner.
>
> As early as the autumn of 1853, a mysterious person arrived in Helsinki, representing himself as an ichthyologist, with a letter of recommendation to the university. On the pretext of occupying himself with the fishery, he lured many pilots, with whom he left for England the same autumn. It is also known that a native Finn who happened to be in Stockholm pointed out on a chart for the British a channel from Porvoo (Borgå) to Helsinki, along which it was possible to approach the capital without having to pass Sveaborg. It sometimes happened that British vessels ran aground when being sailed by their own crews, although the proud sons of Albion were extremely careful to keep such occurrences secret.[22]

[20]Borodkin, op cit.
[21]Borodkin, op cit.
[22]Ibid.

It was very difficult for the higher Russian command to prescribe in any detail the operating methods that detachments posted along the coast were to employ. These men had as their first job the protection of the coastal towns and the organization to this end of a good system of patrols. This job was done by the Cossacks and the Hussars and with the co-operation of the civilian population who, particularly after the British raids in the Gulf of Bothnia which will be described later, were very ready to report the movements of British shipping to the military command and to the civilian authorities.

A good example of local defensive preparations is provided by the action taken at the town of Närpes on the Bothnian coast. Russian troops were moved in and quartered on the local population, who had to provide space for beds, a bathing place and wood for stoves. The people were given detailed instructions not to graze sheep and cattle on the outer skerries where the enemy could easily take them and to keep a constant watch for enemy ships while 'His Imperial Majesty, in his Grace, consented to the peasantry forming armed bands, and to such an extent as they had a mind to do'.[23] Villages near the coast were to organize their own coastguard service and to report the numbers of boats which could be used, their crews, how many men could be made available to repel landings and to state their requirements for weapons and ammunition.

In Närpes the pastor convened a parish meeting, under instruction from the Archbishop, in order to persuade the local people to do what they were told, since despite the polite wording of the Imperial message it was recognized that failure to comply would be taken as an act against the government. There was some reluctance among the good people of Närpes, but in the end the whole sub-county agreed and provided the necessary information and the demands for ammunition and provisions. They added a rider:

> Unaccustomed to warlike operations, and lacking any experienced Commander, the dwellers urged the rejection of any armed resistance, ardent as they were in spirit to effect this. However, to show their devotion to a highly-loved Monarch and their loyalty to the Fatherland, they declared themselves willing and ready, under the leadership of one to be chosen by themselves, to offer armed resistance to the enemy as may be necessary and in so far as military force was to be expected.[24]

[23]K I Nordlund, *Blad ur Närpes Historia, Part III* (Vaasa, 1931).
[24]Ibid.

In June 1854 an Imperial edict sought to re-impose a very limited form of conscription by lot. This was much resented and in Närpes there was open grumbling against it. Nevertheless, the parish had to find 51 temporary soldiers. These were billeted in the huts beside the church which had been built as accommodation for people from outlying farms coming in to church in winter with their horses. These 'church stables' are still standing today.

According to Borodkin,[25] for a long time the Russian authorities believed that the British and French would land near Helsinki and then in considerable force take possession of the road to St Petersburg, capture Porvoo (Borgå) and march on Hamina (Frederikshamn) and Viipuri (Viborg). It was believed that operations of this kind would be linked with the provoking of revolt in Poland.

[25]Borodkin, op cit.

9

The Fleet Sails

Lord Clarence Paget, eldest son of Lord Anglesey by his second marriage, was a naval officer holding the appointment of Secretary to the Board of Ordnance under the Master-General of Ordnance, who was none other than Lord Raglan, appointed Commander of the British Army's Expeditionary Force to the Black Sea area. Entering the navy in 1823, Paget had been present at the Battle of Navarino. His 'interest' was strong and he was a commander by 1834 and a post-captain five years later. He was a very good-looking man, accomplished and something of a linguist (though not in Swedish) and he was almost continuously employed until he retired as an admiral in 1868. He was made Secretary to the Ordnance Board in 1846 and had been a Member of Parliament for Sandwich since 1847. In October 1853 he was offered the command of the *Princess Royal*, a steam-screw ship of the line of 91 guns with an engine of 400 horse power, laid down as a sailing vessel but completed (after twelve years on the stocks) as a steamer in 1853.

The offer of the command was made formally by Sir James Graham in person. According to Paget's autobiography, Graham summoned him to the Admiralty to tell him that as political affairs between Britain and Russia were in such an unsatisfactory state, the Government had decided to strengthen the naval forces. The First Lord told Paget that, 'I should like you to be in command of a heavy line of battleship, for there is a great scarcity of seamen and it will be of no use commissioning ships unless we appoint popular officers to command them.'[1] Paget was a sensible and humane man who took account of changing social ideas. In this respect he seems to have been well ahead of many of his contemporaries in the navy. During the time he was post-captain of the *Princess Royal* with a very mixed crew of 850 men, he managed without flogging.

[1]*Autobiography and Journals of Admiral Lord Clarence E Paget, GCB*, (London 1896). It is to be borne in mind that the passages in Paget's *Baltic Journal* of 1854 were edited by Paget's brother-in-law, Sir Arthur Otway, and some material eliminated.

His autobiography makes very clear the difficulties the navy met with in manning the fleet:

> Sure enough there was a scarcity, indeed almost an absence of seamen. However, with assistance of several valuable officers who were appointed to the ship, and by dint of handbills and touting of all sorts, we managed to enter at the average of 20 to 30 per week, such as they were. Scarcely any of them had been in a man-of-war, and consequently they were entirely ignorant of the management of great guns and muskets; and we set to work rigging, etc in good earnest. . . . Important as I considered the fitment of the ship, I nevertheless kept parties of 30 and 40 men at gun drill all day long, with a view to being ready to make a decent defence when we got into the Channel.
>
> I had named 1 March as the earliest period I could get the ship to Spithead, but the Admiralty were so anxious to make a show, that we were forced out on the 15 February; and a very pretty mess we made of it. . . .
>
> Daily did we practise at the target, and what with the noise of the guns, and the hammers of the artificers, of whom there were about 100 on board, for a fortnight we were in the confusion of Babel; but still we could not get men, men, men! I wrote and wrote to the Admiralty, stating that if they did not assist me by placing 200 coastguard on board, I should be taken by the first Russian frigate we fell in with. This really alarmed their Lordships, and eventually they completed me with that number, many of whom are admirable, but alas! some have since turned out to be worn out and very useless folk.

Captain Lord Clarence Paget recorded, 'I nevertheless kept parties of 30 and 40 men at gun drill all day long, with a view to being ready to make a decent defence when we got into the Channel'. This drawing is titled Gunnery Practice – Firing on Board the St Jean d'Acre. Illustrated London News

By the 27 February we had repaired our engines and got them up to try speed at the measured mile in Stokes Bay, when lo! bump ashore we got in the middle. We had not been there half an hour before a vessel sprightly approached with an admiral's flag at the fore. It was no less a person than Sir Charles Napier, the Commander-in-chief of the Baltic Fleet, come to hoist his Flag for the first time on board the *Princess Royal*. I had slightly known him for many years, and was one of those who highly disapproved of his conduct in Syria, in 1840, consequently, I did not augur well for the future; but I consoled myself with the feeling that, at all events, he was an old gamecock, and would do his country credit if he went into action. Finding the ship hard and fast, he had nothing for it but to remain quietly on board, and dine and sleep; I shall never forget our tete-a-tete conversation that evening. He began by lighting his cigar, and saying that he had a deuce of a job in hand, to go into an enemy's waters and attack a force, numerically superior, and of greater efficiency than our own – for at this time we only expected to produce 12 or 13 screw-liners, and three of four sailing ditto; in fact, as he said, with a raw squadron to attack an efficient fleet in their own waters. But he added that we must on no account turn our backs, however inferior to the Russian Fleet; and by the time he had finished half a dozen cigars, he had informed me of such bloodthirsty resolves that what with them and the thick tobacco smoke, I slept little that night. . . .

Meantime, he issued an order from the *Princess Royal*, that the men were to be practised daily at the guns, and that there was to be an unlimited allowance of powder and shot. Day after day the ships began to tumble into Spithead, and we had commenced blazing away, so that it really was with no small risk that boats communicated with the ships – in fact, there were several accidents by shot and shell. Meantime every possible exertion was used to complete the crews, so much so that by 10 March we had assembled at Spithead a force consisting of 11 line-of-battleships, of which eight were screw, besides a host of frigates and small craft, some fairly and some indifferently manned.

A good deal of saluting took place, of course, when the Queen came to look at the fleet, and I had to deliver several rounds of cheers to Her Majesty as she passed under our bows to look at the figurehead – a likeness to her own daughter.

On Saturday, the 11th, the signal was made for the fleet to weigh under sail alone, and we made a very respectable start under single reefs and topgallant sails, passing in succession the Queen at the trial; and we formed two columns, the weather being composed, of the *Duke*, *St Jean d'Acre*, *Princess Royal*, and *Royal George*; the lee under Admiral Chads, of the *Edinburgh*, *Blenheim*, *Hogue* and *Ajax*; and so we sailed to the Downs from whence we weighed on Monday, the 13th, for the Baltic . . .

The weather throughout our passage across the North Sea was most favourable, and enabled us to make good progress with the guns, muskets, etc to which our whole time and attention were directed; and well it was that the

weather favoured us, for if we had had a gale of wind, with our raw ships' companies, we should have been in a sad mess. But though separated in a fog on the 15th, we all made our way into Wingo Sound (a safe anchorage in the Cattegatt, on the coast of Norway), by the 19th, the *Princess Royal* having got there on the 17th.[2]

It had not been easy to get the fleet to sea. Commodore (as he now was) Byam Martin's private journal again provides some illumination:

> Admiral Sir Hyde Parker then came into the room. Parker told Sir James [Graham] that we must make the fleet sail on Saturday, *at the latest*. 'You will have great difficulty in starting Napier, but, by God, you must *make* him go.'[3]

Captain George Giffard was a more typical career officer. His account of the first days of the campaign published in his autobiography has a slightly different emphasis, and, though he did not get the name right, he knew that Vingå was off the coast of Sweden:

> On the 13 March the Fleet left the Downs in a hurry for the Baltic, report stating that orders had been sent by some mistake. However, by the help of steam we were at anchor in Wingo Sound on the 17th in spite of the fogs which delayed some of the ships, with the Commander-in-Chief, till the next day. Here we were constantly exercised at the guns firing at targets, Sundays not excepted. We were unable to visit Gottenburg, twelve miles from Wingo, but received supplies of all kinds from the hospitable Swedes . . . On the 23 March the fleet left Wingo Sound for the Great Belt, the weather cold and ice on the water; we were employed till the 27th placing ships near the different shoals to mark them, and on that day led the fleet through the Great Belt, and anchored in Kiel Bay, some miles from shore. 29 March, proceeded to mark the shoals by anchoring the small ships, and the fleet passed in safety on the 31st, and anchored in Kioge Bay, six or seven miles off shore, on 1 April, foggy weather. Monday 3rd, heavy NW gale. On Tuesday, 4 April, the Commander-in-Chief amused us with the following signal, more of the 'Napier', than the 'Nelson' type. '*Lads*, war is declared with a bold and numerous foe to meet. If they offer us battle, you know how to dispose of them. Should they remain in port, we must try to get at them. Success depends on the quickness and precision of your fire. Also lads, sharpen your cutlasses and the day is your own.' I leave to the imagination of the reader, the effect of this bombastic signal on the Fleet.[4]

[2]Otway, op cit.
[3]Byam Martin, op cit.
[4]Giffard, op cit.

Commodore Byam Martin has an interesting comment on the origins of this signal. He wrote in his journal,

> Napier's signal about 'sharpen your cutlasses . . . lads' was far from being a sudden thought or the inspiration of a moment. Buchanan tells me he was two days twisting and changing it, and that it was quite a work of consideration and consultation – Someone suggested that the sharpening of cutlasses had somewhat of the butcher style – 'Hut mon – that's just the path o' it.'[5]

It is, however, important to remember that Napier's signal was directed not to the officers of the fleet but to the men of the lower decks, whose reactions were likely to be quite different. Such evidence as there is suggests that in some ships it was enthusiastic. One of the disadvantages the historian suffers in examining this campaign is the overwhelming silence of the majority. There appears to be no voice from the lower deck.

The background to these manoeuvres was complex. Napier's orders from the Admiralty had instructed him solely 'to proceed with the ships under your orders to Wingo Sound and to wait there for further instructions.' The way there and on through the Great Belt to the Baltic had already been surveyed by Captain Hall in the *Hecla*. He was not authorized to sail through Danish waters or to enter the Baltic. On the other hand, Lord Clarendon's letter to the Admiralty of 9 March 1854, already quoted, (page 117), which was sent to Napier under cover of the Admiralty Orders stated quite clearly

> the accounts which have been received in this country represent the ports of the Baltic to be in great measure free from ice; and I have therefore to signify to your Lordships the Queen's commands, that Her Majesty's fleet under the orders of Vice Admiral Sir Charles Napier should proceed forthwith and take up a position near the entrance into that Sea, from which it may be able to give effect, without loss of time, to such further orders as Her Majesty may direct to be conveyed to it

Lord Clarendon's letter went on:

> Your Lordships will therefore enjoin Vice Admiral Sir Charles Napier so to dispose the fleet under his orders as to preclude the possibility of any Russian ships of war passing out of the Baltic into the North Sea.[6]

[5]Byam Martin op cit.
[6]PRO ADM/5623–5625 Admiralty correspondence.

At the same time as he had received these instructions Napier also received a sealed dispatch, to be opened 'after crossing the parallel of the 55th degree of north latitude'. This instructed him, 'You will take care to respect strictly the neutrality of Sweden and Denmark; and to use your utmost endeavours to maintain the most friendly relations with the governments of those countries, enjoining the ships under your orders to be careful not to give any cause of offence . . .'

In these circumstances Napier was justified in being irritated on receiving from the Admiralty a request for an explanation as to why he had left 'Wingo Sound' without further instructions from them. Moreover, he had a diplomatic function to fulfil.

Captain Codrington of the *Royal George* summed it up well in a letter to his sister of 25 March,

> You saw the feeling of our countrymen in England by the way in which every steam boat or sailing boat kept cheering as they passed . . . from Spithead to the Downs and Ramsgate. At Wingo Sound the same thing occurred when the Swedish steamers and boats came down from Gothenburg to see the Squadron. They cheered and waved handkerchiefs lustily. The Danes will have no such feeling; two previous visits of English armaments having left unpleasant recollections for them.[7]

Captain Henry Codrington was the third son of Admiral Sir Edward Codrington who had commanded his ship at Trafalgar. He himself entered the navy in 1823, was wounded at Navarino and present at Acre, having been made post-captain in 1836 at the age of 28. He died a knighted admiral of the fleet, having been Commander-in-Chief Devonport in the 1860s. He emerges from his correspondence as a sensitive and intelligent officer.

There was a pro-Russian element in the upper strata of Danish society, and the presence of a British fleet in Danish waters would encourage the Danish government to maintain its position of neutrality. There was still an ill-informed fear among the British that the Russians might get there first, although in fact the Russian Fleet was still rendered completely immobile by the ice of the middle Baltic. So great was this concern that on the 19 March 1854, only a day after reaching Vingå Sound, Charles Napier steamed to Copenhagen in the paddle-steamer *Valorous*. From Copenhagen, Napier wrote to Sir James Graham,

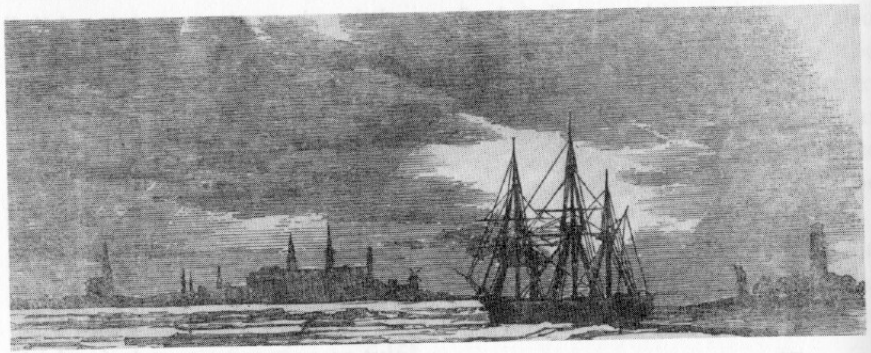
> By all I learn the Russians are fast at Sweabourg (sic), and I hope will remain until we get away to Kiel or the neighbourhood . . . I leave tomorrow morning and hope to find the fleet coaled, and, weather permitting, I shall leave Wingo on Wednesday morning.
>
> I've not been able to get pilots either here or at Elsinore, but I hope they have found some in the neighbourhood of Wingo; but, if not, I shall place our paddle-steamers in the dangerous places and proceed under steam like a string of wild geese – the smallest vessels first . . . I hear the Russians are anxious to get a division of their Fleet from Kronstadt to reinforce the division at Sweaborg, but I hope to prevent that . . . A number of small steamers are absolutely necessary for dispatches, for fire vessels, and also to protect us from fire vessels, as, by all I hear, the Russians will be enterprising . . . I have outside of us at present three steamers, but that is not enough –[8]

[7]NMM *Codrington Papers*.

The actual passage through the Belt proved difficult. (The Belt was chosen rather than the Sound, the passage between Denmark and Sweden which is today used by almost all shipping entering and leaving the Baltic, because it was believed that the Great Belt was deeper than the Sound and easier to navigate for a fleet of large sailing ships.) They had no local pilots and the weather became so bad at one stage that the vessels had to strike topmasts; that is, to send down their topgallant and topmasts in order to reduce the enormous windage presented by the spars and rigging of these big square-rigged ships. This operation involved the dismantling of rigging of great complexity and the movement of considerable weights far aloft and would today only be undertaken with the aid of scaffolding in a dockyard.

During the passage through the Great Belt, the fleet was joined by the screw frigate *Miranda*, which had been dispatched to the Baltic some days before the departure of the fleet in an attempt to determine the location of the three divisions of the Russian Baltic Fleet. *Miranda* under Captain Edmund Lyons, son of the second-in-command of the Black Sea Fleet, and later to be tragically killed there, had pushed her way to the limit of her capability through ice floes and had managed to reconnoitre Tallinn (Revel) and Paldiski (Baltic Port), ascertaining that there were no ships of war in either port. The fleet was also shortly after joined by the *Lightning*, Captain Sulivan, which was to play a very important part as the campaign developed. She had been sent as a surveying ship in view of the inadequate information available about the complexities of the reefs and channels of the Finnish coast. Much of Sir Charles Napier's correspondence at this time is concerned with the shortage of pilots, first in the North Sea and then for the channels through Danish waters into the Baltic, and he bemoaned continuously the shortage of pilots for Finnish waters. Nevertheless, when Captain Sulivan reported to

[8]Williams, op cit.



The screw frigate Miranda, *Captain Edmund Lyons, with topgallant and royal yards sent down, lying in the ice off the island of Nargen on the Estonian coast and in sight of the towers and spires of the old town of Tallin (Revel).* Illustrated London News

him on board the *Duke of Wellington* anchored with the fleet in Kiel Bay and handed over his appointment 'for surveying and pilotage duties', Napier's reaction was to say 'I do not know what you have come out for, or what is the use of a surveying ship, unless to make a fire vessel of'.[9] The *Lightning* in fact, although a tiny vessel in comparison with the great screw line-of-battleships, had a full post-captain in command who already had a most distinguished record in hydrographic and surveying work, and also three surveying officers. Nonetheless, at first the *Lightning* was used as a message carrier from ship to ship, sent out in search of supplies and, in the words of Admiral G S Ritchie, the historian of the hydrographic service,

> Most humiliating of all, ordered to Swedish ports to collect indifferent pilots when the excellent Russian charts which had been supplied to the fleets by the Hydrographer were completely adequate for navigation, except in the narrow waters and anchorages where *Lightning* should have been busily employed.[10]

The navy's failure to make use of the vast pool of knowledge of Baltic navigation available in a merchant shipping industry which had been trading with Sweden, Finland and the Baltic States for two centuries is difficult to understand. There was more than a germ of sense in W S Lindsay's comment on the situation,

> . . . let us dispatch at once, in a steamer after the fleet, for distribution among the ships, some twenty or thirty north country skippers. Abundance of

[9]G S Ritchie *The Admiralty Chart* (London, 1967).
[10]Ibid.

> volunteers can be found, who have traded all their lives in these seas; who know every inch of the ground, and every bay and headland along the coast.[11]

On 2 April the decision was taken to send Admiral Plumridge with an advance squadron of paddle-steamers to reconnoitre the entrance to the Gulf of Finland. The *Leopard*, the *Imperieuse*, the *Tribune*, the *Dauntless* were dispatched to examine the ice, the anchorage, and fortifications at Hangö, and to make sure that the Russian fleet was still frozen up in Suomenlinna (Sveaborg) and to examine Tallinn (Revel). During the conference on board the flagship at which it was decided to send out these ships, Captain Sulivan managed to catch Admiral Plumridge's eye with the result that the *Lightning* accompanied them and was able to begin to gain her reputation as a solution to the pilotage problem by surveying Fårö Sound at the north end of the island of Gotland and establishing that there was there an excellent inner harbour, not shown on the contemporary chart, which would make an admirable base for the colliers which would have to serve the fleet.

George Giffard, in command of the *Leopard*, records the result of the reconnaissance in the Gulf of Finland:

> Fresh NW gales and snow, and on the 8 April, closed the ice off Helsingfors, observed the spire of Revel church, in passing 1 p.m. Made out the Russian fleet of seven large ships and eleven smaller, moored between the beacons of Grohara and Miclo, about 14 miles distant. The solid ice field about one mile distant, extending to the shore, on each side of the Gulf. Wore round to rejoin Squadron off Dago Island.
>
> There were several vessels we might have captured closed in with the ice, but I could not induce the Admiral to go nearer. On the 9th we captured a Russian bark, which after long argument, I convinced the Admiral it was his duty to retain; he had a strange idea, that the Order in Council allowed all enemy's ships six weeks from the declaration of war, to rejoin their ports, though it was plain that the clause referred to vessels leaving British ports only. I now felt the misery of having an Admiral on board my ship ignorant of the powers of steam, and who, though personally brave, was in constant dread of fogs, rocks, and enemy's gunboats. On the 10 April proceeded into Hango Bay, to the entrance to the harbour, observed the castle and forts in good order, and heavily armed, and several small vessels in the port. Returned and anchored outside for the night, and lifted the cylinder covers, to screw down the packing, and while working hard, about midnight, several heavy explosions were heard on shore. The poor old Admiral rushed on deck, and ordered the anchor to be weighed at once, declaring it was the signal for gunboats to attack us. As it was calm at the time, I begged him to wait until

[11]E H Nolan, *Illustrated History of the War Against Russia* (London, 1857).

we could get up steam, as the ship would only drift about, but the gunboat 'Phobia' was too much for him, and we got under weigh, and drifted about till the engines were ready and steam up, and on the 13th joined the Commander-in-Chief and the fleet off Bornholm.[12]

There was some excuse for Admiral Plumridge's horror of gunboats. As a lieutenant in the *Melpomene* in 1809 he had played his part in the repulse of 20 Danish gunboats which had shot her to pieces and killed and wounded 31 of her crew.

The outbreak of war was followed rapidly by new orders to the Baltic Fleet. On 29 March 1854, the Duke of Newcastle in his capacity as Secretary for War wrote from the War Department to the Admiralty to inform them that,

> At a Council held this day, the Queen was pleased to pass orders of general reprisals against the Emperor of Russia; and I am commanded by Her Majesty to instruct your Lordships to send out, without delay, orders to Vice-Admiral Sir Charles Napier, the Commander of Her Majesty's Naval Forces in the Baltic, directing him to proceed from Kiel to the entrance to the Gulf of Finland, so soon as the breaking up of the ice will permit, and he has a sufficient force under his command to undertake hostile operations. . . . I have to request that you will direct him, in the first instance, to establish a strict blockade of the Gulf of Finland, and at the same time to pay particular attention to the state and fortified condition of the islands of Åland, and to ascertain the exact strength of the garrison of Bomarsund and the nature of its approaches; but you will particularly enjoin upon him that his principal object must be to prevent the Russian Fleet from passing his line of blockade, having first clearly ascertained that he has let no Russian ships in his rear which could pass through the Sound or the Belt.
>
> Care being thus taken that the whole of the enemy's fleet is in front of his line, he will endeavour to cut off all supplies from Finland to the Island of Åland, and having obtained accurate surveys, and taken careful soundings of the channels in the neighbourhood, he will report to Her Majesty's Government his opinion whether the fortress of Bomarsund is open to attack, and if so, what amount of military force will be required to ensure its success.
>
> Your Lordships will further instruct Sir Charles Napier to look into Revel and other fortified places on the Russian coast in the rear of his line of blockade; but I am unable to give positive instructions as to any attack upon them. This, in the absence of present information, must be left in great measure to his discretion.
>
> It is Her Majesty's anxious desire that the interests of humanity should be regarded in the war upon which Great Britain has now entered, to the fullest extent which its operations will admit; and I am to request your Lordships to give positive orders to Sir Charles Napier to respect private property wherever it can be spared, without a sacrifice of the objects of the war, and on no account to attack defenceless places and open towns, but to confine his efforts to the reduction of forts and batteries; and, above all, to endeavour to cripple to the utmost of his power the enemy's fleet.[13]

[12]Giffard, op cit.

This document set the scene for everything that followed. It gave positive instructions with regard to Bomarsund, the blockade and the respect of private property. It left to Sir Charles Napier's discretion the question of attacking the Russian bases.

Sir Charles Napier had taken his fleet into Kioge, instead of Kiel as he originally intended, in the belief, he said later, that he was better placed in the southern Danish islands to prevent any attempt by the Russian fleet to break out of the Baltic than he would have been had he been based on Kiel. On the declaration of war, some frigates and small vessels were immediately sent to blockade Riga and the west coast of what later was to become Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, and to establish a line of blockade between Bornholm and the south shore of the Baltic. There was great speculation as to the whereabouts of the Russian fleet; despite Captain Lyons' reconnaissance, there were still rumours that part of the fleet was in Revel. There were other rumours that the fleet from Revel had gone into Helsinki at the beginning of the winter and yet others that the whole fleet had been concentrated at Kronstadt.

But there was one matter which was never satisfactorily cleared up and which, fortunately for Admiral Napier, never broke in the contemporary Press. Admiral Plumridge during his reconnaissance of the Gulf of Finland had specific instructions from Napier not to approach near enough to Helsinki for the enemy to be able to determine the size of his force. Captain Giffard's account of the reconnaissance has already been quoted, and it is apparent from this that he was of the view that the seven Russian line of battleships and 11 smaller seen 'at about 14 miles distant' were outside the harbour, that is outside the channels through the fortifications of Sveaborg, frozen in the ice, having been caught there by the onset of the preceding winter. Indeed, he was quite specific in his account, stating that the Russian ships were 'moored between the beacons of Grohara and Miclo'. These are corruptions of Gråhara and Mjölö, the old Swedish names for the islands of Harmaja and Kuivasaari which lie to the south off the entrance to Helsinki and right by the south channel into the harbour.

[13]NRS, 1854.

Whatever else he may have been, George Giffard was a most competent seaman, brought up in the high tradition of wooden sailing vessels. Such men became masters of the art of identifying other vessels distantly seen and of fixing their positions. It is most unlikely that Giffard was wrong in his identification and his exact placing of the Russian vessels.

Admiral Plumridge reported that they were 'hull down' to him, that is, their hulls were out of sight because of the curvature of the earth, but that he could see half-way down their lower masts and that the distance was too great to judge whether the land was beyond them or whether they were inside it. But given the nature of the islands which girdle the entrance to Helsinki harbour, quite apart from Giffard's specific statement, it seems unlikely that vessels so easily visible were inside them.

The great importance of a possible presence of Russian warships in the ice outside Sveaborg stemmed from the fact that if they were there, they were at the mercy of the British fleet because the sea ice melts gradually from the seaward, and there would be a time, therefore, when it would be possible for steamers to break through the melting ice and reach them before they, helpless sailing vessels, could escape.

Rumours that these Russian vessels were present, trapped in the Gulf of Finland, waiting to be captured, were widely circulated in the fleet and it was felt that there should be steamers waiting at the edge of the ice to verify their presence and to capture them, if they were there, as soon as the ice melted. But no steamers were sent and instead the fleet remained at Kioge for another week.

On 11 April, Captain the Hon Henry Keppel of the 101 gun screw line-of-battleship *St Jean d'Acre* wrote from Kioge to his brother-in-law, Harry Stephenson,

> Time appears to hang heavily here, for the last ten days we have made no forward movement, but the ice will not be hurried. Old Napier has been staying a few days in Copenhagen. I hear that he had an interview with the King and afterwards with the Queen (who is not generally visited) by whom he was made much of, so much so that the Russian Chargé d'Affaires wished to know why the English had been made so much of – she, they say, has great influence – . . . I have not touched land since I embarked at Portsmouth – *Odin* has had to return some water casks at Copenhagen and Scott [Captain Francis Scott, her commander] has offered to take Harry[14] to see the place so

[14]Henry Frederick Stephenson, 1842–1919, son of an illegitimate son of the 11th Duke of Norfolk. His mother was Keppel's sister Mary. He went to sea as the protégé of his uncle in 1853 at the age of 11½. He slept with the junior officers or in a cot in his uncle's cabin, had the run of the ship and was taught spelling by the chaplain. He formally joined the navy in 1855. Like his uncle, he had an adventurous life. He was promoted post-captain in 1875 after service in the Royal Yacht, which lead to a long friendship with King Edward VII and the future King George V, and service in the Royal Households. He commanded the *Alert* as second in command to Nares on the expedition to Arctic Canada in 1875–76 and died a knighted admiral.

> that I shall let him go and he will rejoin me tomorrow. . . . If, as you seem to think, the Tzar is in bad health and loses any of his energy he will hardly force his fleet out to meet us, which will be the worse for us as in that case we shall have to attack his stone walls, which are very hard. Old Charlie is not the man I took him for if he returns without doing something. . . . The Russians we know have been sinking stones in the northern passage by Kronstadt to St Petersburg but at no time was there ever water enough in either passage for our larger ships to enter . . . We must try our hand elsewhere.[15]

Captain Keppel was one of the most enterprising of nineteenth-century naval officers. A man of strong and likeable personality, his 'interest' was enormously helpful and he was both brave and efficient. Entering the navy at the age of 13 in 1822, he was a post-captain at 28. He led an adventurous life seeking action wherever it was to be found, on the African coast and in the Far East. In command of HMS *Dido* he worked with Rajah Brooke in the suppression of Borneo pirates. In later life he became a fashionable and very popular figure in London and a close friend of King Edward VII. Like Captain Paget, he managed to maintain discipline and efficiency in his ship's company without recourse to flogging.

On 12 April the fleet sailed and, in the words of Captain Paget,

> We advanced majestically, favoured by lovely weather. Leaving Bornholm on our right and Gotland on our left, we arrived on our first cruising ground of Gotska Sando on the 15th.[16]

Captain Keppel continued in another letter to his brother-in-law,

> On 15th when some forty miles to the south west of Stockholm . . . the Fleet separated into two divisions. . . . My idea was that by reducing the Fleet to our present number old Napier imagined that there would be a better chance of the Russian Fleet coming out to meet us, but we had been going in so many directions for the last 24 hours that it is impossible to guess what the old fellow is at. . . .
>
> Several merchant vessels have been taken possession of by the look-out frigates which must have been laden with 'munitions of war' . . .

[15]NMM HTN/52a Keppel Papers.

[16]Otway, op cit.

We have lots of exercise and manoeuvring, some of the late arrivals coming in for all the admonitions the Admiral can make by signal, such as 'you are out of station'. 'Pay more attention to orders'. 'Very bad' 'Very negligent'. 'Place officer of middle watch under arrest'. . . . The water freezes on our decks of a morning and it is 1° below freezing point alongside but we have not yet seen any ice.

According to George Giffard, Admiral Plumridge's paddle squadron rejoined the main fleet after its reconnaissance of the Gulf of Finland and Sveaborg when the fleet was off Bornholm on 12 April. Giffard is quite specific in his *Reminiscences* as to what happened immediately afterwards,

> We all now expected that the Chief would lose no time in closing the Russian fleet at Sweaborg, which we had reported as having seen on the 8th instant, and show what the steam line-of-battleships could do, as there was no danger among the icefields under steam, and good anchorage, under Nargan Island off Revel, but we were sadly disappointed. The Fleet proceeded under easy sail towards Hango, the *Leopard* with Admiral Plumridge leading, and on sighting the land the Admiral made signal 'Rocks ahead', the whole coast being formed of numerous rocky islets. The fine Fleet consisting of the *Duke of Wellington*, 131 guns; the *St Jean d'Acre*, 101; *Caesar*, 91; *Princess Royal*, 91; *Edinburgh*, 71; *Royal George*, 101; *Cressy*, 81; with four steam frigates, hove to and sending the Master of the Fleet to *Leopard*, returned to the coast of Sweden, a more cowardly act, in my opinion than that for which Admiral Byng was shot. It was evident that nothing would be done by the Commander-in-Chief.[17]

Captain Paget, of the *Princess Royal* was, if anything, even more specific in his view of what occurred,

> With eight line-of-battleships, the same number as were reported to be outside of Helsingfors, we shaped our course for the Gulf, leaving the rest of the Fleet laying to. It may be supposed that we were envied by the poor fellows left behind. . . .
>
> Next day, Monday 17th, found us in the entrance to the Gulf of Finland, a thick fog separated us for a few hours, but with constant attention to the guns of the Admiral, we kept pretty well together, and with a nice westerly wind we calculated on being within sight of the enemy's Fleet that evening, when lo! to our dismay, the course of the Fleet was suddenly altered to the westward! Various, of course, were the surmises at this unaccountable proceeding. Some thought that we were merely going to haul up for the night and to resume our course in the morning, having only about 80 miles to go to

[17]Giffard, op cit.

> arrive off Helsingfors. A few there were who doubted the old man's nerve – very few. Alas! their fears have turned out but too true, as the sequel will show – and the only redeeming point in the case is that he candidly confessed that the fogs of the morning had unnerved him. But to resume. All night we did stand away beating to the westward and in doing so we made Dagerort, the first spot on the Russian coast we had yet seen, a lowish point with the remains of the lighthouse, which had been destroyed in order to prevent it from being of use to us. This was the first hostile action we had seen, and proved the reality of the affair. Still, on we stood to the westward, and finally rejoined our less fortunate comrades in the evening on the former cruising ground. I need hardly state that they were no less astonished than ourselves.
>
> It has never yet been positively ascertained in the Fleet whether the Russian squadron were out or inside of Helsingfors . . . but it certainly appeared to us that we were neglecting to take advantage of a possible opportunity of destroying an enemy's squadron. Doubtless the Commander-in-Chief had some positive information which had induced him to give up the idea of attacking the Russian squadron, bearing in mind our qualities of steamers for such work. A month previously the *Miranda* screw corvette, commanded by the intrepid Edmund Lyons, had forced a passage through the ice many miles from us and had succeeded in looking in to Revel and ascertaining that the enemy's Fleet were not there.
>
> It was perhaps fortunate that the Press were not made acquainted with the details of this first and significant opening of the campaign.[18]

Captain Codrington gave his sister a good account of the affair in one of his inimitable letters. He wrote:

> But there is one thing which I have been told which if it turns out to be true will indeed make what the French papers call a 'sensation' if ever it be known. Only don't you mention it. Indeed it is so astounding I can't quite believe it correct yet. It is this. The Russian squadron now at Sveaborg had been at Revel, but being insecure there, had moved over to take refuge in Sveaborg. But on getting across the Gulf of Finland they found the ice blocking up the entrances to Sveaborg and consequently they had to remain *frozen out* as it were outside of Sveaborg; they were in this position outside of all protection, and quite unable to get in when Rear-Admiral Plumridge arrived off there and reconnoitered them. On his return he reported the state of the case to the Commander-in-Chief and subsequently we went to sea and after that Sir Charles Napier leaving the sailing ships with Admiral Corry bore up with all the steam ships and we went down into the entrance of the Gulf of Finland. We never saw any ice but made the land on each side when after just running a little in hauled out again; the weather was cloudy but not bad: and at that moment had we gone on but 30 miles further we should have pounced upon 8

[18]Otway, op cit.

line-of-battleship outside and we must have had them on cheap terms. Now don't mention that, for I hear on the other tack that they have never been outside Sveaborg at all so I would not wish it mentioned. We are all much in the dumps here. It seems evident that little or nothing is to be done, or is likely to be done . . . Method, arrangement, head, and above all nerve is wanting in one quarter where it is most wanted . . . with the failure of nerve, temper, or what little pretence there was to it, has gone also.[19]

The significance of this episode can scarcely be overestimated. The question of whether there was a Russian squadron off Helsinki trapped in the ice in April 1854 was so vitally important to the conduct of the whole war that it should have been resolved beyond all shadow of doubt as the first of the fleet's responsibilities. If a squadron was there, its capture or destruction must have had a very important effect on the whole course of the war with Russia.

The whole fleet now made for 'Elgsnabben' as the place was invariably called in British documents, which was in fact Älvsnabben, in the archipelago south of Stockholm. This was at the instigation of Lieutenant Emil Theorell, an officer of the Swedish Navy who had joined the fleet, with the permission of his superiors, nominally as an interpreter. He had been recruited by Mr Grey, the British Chargé d'Affaires in Stockholm, who reported to Napier on 10 April as follows,

> I was instructed by Lord Clarendon to offer the rate and allowances of a Lieutenant in the British Navy to Swedish officers who might willingly join it, but in several instances the negotiations failed from the uncertainty which they felt with regard to their future prospects when the War was over. One officer, however, Lieutenant Theorell, who is at present ADC to the Superintendent of the Arsenal at Stockholm, who accompanied Admiral Virgin in his voyage round the world in the Swedish frigate *Eugenie*, and who bears a high character in the service, has at all risks determined upon joining the British Navy upon the terms I was authorized to offer him and will sail with Captain Heathcote. Lt Theorell is in possession of many valuable charts and enabled me some little time ago to forward the copy of a chart of the inlet to Sveaborg to Mr Buchanan. He is also a Finlander [that is, a native of Finland of Swedish language culture] and I presume speaks the language, as well as English and Swedish. I trust he may be of service to Your Excellency.[20]

Lieutenant Theorell was ordered to join Captain Bartholemew Sulivan in the *Lightning* to go to Stockholm to see if it was possible to

[19]NMM Codrington Papers op cit.
[20]NMM NAP 7 Letters to Admiral Sir Charles Napier.

recruit Swedish pilots. Captain Sulivan gives his own account of what follows,

> Sir C Napier's only idea of navigating the fleet was through pilots; and, as it was soon found that the Baltic pilots supplied to the fleet in England knew nothing of the shores, harbours, etc, having simply made voyages to and from Cronstadt, he wanted to obtain Swedish ones. On his ordering me to Stockholm to bring down pilots hired there, I pointed out to him that they might be paid by the Russians to run us on shore, and urged him to let the surveying officers and the Captains and masters take care of the ships; but he would not listen to my objections, and ordered me to go for the pilots. When speaking to our minister [actually Mr Grey, then Chargé d'Affaires in Stockholm] about the pilots to be engaged, I asked him what security we had that they had not been tampered with. He replied, 'None whatever'; and I found that a Russian agent, said to be well supplied with funds, was a near relation of one of the pilots; so I determined not to take any of them, and returned to the admiral without them. He then seemed satisfied that I was right, and by degrees his confidence in his own officers increased.[21]

Lieutenant Emil Theorell's private diary gives a somewhat different account of these events,

> We came up to Waxholm at 11. From there to Stockholm in Kreuger's boat at half past two. Family dinner with Uncle – great alarm when I appeared. Endless hunting for pilots – they did not want to go because of the low wages and Grey's indecision.

and the next day (17 April),

> Spent almost like the day before, but all in vain.[22]

As has already been said, one of Admiral Napier's main preoccupations from his first appointment was the necessity for pilots. Eight pilots were sent for the 16 ships when in the Downs in order to take them across the North Sea. Captain Sulivan taking, perhaps, a somewhat biased hydrographer's view, recorded, 'The pilots we had were quite useless, they did nothing but learn the pilotage they were supposed to have learnt before'.

[21]H N Sulivan (ed) *Life and Letters of the late Admiral Sir Bartholemew James Sulivan*, (London, 1896).
[22]Emil Theorell, *Diary* coll Martin Isaksson, made available to us by Mr Martin Isaksson, formerly Governor of the Åland Islands.

And then again,

> Again, the charts of the Baltic – chiefly Russian – were excellent, those of the Åland Islands excepted, and the ships ought to have been navigated by these without pilots.
>
> For the passage up the Baltic from Kioge Bay to Revel, pilots were not more necessary than in many of the ordinary passages made by men-of-war. The charts were more to be depended on than many pilots, who would only have known the direct route to Cronstadt. They knew nothing of the inshore pilotage.[23]

Earp, in his capacity as Napier's principal apologist, gives as the reasons for Napier's failure to reconnoitre Sveaborg, with a possible Russian squadron outside it,

> . . . but the wind coming direct into the Gulf, with a falling barometer, and the weather looking threatening, he abandoned his intention.
>
> In the night the Fleet tacked, every two hours, between the shoals of Hangö Head and Dager Ort, – by no means a pleasant cruising-ground with a squadron not accustomed to manoeuvre in such waters, and in the midst of fogs and gales. Under all circumstances, the inexperience of the fleet, now that it was on the enemy's coast, was but too apparent. To remain, therefore, at the entrance of the Gulf, in the weather at present prevailing, was dangerous, as the least inattention to, or misapprehension of, signals – in the night especially – might have been attended with fatal consequences. The squadron was without local pilots, whilst the Russians had removed all the beacons and lights, and had, moreover, locked up all their own pilots, lest the Admiral should entice any of them into his service.[24]

As Sulivan points out, Napier had been informed that the Russian Fleet was outside Sveaborg in the ice. In these circumstances there was no excuse for turning back without setting the point at rest, and although he complained endlessly of the absence of pilots, he had two surveying ships with him with expert hydrographers on board which were being used as pickets to carry messages through the fleet. He was in command of a fleet of screw-steamers and he was handling them as if they were sailing ships. The fact was that Napier and his admirals had no more comprehension of the use of hydrographers than they had of the use of steam. These men were living in an earlier age. Captain Sulivan summed up the situation well when he wrote, 'you must know that the screw-steamers never get up steam except

[23]Sulivan, op cit.
[24]Earp, op cit.

in cases of emergency, and they act quite as sailing vessels . . .'[25] Indeed, Captain Sulivan told his wife in a private letter that he had been reduced to reporting to Admiral Beaufort,

> that I cannot go on receiving pay and nominally holding a position I am not allowed to do the work of; that it would be unjust to myself or to the service to do so; and that, rather than continue in this way, I would prefer being superseded, even if I had to return to half pay, if the Board would not give me a frigate as a regular ship . . . My own firm conviction is that it has been a great mistake appointing our present chief; he is evidently very nervous, afraid of the land, and, I think, seems weighed down with the responsibility (he always has a very nervous twitching of his lips and face), and yet he will not be easily advised by those around him, but will have his own way. That he will do any fighting work when it comes very well I dare say, but others would do it as well, and perhaps with more judgment and forethought. Up to this time I have never seen the fleet perform one single evolution, except tacking when necessary, so that any changes of position from divisions into line or from line into sailing columns have never been attempted. They are well worked at guns. Chads and the captain of the fleet go from ship to ship, working them at quick and horizontal firing, supplying powder quickly, etc etc and there is so much practice that many are beginning to ask where a fresh supply of powder, shot, and shell is to come from![26]

Captain Sulivan recorded a charming picture of the fleet under sail.

> The *Duke of Wellington* sails beautifully, particularly off the wind, when the old blockships have difficulty in keeping up under all sail; but today, blowing a good topgallant breeze, on a wind, she did not spare others much canvas, and *Edinburgh* and *Hogue* nearly kept way with her. *St Jean d'Acre* running free comes nearly up to *Duke*; but on a wind the *St Jean d'Acre* had to set nearly the same sail as the blocks. *Neptune* is an astonishing ship; though an old '120' like *Britannia* and *Trafalgar*, she sails nearly equal with the *Duke*, and is one of the fastest in the fleet, and having *Regent*'s old crew is certainly the crack ship of the fleet.[27]

At almost the same time Lieutenant Theorell was recording his own first impressions.

> 14 April. Went on board the incomparable *Duke of Wellington* – what a ship . . . Friendly reception – called to visit Sir Charles, whom we found together

[25]Sulivan, op cit.
[26]Sulivan, op cit.
[27]Ibid.

with Commander Seymour walking to and fro the cabin. He was wearing a blue tunic with short trousers and big shoes, a civilian hat with gold stripes (lace), an enormously big handkerchief in all the colours of the rainbow hanging out of the tunic pocket. His movements and appearance as simple as possible. His face very badly washed, some yellow spots – probably from the eggs at breakfast – round the lips and on the lower part of his face. We shook hands and he greeted me with a 'You speak English, eh?' and continued with two questions that – as he spoke Scottish in a rusty drivelling voice – I of course did not understand a word of.

Commander S, a man of great appearance, agreeable ways and with a very correct pronunciation took care of the conversation to my extreme relief – as Sir Charles had already asked 'Does he not sharp English?' We soon came to a better understanding on both sides, upon which the conversation turned to the Finnish Bay, the Swedish Coast, Åland and the evacuation. They asked whether it was too early in Spring for navigation in the Finnish Bay and seemed pleased with my answer 'yes'. In the evening we had still another discussion of the same kind. Accommodation was provided for me in the cockpit in an English hammock. Everybody extremely polite and friendly, especially Doctor Bank who offered me his cabin to get dressed in. Passed a good night.[28]

The praises of the *Duke of Wellington* were to be sung years later by a man who served on board her in 1855 as a Hospital Dresser, a rank which gave him gunroom status as a junior officer:

> The noble 'Duke' was not only the largest and finest three-decker afloat, or as yet had sailed the seas, but was so complete and up to date at the time, that, had anyone hinted she would be really obsolete in less than a decade, he would have been laughed to scorn! . . . she was commissioned with an armament of 131 guns, and a crew of 1200 officers and men of all grades. Her dimensions were as follows:- length 270, beam 60, depth 60, draught 27 – increased in the semi-fresh waters of the Baltic to 29 feet; tonnage 3700; engine power 780 horse. . . . She had three fighting decks from six to seven feet in height; the lower and middle decks were armed with hollow 56 and solid 32 pounders; the upper decks with 32 pounders; and the quarter decks with brass guns. The odd gun was a great swivel solid 68 pounder, mounted on traversing rails on the forecastle. The cockpit deck was partly under the waterline; the magazines and engines wholly so. . . . The Gun Room of the 'Duke' was much the largest in the fleet and would have been reckoned a magnificent Ward Room in Trafalgar days.[29]

The *Duke of Wellington* had been built at Pembroke and awaited launching as the 120 gun *Windsor Castle* when early in 1852 it was decided to

[28]Theorell, op cit.
[29]William Don, MD, *Reminiscences of the Baltic Fleet of 1855* (Brechin, 1894).

alter her to be a steamer of 131 guns. She was lengthened 23 feet amidships and seven feet in her stern structure and given the engines of the iron screw frigate *Simoon*. She was finally launched on 14 September 1852, the day of the death of Wellington, for whom she was subsequently re-named.

According to Earp, bad weather in the mouth of the Gulf of Bothnia compelled the Fleet to remain at Älvsnabben for a fortnight, in place of the two, or at the most three, days which had been originally proposed. Sir Charles Napier paid a visit to the King Oscar I of Sweden. He was received very formally and invited to breakfast. All this was perfectly in order because Sweden as a neutral country had declared all her harbours open to both combatants, except for certain specified places. Britain and France, of course, were able to avail themselves of the facilities of Swedish ports, whereas there was no advantage to the Russian Fleet, locked up as it was in Kronstadt and Sveaborg. The discussion was formal and King Oscar I made no statements to suggest any weakening in Sweden's position of strict neutrality. At the end of the formalities Napier was received by the Queen and presented to other members of the family.

At this time Sweden was playing a complex waiting game. The country's foreign policy during the Crimean War has been the subject of much study by Swedish historians. Sweden benefited from neutrality both openly and covertly and this fact influenced popular opinion and to a degree neutralized the popular urge to seek to recover lost territory in Finland. Against this, there was considerable propaganda for intervention, expressed very vividly, for instance, in a Swedish language publication put out in Göteborg in 1854 which, after rehearsing the expansion of the Russian autocracy in highly coloured terms went on,

> If the control of the mouths of the Danube and Turkey's garrisons on the Black Sea and on each side of its entrance could alone place in Russian hands the means of mastery over the rest of Europe, it follows that it would be a logical step to deny them those areas, but this limited objective would not be enough. It is the conquests in the Baltic, the Black Sea and the Caucasus, the occupation of Finland, the Baltic Provinces, Poland, Bessarabia, the Crimea and Georgia that have at one and the same time aroused the lust for further expansion and provided the capacity to satisfy it; it follows logically that the only true and total cure must be the redemption of those conquests and the return of the possessions to independence under their former owners. It is not simply enough that someone is prevented from committing further crimes; he must also be punished for the crimes he has already committed; and it cannot be regarded as adequate that an aggressor ceases his depredations or is

prevented from plundering the defenceless, it is not more than right and proper that he be forced to disgorge his spoils.[30]

The booklet goes on,

> The foregoing should amply demonstrate that it is by no means a coincidence that Swedes and Germans extended their sway on their respective sides of the Baltic until they were separated only by the modest width of the Finnish Gulf and if we accepted as a natural imperative that led the Swedes to Finland and the Germans to the present *Russian* Baltic provinces, is it not as clear as day that the situation which brought about domination of these regions by the Russians is unnatural and disharmonious. It would be an eternal stain on the Swedish name were not every Swedish heart to pound with joy at the possibility of the liberation of Finland from the Russian yoke and were the whole Swedish nation not to rise as one man if indeed they are called on to take part in the great struggle which our brothers the other side of the Baltic are certain to wage against the 'Northern giant' (the objective of the war must be Finland's reunion with Sweden or its independence, guaranteed by a local connection with the old Motherland). In the same way it cannot be regarded as open treachery for the great German nation (its behaviour explicable only through the lack of political unity) to permit the Baltic Provinces – under German suzerainty for hundreds of years – to become a shuttlecock between neighbouring states and finally a helpless sacrifice in the hands of Russians determined on world domination; and what would better become Prussia, which prided itself on being a German and a Protestant great power, than to incorporate the German Baltic Provinces, whose inhabitants in their hearts and souls still remained good Lutherans despite all that the Russians had done . . .[31]

Swedish foreign policy was still very much the prerogative of the Crown and great freedom of action was allowed to the monarch by ministers and popular opinion. During a period of crisis in 1833–4, when war between Britain and Russia appeared possible, under King Karl Johan XIV the likely contestants were informed by the Swedish government that:

> Since Sweden has become what might be described as an island kingdom following the disasters which divided it from Finland in 1809, and the consequent union with Norway in 1814, its external policy has to be guided by the requirements of its geographical situation and its interests. Far from indulging in illusions, which could jeopardize its security and its existence, it has confined its ambition to seeking to inspire those powers, with whom it

[30]D F Bonnias, *The War in the Gulf of Finland in the Year 1854* (Göteborg, 1854).
[31]Bonnias, op cit.

> maintains the closest relations, with a firm faith in its honourable intentions . . . Sweden/Norway, by observing strict neutrality in relation to both the belligerent parties, may by its impartial behaviour merit respect and appreciation for its attitude. . . . Our restricted resources rule out any idea of a war of conquest and require that we concentrate wholly on defending our territory and our social institutions. . . .[32]

This declaration, which might be taken as marking formally the end of Sweden's imperial history, was meant to deal with a particular short-term situation, and although its general spirit has on the whole guided Swedish foreign policy ever since, and although a very similar declaration of neutrality was made by King Karl's son, Oscar I, when war between Britain and Russia again threatened in 1853, this did not preclude King Oscar I from prolonged negotiations with France and Britain aimed at the winning of considerable subsidies and the recovery of Finland to Sweden in return for Swedish participation in the war on the allied side. Indeed, some modern Swedish historians have maintained that King Oscar intended to take part in the war even in 1853, and had the reconquest of Finland and the consolidation of Sweden's position – and that of himself and his descendants – in the Baltic in the forefront of his policy. Given Sweden's weakness, he could not do so, however, without specific guarantees that France and Britain would assimilate Sweden's objectives into their own, making the Baltic the main theatre of the war, undertaking not to negotiate a separate peace and to give Sweden considerable financial and military aid. Seen from this point of view, it was in the King's interest to arouse public opinion in favour of war and it has been suggested that a skilful campaign in favour of active participation was mounted in the Press, and in other ways, under Royal direction. Such publications as that quoted above from Göteborg would form part of this campaign.

Be that as it may, at the onset of the war Swedish neutrality favoured the Western Powers at Russia's expense. For instance, the opening of most of Sweden's ports (Karlskrona, and Slite in Gotland, where there were Swedish naval bases, were notable exceptions) to both belligerents was clearly of great benefit to the Allies and no benefit at all to the Russian Navy, except during the brief period between the withdrawal of the Anglo-French fleets in the autumn and the freezing of the sea. This kind of neutrality was not to Russia's liking and pressure was brought to bear from St Petersburg designed to scare the Swedish government as to Russia's long

[32]Wilhelm Carlgren, *The Emergence of Sweden's Policy of Neutrality*, Revue Internationale D'Histoire Militaire, No 57, (Paris, 1984).

term intentions. Nevertheless, King Oscar continued with his policy of a neutrality which he intended to abandon as soon as the Western Allies offered suitable terms and guarantees. With a view to obtaining these, in June 1854 he had a series of highly secret discussions in Gotland with two envoys of the Emperor Napoleon. These agents asked for 200 Swedish gunboats and 60 thousand troops. In return, King Oscar demanded that the Allies should bring 70 thousand of their own troops into the Baltic sector and pay large subventions to Sweden. In subsequent discussion he reached a form of agreement with the French agents to the effect that an appropriate subsidy would be three to four million francs, which would finance some 70 thousand Swedish troops and also the Swedish Navy's participation in the war. In July, again in negotiation with the French but now with the commanding general of the French Expeditionary Force which was sent into the Baltic area in that month (see Chapter 14) he refused to co-operate with the Allies unless the French force was increased by 50 thousand men and Sweden granted subsidies of several million francs each month. The conquest of Finland was also to be involved as one of the Allied war aims. The Allies did not agree, and it was clear that Sweden, should she join their side, would be left exposed to the full perils of Russian vengeance when the Anglo-French Expeditionary Force withdrew in the autumn. Sweden not unnaturally remained with her biased neutrality.

British attitudes to Sweden's possible participation in the war were ambivalent in 1854. Lord John Russell, Lord President of the Council, in the early summer put forward the desirability of considering Sweden as a possible ally, but received little support in the Cabinet. Russell had sweeping ideas for the future of a type which were to receive much more support a year later. He saw Finland being returned to Sweden, Poland freed from the Russian autocracy, the absorption by Prussia of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, historically within the German sphere of influence. Palmerston supported ideas on these lines but Lord Aberdeen, as Prime Minister, regarded them as quite impractical and, indeed, dangerous.

Napier's visit to Stockholm was in pursuit of instructions from Sir James Graham to cast a fly over the Swedish authorities – the Åland Islands in return for gunboats and, once again, pilots. Despite Captain Sulivan's views on the dangers of employing pilots who might be Russian agents, the British Minister in Stockholm, Mr Grey, seems, from his reports, to have sought vigorously to recruit them. He reported to Napier,

> I am exceedingly sorry that the Åland pilot who Mr Theorell had almost succeeded in getting has after all refused to go. I have this evening, however, seen a person who thinks he will be able to persuade him still.

> On Saturday next, the 22nd, Lieutenant Hjelmstejerna of the Swedish Navy, and Mr Broman will embark for Gotland to join Your Excellency – at least they both promised me most positively today to do so. They are both very highly recommended to me and I trust they may prove of service.
>
> I will only add that Mr Theorell was most active today in his endeavour to persuade the Åland pilot to join the fleet and the failure is not owing to want of exertion on his part.
>
> I have not heard anything of the two Able Seamen who were promised me but I hope to be able to send them off on Saturday.[33]

It is perhaps as well that the Allies' ambivalence in 1854 over Sweden's participation in the war and their later preoccupation with the Crimea as the main theatre of war, did not give King Oscar I the guarantees, and military and financial backing for which he asked, for it appears likely that the Swedish armed forces were in reality in no position to give the support to the Western cause which the King's negotiations with the French indicated as possible. Torvald Höjer summed up the situation in a paper in 1942 when he wrote,

> The question has not been systematically analyzed but there are very strong grounds for thinking that Sweden's state of military readiness was anything but good. The heart of the army, the *indelta armen*, consisted largely of men in their fifties or even older. Regimental manoeuvres amounted to a couple of weeks each year and were often cancelled. Recruits were given only fourteen days training in their first year. The Fleet was in a very bad shape and the equipment of all the armed forces was clearly deficient. These serious shortcomings were disclosed with brutal frankness during the press debate in March 1855, by one of Sweden's foremost and most capable military figures, the King's former confidant, Colonel J A Hazelinus. . . . Hazelinus spoke of, 'Throwing ourselves into an aggressive war with the many shortcomings in various antiquated sections of our armed forces, after forty years of peace, with no general staff, no supply channels, no army surgeons, no adequate medical facilities, no army organization for war . . . without adequate artillery, without a commisseriat, without adequate command'.[34]

It might almost have been a description of the British army in the Crimea.

[33] NMM NAP 1–16.

[34] T Höjer 'Svensk utrikespolitik från Carl XIV Johan till Oscar II' *Svensk Tidskrift*, 1942:7.

10

Blockade

The summer of 1854 was one of disruption for the Finnish merchant shipping industry and the Baltic trade. The correspondence, journals, and diaries of British officers are filled with references to the interception, capture, and too often destruction, of 'Russian' merchant vessels, or vessels suspected of trading with the enemy.

On Saturday, 22 April 1854 *The Times* printed the following story.

> The First Prize (by electric telegraph).
> Portsmouth, Friday night.
> This evening between six and seven o'clock no little commotion was caused in this port by the appearance in the roads of one of HM steam vessels, having a sailing ship in tow, making for the harbour at all speed. The ramparts were quickly thronged with the inhabitants, who, as soon as the vessels approached near enough for the colours of the sailing craft to be made out as Russian, loudly cheered her fortunate captors.
>
> Aboard the vessel we found that Her Majesty's revenue steam cruiser *Argus*, Commander M W S Grandy, which left Southampton yesterday, fell in with the *Fröja* for Åbo, four hundred and forty tons, fifteen men, Wickman Master, today about noon between the Owers and Beechy Head (about eighteen miles from the latter point) and boarded her, ultimately making prize of her. She is a fine ship, four years old, and apparently in good condition. She left Lisbon on the 28th ult with about 600 tons of salt as cargo, and was bound for Åbo, although her Master (who speaks very good English) says Elsinore. No opposition was offered to her detention, and Commander Grandy accordingly took her in tow, and brought her in here. She carries two nine pounder carronades together with small arms for her crew. The revenue authorities who boarded her consider her a lawful prize, and the capture has been duly reported to the Port Admiral, and by him to the Admiralty.

Such was the first Finnish merchant vessel captured as a prize of war.

The *Fröja* was built at Åbo in 1849, her chief shareholder being C M Dahlström, a wealthy merchant of the port. She was rigged as a barque and was of about 400 tons gross by the measuring standards in use in Britain at

the time. Her first employment was to bring back to Finland the product of a small whaling fleet which, based on Åbo, hunted in the North Pacific and the Okhotsk Sea. In this long-range trade in waters where there was no protection against pirates, she needed to be armed. In fact, on her first voyage she was attacked on 23 September 1850, when on passage from Sitka towards Hong Kong. The Chinese pirates, however, quickly withdrew when a cannon ball splashed into the water near one of the attacking boats. By 1854 the *Fröja* was employed in general trade, principally between Finland, Britain, and the Mediterranean. Early in 1854 she loaded coal at Hartlepool for Lisbon. There she loaded salt for Finland and sailed on 28 March, only to be seized in the circumstances reported by *The Times*, her crew quite unaware that war had broken out. On 18 May 1854 *The Times* duly announced that Dr Lushington, the Judge of the Supreme Court of Admiralty would, within twenty days, proceed to condemn a number of 'Russian', that is, Finnish, vessels as 'lawful prizes to their captors' and that the first Court of Admiralty for the condemnation of Russian prizes was appointed to be held in Doctor's Commons on 22 May. The seamen of the *Fröja* were immediately set free against promises not to serve against England. The master and mates were released from custody later but the *Fröja* herself, the first prize of war, was duly condemned. The condemnation was confirmed in the High Court of Admiralty on 12 November 1854. She was put on the market and sold to Messrs Hill and Hurrel of Salcombe, Devon, Captain F W Hill becoming her master in the Mediterranean trade from South Devon. In 1860 she was sold to owners in Shields. She was abandoned at sea on 18 June 1867 while on passage from Aguilas on the east coast of Spain towards the Tyne, laden with lead and grass, on fire through the latter having heated and spontaneously ignited. Her crew were all saved.

That is not quite the end of the story. Her arrival at Salcombe after she had been bought by local owners had been a considerable event. She was much looked for and, in the words of one who saw her,

> There was no wonder then that the arrival of the Russian barque was almost as anxiously expected by us as by the rest of the town, with whose interest we were at that time so completely identified.
>
> Week after week was this vessel delayed; indeed we began to suspect that she had been metamorphosed into the Flying Dutchman, so contradictory were the statements we heard about her. She had been taken in the war on her return from St Ubes, laden with salt, and not being able to get into a friendly port, fell a prize to our British tars. It is terrible to think of the consequences which might have arisen to the health of the Russian nation had the war been

prolonged, for they were entirely dependent on other nations for this necessary commodity.

The barque, having been captured, was sold by order to a company of Salcombe men, of whom, physically speaking at least, our friend Captain Cove was the greatest. Day after day we watched the Captain's broad back as he stood by the low wall which divided the narrow street from the shipwright's yard below, where the best view of the mouth of the harbour was attainable, with his telescope in full play, making his eyes and his burly arms ache to no purpose. . . . Others thinking to get an earlier sight would walk a little way up the street, and insert their telescopes into an oblique aperture which they had got leave to make in the obdurate wall which formed the street boundary of the Cliff House garden; while others would saunter down the cliff overhanging the castle, and look out there, still in the same position.

At last, one day, when we had somewhat forgotten the general anxiety, she appeared in sight; and I believe we were among the first who saw her as she majestically sailed round the Bolt Head, escorted into the harbour by the ever-watchful pilot Jarvis, and finally anchored in the river in full sight of our lodgings. She looks superb, her three masts and proportionate size of hull giving her a most decided superiority over all the vessels lying in the harbour; and, if the truth were known, not a little griping to the pride of the naval architects of the place. . . .

One bright afternoon the polite Captain Hill came for us in his boat: his men rowed us back to the vessel and with some trepidation we ascended her lofty sides. . . . Captain Hill showed us the private cabin of the unfortunate Russian captain, who seemed to have had a taste for the arts, as a large quantity of painting brushes and other drawing materials was found in his lockers. I'm sure I pitied the poor man, well knowing as I do how awkward one feels without sketching materials, and how invariably a subject appears which is especially attractive at such times. The thing which struck me most was the immense size of the hull, which was quite undivided and clear for the reception of merchandise; and we learnt that she was to be chartered for Balaclava – rather a different destination from what was intended by her original owners.[1]

Though she sailed away from Salcombe the *Fröja*, renamed *Rebecca*, left something behind. In the family of the descendants of Captain Hill are some cups and saucers of delicate china, found on board in the master's cabin with his paint brushes. Moreover, her Finnish owners did not let her go easily. They contested the condemnation of their vessel, on the grounds that the British Government had announced on 20 March that if war broke

[1]Ellen Luscombe, *Myrtles and Aloes – A Salcombe Sketch Book* (Kingsbridge and London, 1861).

out, merchant ships under the Russian flag would have the right to load for six weeks and then sail for their home port unmolested and not liable for seizure at sea. But not surprisingly, on 1 August the claim was disallowed, apparently on the grounds that the *Fröja* was an armed vessel, and she and her cargo were finally condemned. There is, however, something of a happy ending. After the war was over the *Fröja*'s owners were compensated by the Russian authorities to the sum of £1750 for the vessel and £569 for the cargo.

After April, *The Times* has an increasing flood of reports of 'Russian' vessels coming into British ports as prizes. These represent both vessels sent home from the Baltic with prize crews on board and vessels captured in the Western Approaches and the English Channel on their way home to Finland laden with cargo for the Grand Duchy. In many cases, in the early stages, the masters of the latter vessels did not even know that war had been declared. The British fleet in the Baltic seems generally to have ignored the government's promise of immunity for six weeks from 20 March 1854. There are some happy stories. The Finnish whaler *Suomi* narrowly escaped. The story is told in a Russian article of 1914:

> *Suomi* – the *Suomi* sailed in 1851, her outfitting costs having amounted to 75,000 Roubles. Her voyage lasted until 1854 under a German captain from Bremen and with a largely German outfit. She caught sufficient whales to bring in a gross return of 88,000 Roubles, with a net profit of 13,000. The voyage was considered successful even though the vessel had to be sold at a low rate (21,000 Roubles) in Bremen at the conclusion of her voyage because of the outbreak of the Crimean War. She was in fact nearly made a prize of war by the British. She put into Cowes unaware that war had broken out; having been informed by the pilot of the situation the master set sail with a favourable wind under cover of darkness and escaped to Bremen.[2]

The subject of blockade is extremely complicated. Finland was a quasi-independent territory of the Russian Empire. In Britain there were confused and ill-informed hopes of weaning her away from Russia into a move, not towards independence, but to reunion with Sweden. For the Finns themselves, with as yet barely formed ideas of national identity, and with scarcely a large enough population to develop a national movement, the way ahead lay in quiet co-operation with Russia and the maintenance of their privileged status of freedom from the full rigours of the autocracy.

[2]*Izvestia Moskovskago Kommerches Kago Instituton.* Kommerchesko-Techninde-Koye Ordeleniye. Kniga 11 (Moscow, 1914).

One of their principal trading partners was Britain, with whom they now found themselves willy-nilly at war, though the war had very little to do with them. They provided by far the greatest part of the 'Russian' merchant shipping industry. That industry was important to the development of Finland in two ways. It represented significant industrial activity and a source of capital generation. Second, it provided a channel of communication with the outside world, a channel for the receipt of news and ideas largely denied to other subjects of the autocracy. There is a fine line between neutral shipping and the shipping of a people in the position of the Finns in this war, and the British Government was faced with a situation of considerable subtlety. In the event, in the orders given to the Baltic Fleet, and even more in what the admirals of the Baltic Fleet under Napier's weak and uncertain command were allowed to do, they made very nearly the worst of the situation on both political and humanitarian grounds.

The decision was taken not to issue letters of marque, the licence by which privately-owned armed vessels had in the past been given official authorization to raid an enemy's commerce. Although in the eighteenth century and earlier, privateers had been an important instrument of economic warfare in Britain's various wars, the use of this barely-controllable licensed piracy was both out of keeping with the social spirit of mid-nineteenth-century Britain and likely to be dangerous to Britain, since British seaborne commerce was vast and vulnerable. It was also not acceptable to the United States. Nevertheless, a blind eye seems to have been turned towards the activities of 'unofficial' privateers, thugs and pirates, provided that they confined their attention to vessels belonging to Finnish farmers. It became policy to treat Finnish merchant shipping as enemy shipping and Finnish vessels were hunted down and captured or destroyed on every possible occasion. In fact, most of those concerned seem to have found it impossible to distinguish between Russian and Finnish property. Of course, Russian trade was not carried only in Russian Flag (principally Finnish) ships. A great deal of it was carried in vessels of the German states, of Prussia, of Sweden, and Denmark, and most important –of the United States. Traditional British maritime policy in wartime dictated the seizure of enemy property found in neutral vessels and sometimes the condemnation of the vessels themselves. It was considered by some that vital damage could be done to Russia's economy by strict blockade and control of neutral carriers. Given the power of the British Navy – at least in terms of numbers and of steamships – it was assumed that to enforce such control on foreign shipping would be simple. But there were other and much more complex issues.

A long and at times tortuous argument went on as to whether the effects of blockade harmed Britain or Russia most. The statistics are by no means clear, but it appears that Russia exported substantially to Britain – it was said that half of Russian exports (presumably including those of Finland) went to Britain – while Britain exported little, perhaps one per cent of the total of goods sent overseas, to Russia. It was argued that Russia would suffer if her imports from Britain were cut off, especially those of the technological and industrial equipment which Britain alone in the world could provide in the mid-nineteenth century, but that Britain could not do without Russia's raw materials. The British Government of Lord Aberdeen therefore evolved a three pronged policy which involved controlling the export from Britain of warlike stores, the blockade of designated Russian ports, the capture and detention of Russian ships, and the legalizing of British trade with the enemy, although British ships were barred from entering Russian ports. At the same time, enemy property in neutral vessels was not seized; a complete departure from traditional British procedure, especially as practised during the Napoleonic Wars.

In fact, warlike stores continued to reach Russia from Britain through a number of channels and where they did not, the Russians could obtain materials they vitally needed – machinery and chemicals in particular – from Belgium and from the United States. Cargoes destined for the enemy in neutral vessels were not seized for a number of reasons. The desirability of not quarrelling with the United States while Britain was involved in a European war was important, as was also the wish to keep the Scandinavian kingdoms sweet as potential allies and to remain in good relations with the German States, bearing in mind that they were in a position to embarrass Britain by providing land routes to Russia, which indeed Prussia did on a large scale. But it was also argued that the basis of Britain's power was now industrial, rather than naval or military, and that a reduction in the flow of raw material for manufacture should be avoided. The exercise of the right of search of neutral vessels for Russian goods – except where articles of war were suspected – was therefore abandoned since it was believed that the loss of the imports would do Britain more harm than good. The policy was, therefore, to seek to avoid any great diminution in the movement of imports of raw materials from Russia into Britain, to deprive Russia of the materials she needed for her war effort, and destroy the Russian – that is, almost entirely the Finnish – merchant shipping industry.

However, the results were not quite as planned. The blockade proved ineffective, despite the large number of Finnish ships captured or destroyed in the Baltic and elsewhere. At first the Admiralty failed to have the precise

geographical description of an actual blockade in force published, as was required by international law. Hence there were cases where the restoration of vessel property was granted in the Appeal Courts. In the Black Sea no blockade was established at all for some time and British merchants who had acted in anticipation of its imposition suffered accordingly while neutrals prospered. Moreover, there were routes into Russia which could not be closed at all. The labyrinth of the Finnish archipelagos provided many routes to the mainland, indeed all the way to St Petersburg itself, which could not be closed by a Baltic fleet without shallow draught gunboats and an attitude to the practice of hydrography quite different from that generally current amongst naval officers in the mid-nineteenth century – however much survey work was going on in different parts of the world. In addition, the months in which the fleets could operate in the Baltic were limited by winter and further by the navy's apparent lack of practical knowledge of Baltic autumn and spring navigation, made worse by Napier's nervousness. There was a period after the withdrawal of naval forces when navigation by the experienced and resourceful Finns was still possible, as was the transport of light goods, notably arms, even across the winter ice. Moreover, the French were not at all disposed to co-operate in the imposition of a rigorous blockade.

The biggest factor operating against the imposition of control on the flow of goods into Russia from the West was simply geographical and technical. Seapower was no longer absolute. It was now, for the first time in history, easier, if not cheaper, to move goods by land than by water because the railways had made it so, and there were sufficient lines to ensure a steady flow of goods and material into Russia from its western Continental neighbours; especially Prussia, through which a massive flow of goods continued to pour into Russian territory. There were some goods, however, which could not readily travel by this, or indeed any route other than sea transport, and for which Russia was entirely dependent on Britain. The most important of these was coal. As Sir James Graham himself put it,

> The whole Baltic supply of coal is drawn from England: and while England possesses her coalfields and command of the sea, Russia for all steam purposes of War is crippled, if we hold her supply and treat Coal as a Contraband of War.[3]

This was duly done, though Russian flag ships loaded coal in Sweden after the British had withdrawn in the autumn and before the winter set in. This

[3]Olive Anderson, *A Liberal State at War* (London and New York, 1967).

embargo on coal exports would have been more effective had Russia been more dependent for her war effort on an industrial economy and had the Russian fleet had steam vessels in any numbers.

Taken by and large the blockade did little to harm Russia. There seems to have been little shortage of goods on the Russian market, while it appears from some Russian sources that there was an industrial boom in the country which caused some Russian manufacturers to regard the war as a brief golden age. The admirable Captain Sulivan had direct experience of this attitude and recorded it in a letter to his wife written at Nargen Island, off Revel.

> Yesterday our gunboats were taking some good oak timber off Wolf Island, when a Baron Somebody came over in a small boat from Revel and said it was his; and as we paid for everything – milk, fish, etc – at Nargen, he hoped the admiral would pay him for his oak timber, which was part of the cargo of a wreck he had bought. Caldwell explained to him that it was rather different; but out of 60 fine logs only took 13. The Baron said they thought we were going to destroy Revel after Sveaborg; but that it would have done us no good, and could not have had any effect on the war either way. This is, I think, the real truth. He certainly showed great confidence, for he came over without a flag of truce. He said the war was doing one good in Russia; it was making them bring out their internal resources more than ever, as they were now working salt mines, etc, that were not worked before, and opening out roads for inland conveyance, though their rivers enabled them to do much by water.[4]

The effects and success of the policy of allowing continued imports of raw materials for British industry from Russian territory are perhaps even more difficult to assess than the results of the blockade. British cargoes, like timber, could no longer be shipped direct from Russian ports with the result that there was a shift from Russian and Finnish sources to Sweden, a shift which persisted for some time after the war. Linseed oil, an essential of the wooden ship economy, was imported from India; hemp, yet another maritime essential, from Italy; the short fall in wool was met partly at least, from increased production in Britain; Russian tallow could be replaced to some extent by tallow from the Argentine and Uruguay. The Russian authorities themselves banned the export of grain from the Black Sea ports, but the grain trade rapidly recovered after the war. Some British trading houses suffered, as we shall shortly see in some detail, but the expanding

[4]Sulivan, op cit.

economy of the greatest industrial and trading nation on earth was probably little affected by the two-year hiccup in the supply from one group of sources of a very limited range of its raw materials. To a certain extent the view of successive British governments that economic strength lay behind military and naval strength, and that in its preservation and development lay the hope of success in the field and at sea, proved justified. Some historians see this war as the turning point at which this reality was recognized for the first time.[5]

The very important trade in the direct export of Stockholm tar, the essential preservative of the fabric and rigging of wooden sailing ships, from Finland to Britain suffered a temporary eclipse which caused some hardship, as we shall shortly see, to its producers in a particularly impoverished area, the Oulujoki water system in Northern Finland, and in the seaport towns of the Gulf of Bothnia. Finland was the main source of the world's pine tar – Stockholm tar, as it is still known in Britain – a legacy of the years before 1765 and the abolition of the *stapelvånget* when, though made in Karelia and central Finland as well as Ostrobothnia, it had to be exported through Stockholm and transhipped there. In the nineteenth century the hinterlands of Kristiinankaupunki (Kristinestad) and of Kokkola (Gamla Karleby) and Oulu (Uleåborg) became the principal tar-producing areas. Because of the good communications with the port of Oulu provided by the Oulujoki (Oulu river) the Kainuu area, two hundred miles inland, became an important source of tar which was carried, 25 barrels at a time, in long narrow tar boats downstream to the coast. Several of these boats have been preserved in Finnish museums.

The tar was made by slow burning split pine logs in a carefully arranged stack. The tar ran out of the funnel-shaped stack for the five days or so of the burn. The process was arduous, wasteful, and indescribably filthy, but the relatively small sums to be made from tar-burning were very important to subsistence farmers living on the margins of the habitable world, far north of the 60th parallel. Pine tar, produced more scientifically but chemically much the same product, can still be bought in Britain. It is now used in veterinary work.

The tar trade was one of the principal targets of the British Baltic blockade and of the raids made on Finnish coastal towns by the navy. Nevertheless, this trade appears to provide a model case of the continuation of business as usual through the use of neutral intermediaries, or so the statistics suggest. Thus in 1853 'Russian' Stockholm tar coming into Britain

[5]Anderson, op cit.

totalled 161,000 barrels, 82 per cent of total imported pine tar. Britain imported some 17,000 barrels from Sweden, 8.5 per cent of total imports.

In 1854, 56,500 barrels came to Britain direct from Finland, 35 per cent of the total imported, and some 43,000 barrels from Sweden, 26.2 per cent of imports. The balance was made up largely by a surge in imports from the USA of from 7.3 per cent to 31.8 per cent of the total. This total remained fairly constant, except for a dip of roughly 30,000 barrels in 1854, through the middle 1850s. In 1855 no Finnish pine tar was shipped direct to Britain. Swedish exports to this country went up to 128,000 barrels, 63.9 per cent of the total. In the summer after the Peace of 1856 Britain's imports of tar from Finland immediately recovered to 155,000 barrels, 72.7 per cent of the total, Sweden's quota dropped to 15.5 per cent and that of the USA to 10.7 per cent. There was a reduction in the actual amount of tar sent from Finland to Britain and there undoubtedly was hardship and personal loss among a very poor segment of the population of a country whose contribution to the Russian war machine was negligible; but it seems likely that the great bulk of the trade remained intact and was conducted through Sweden.[6] During the war the assumption is that the filled tar barrels were taken across the Gulf of Bothnia to Sweden in small vessels which for most of the time, especially in the autumn, would be very unlucky if they encountered a wandering British man-of-war, and re-exported from Sweden to Britain. It is notable that immediately before the war Finland's exports to Sweden were 4 to 8 per cent of the total of all exports but in 1854 they ran at 35 per cent and in 1855 at 48 per cent. By 1863, over a quarter of a million barrels of tar were exported from Finland. This quantity reflected the demands consequent upon the great shipping boom accompanying the American Civil War.

The effect of the blockade on the Finnish merchant shipping industry, so vitally important to the process of capital generation and economic development in that country, to a degree its eyes and ears to the outside world, was another matter. The columns of contemporary issues of *The Times* have many references to 'Russian prizes', to the vessels arriving in England with prize crews, to condemnation procedures in the Courts and to the treatment of Finnish crews, many of whom were released on undertaking not to serve against Britain for the rest of the war. Many vessels were sold, often, it has been said, at good prices because of the wartime shipping boom. According to Professor Kaukiainen[7] there were

[6]Figures from Kustaa Hautala, *The Finnish Tar Trade* (Helsinki, 1963).
[7]Yrjö Kaukiainen 'The Heydays of Finnish Shipping' (Lecture).

532 vessels of 55,100 läster (roughly 100,000 tons cargo capacity) sailing from the recognized seaport towns in 1853. In 1856 this number had dropped to 390 vessels totalling 28,400 läster. There are, unfortunately, no comparable figures for 1856 for the 'peasant' tonnage, but there were 924 such vessels totalling 25,500 läster in 1853. These little vessels were very vulnerable to the British blockade and it is possible that as many as a quarter of them were lost or sold during the war. At times from the official correspondence one gets the impression that they were the navy's principal target. Since they frequently represented a notable part of the capital of peasant farmers, it was inevitable that their capture and destruction often involved human tragedy, though such actions can have had no effect on the course of the war whatsoever.

Although some of the figures given are somewhat different from those of Professor Kaukiainen (for instance, the total number of vessels from 19 trading towns round the coast from Oulu (Uleåborg) to Viipuri (Viborg) surviving on the 1 January 1856 is given as 295, totalling 21,868 läster) much detailed information can be gained from a little publication called *Finland's Skepps – Kalender för år 1856* published in Åbo, price 50 silver kopeks, in that year. This list gives 'information as to vessels captured or destroyed by the enemy during the war, together with vessels sold and lost after 1 January 1854'. It shows a total of 158 vessels from the principal seaport towns as sold during the war period and immediately before, the highest totals being 22 from Oulu, 18 from Raahe (Brahestad), 14 from Pietarsaari (Jacobstad), 19 from Kristiinankaupunki (Kristinestad), 21 from Pori (Björneborg) and 10 from Viipuri. It shows a total of 89 vessels as captured or destroyed by the enemy, 12 from Oulu, 11 from Raahe, 10 from Vaasa (Vasa) and nine each from Helsinki and Uusikaupunki (Nystad). The total tonnage sold was 29,000 läster and the total captured or destroyed 9500 läster. In the same period 22 vessels were lost through other causes. The war risks therefore seem roughly to have multiplied the normal annual losses of Finnish tonnage by five.

The list of vessels sold shows where the transactions were completed. Vessels from Oulu sold in Genoa, London, Helsingør, Liverpool, Hull, Shields and Demerara. Sales of Raahe ships took place additionally at Odessa, Kertsch, Copenhagen, Hamburg, Newport and New York. Kokkola adds Corfu, Waterford and Antwerp to the list. Pietarsaari vessels were sold in New Orleans and to Swedish ports. Kristiinankaupunki adds Bristol to the list, and so on. Many of the sales to British owners took place early in 1854 in anticipation of the outbreak of war and because it was proving impossible to obtain cargoes for Finnish ships because of the danger

of confiscation or loss in the event of war. Their British purchasers were anticipating the shipping boom which was to accompany the war. Some of these sales were probably paper transactions and in reality comprised transfer to flags of convenient neutrality for the duration of hostilities. These figures are of vessels from the recognized trading towns only. In addition many vessels from rural areas were probably sold, mainly, since their operations were at this time confined to the Baltic, to Prussian, German, and Danish owners and in these cases transactions of temporary convenience were perhaps more common than with the larger vessels sold on the international market.

There is evidence that the Russian authorities took some steps to discourage the sale of Finnish vessels. *The Times* contained a report on 12 June 1854,

> Letters from Torneå in Finland, of 21 May state that the Russian Government has ordered the Customs House Officers of every Finnish sea town to make known to Finnish shipowners that they ought not to sell their vessels, as the Government has assured free navigation to them in the following manner: That shipowners or shipmasters had only to apply to Hamburg or to a Prussian town for the rights of the citizens of that town, and that it would be granted them, without thereby losing their Russian nationality; and that Prussian shipping-bills would then be forwarded to them in their quality of Prussian citizens. In fact cases are known where Finnish vessels upon examination of their shipping documents by British cruisers, have been released on account of their Prussian nationality.

Moreover the French refused to recognize the validity of any sales of vessels after the declaration of war and occasionally, at least, this had a discouraging effect on potential buyers, hence the following report in *The Times* of 8 June 1854,

> Intelligence has been received, under date Cristiansand 2 June, that on the previous day the Russian vessel *Onni* of Nystadt laden with salt, which entered that port on 7 May to escape capture, was put up to public auction. The French Consul attended, and informed the bidders present that the sale would not be valid, inasmuch as it would be made after the declaration of war, and if taken by any of the Allied Fleet the ship would be deemed a lawful prize. On hearing this no-one made any offers, and the vessel remains unsold.

In fact the British would not have regarded the *Onni* as a lawful prize and it seems that neither Russian pressure to transfer to Prussian registration

nor fear of the French deterred Finnish shipowners from disposing of their vessels when they could do so for prices which, in the circumstances, they found satisfactory. What the total effect of ship sales was on the Finnish merchant shipping industry remains a subject calling for research by Finnish scholars, as does the terms and effects of the compensation paid to shipowners after the war. This appears to have taken the form of interest-free loans.

The *Hackmanska arkiv* in the Åbo Akademi casts some light on this matter. The House of Hackman in Viipuri (Viborg), of German origin, was very well-established in Finland's international commerce, especially in Britain. Their correspondence shows preoccupation with the possible consequences of the 'Oriental question' as early as the beginning of 1853. An order placed for a steamer in October with Thos D Marshall & Co of Shields is not to be in the Hackman's name because of the risk to their property if war breaks out. In early November they are raising the question of the sale of vessels to make them appear British. By late November, vessels are being sold at prices which are 'not very brilliant but satisfactory in the present circumstances', and it is proving more and more difficult for Finnish vessels to get freights.

Some extracts from the correspondence are worth quoting in detail. Thus, to Hackman's British agents, Robert Garbutt & Son of Hull, on 6 November 1853:

> If you can find a purchaser for the brig *Kirjola* [built in 1838, 81 läster] at the price of £600, provided you can do no better, we authorize you to sell this Vessel . . . and perhaps also give power of attorney for our other ships the *Selene* and the *Helios*, because the Oriental question is likely to take a dangerous turn for the Russian flag.

And on 9 November,

> Our last letter informed you of our wishes with respect to the *Kirjola* . . . it would likewise answer our wishes if the *Selene* [built in 1841, 135 läster] and the *Helios* [built in 1840, 232 läster] could on arrival be sold for £3000 each. Should it however be impossible to effect a sale, you may be able to make out a *proforma* bill of sale, which would make the ships appear English property and enable them to sail under the English flag. Perhaps this might be done without great cost or difficulty, if however a change of crew and captain should be required for this purpose, we should request you to dismiss the present captain and crew and to engage an English one instead. We trust that this step will not be necessary and that the engagement of an English flag captain will suffice. The prospect of a continuing war [Turkey had declared war on Russia on 4 October] is the sole inducement we have to sell the *Selene* and *Helios* or to take any measures of precaution, should therefore the political state of Europe on arrival of our ships in your country render a sale unnecessary and the above mentioned steps useless, we merely rely on your doing your best to procure good freights for them.

On 11 January 1854, the Hackmans gave a final instruction,

> The difficulty of bringing Russian ships under English colours being so great, we have come to the resolution to get a bill of sale made up for our *Selene* which we beg to hand you enclosed. By this document of which you will of course only make use in an extreme case of need, we certify to have sold the *Selene* to your Mr C O Garbutt for the sum of £1500 . . . Should a war with our Government break out and such a sale be the only means of escaping the loss of our ship, we should be satisfied with the above moderate sum, which, we trust, you would have no objection to grant us under such circumstances whereby you would be enabled to make with clear conscience the necessary declaration of ownership before your tribunals . . . it is only under the alternative of selling or losing our ship that we consent to accept £1500 . . .[8]

Finland's Skepps-Kalender duly records the sale of the *Selene* and the *Kirjola* in Hull, the *Helios* in Quebec, and the Hackman's other ships, the *Wellamo* in Lübeck and the *Wiborg* to the Russian government. Money transactions through London continue during the war. As soon as they judge hostilities are likely to end, the Hackmans are in correspondence and arranging contracts through Garbutts for the purchase of steam tonnage in Britain.

Finland's Skepps-Kalender tells many other things about what happened to Finnish merchant vessels during the war. The barque *Felix* of Oulu (Uleåborg) was destroyed by the enemy in Sebastopol in September 1855. She was probably caught by the outbreak of war in Sebastopol and destroyed in the last stages of the prolonged siege. The schooner *Nagaden* of the same port was captured by the English in the Åland Sea in May 1854, while in ballast – that is, without cargo – and she was sent all the way to London, her arrival being duly reported in *The Times* on 7 June as follows, 'Yesterday the *Gebroeders* and the *Nagaden* were brought into West India Docks to be condemned'.

The schooner *Akbar* of Kokkola (Gamla Karleby) was taken by the enemy in the English Channel in 1854 when loaded with 'piece goods' from the West Indies for Hamburg. The brig *Patrioten* of the same port, laden

[8] *Hackmanska arkiv* B-82 (Abö Akademius Bibliotek).

with salt, was captured near Gotland. The barques *Fides* and *Preciosa* of Vaasa (Wasa) were 'taken in the neighbourhood of Vassa Harbour'. The barque *Aina* of Kristiinankaupunki (Kristinestad) with a cargo including salt was captured in the Kattegat on 21 April 1854. The barque *Carl* of Rauma (Raumo) also laden partly with salt, was captured in the English Channel on the 25 April 1854, and the brig *Dido* of the same port, similarly laden, in the Baltic on the 11 April. The barque *America* of Helsinki was captured in the North Sea, also salt laden, on 1 May 1854, and the barque *Fidentia* of Loviisa (Lovisa) was taken in the Gulf of Finland on 1 April in the same year.

The great majority of these captures were, of course, made in the early summer of 1854. They were made by the patrolling paddle-steamers when the vessels concerned were returning to Finland from ports all over the world. Once this first crop had been taken, there were relatively few more captures of deep-sea vessels. Many Finnish ships spent the war laid up in Baltic ports where they were when hostilities began or to which they managed to make their way without being captured in April, May, and June 1854. Again *Finland's Skepps-Kalender* gives some of the details. Vaasa (Wasa) ships were laid up in Norway, Amsterdam, and Stockholm, but the great majority, ten of them, remained in their home port. Raahe (Brahestad) vessels lay in Finnish ports and in Cadiz and Antwerp, while Pietarsaari (Jacobstad) ships lay in Rio de Janeiro and Cadiz and five of them in their home port. Vessels from Uusikaupunki (Nystad) were laid up in Norway and Denmark but, again, the majority of them were laid up in their home port, no less than 19 in number. As events were to show, sometimes the home port could be the most dangerous of all places.

All these vessels were relatively large deep-water vessels from the trading towns. There is less information readily available about the vessels from the countryside trading inside the Baltic. Many of them continued to trade; partly because in wartime conditions there was good money to be made by running risks, partly because the goods they carried, especially salt, were often essential to the life of the communities from which they came, and often because it was essential for their owners to continue in employment with the vessel because their small farms alone were not sufficient to maintain their families. There are many notes among the logs and letters of British officers of the interception, capture, and too often the destruction of these little vessels, the loss of which did no harm whatsoever to the Russians but could ruin a small farmer/shipowner and alienate a whole Finnish community. These were the people who suffered most from the blockade and they underwent much distress, but although the navy continued to harass them, nobody can have believed that their sufferings

made the remotest impression on the Russian government or the outcome of the war. The official returns of naval prizes made towards the end of the war show that the majority of 'Russian' vessels captured were in fact the *galeaser* and *jakter* of peasant seafarers. There is a graphic description of useless destruction in a letter from Captain Codrington to his sister of 3 June 1855.

> I told you that the squadron had caught some country vessels laden with wood and that five had been brought into the squadron. One caught by the *Amphion* was made over to the care of this ship and for our use at my request for not only did I propose to burn the wood, so as to save our coal, but I hoped to make her into a good and serviceable gun vessel. To be sure I was *astounded* when I hauled her alongside and began unloading her. The quantity on board of her quite staggered me. I found her a large, heavy, flat-shaped country vessel of about 180–200 tons. She was loaded chock full with billets of firewood closely packed under hatches; then on deck she was built up with more firewood in one enormous stack fore and aft overhanging the sides and leaving only about 6 feet of working room for the crew at each end and it was piled thus on deck high above my head . . . We worked away all night and next day in 'handing in' and stacking the wood. Next morning not only was engine room and orlop deck filled up, but wherever I could place it on lower deck it was also filled. On middle deck there was a stack between every two guns; main deck the same, and even on upper deck the quarter deck was taken up by firewood in long stakes along each side. I never saw such a quantity. It was all good and dry and evidently intended for the use of furnaces for it was cut in long billets, not in the short ones for fireplaces. The weight we took immersed this ship 4″ . . . We had even then still got one third more of her *deck* load untouched; and her hatches were not even lifted! She remained alongside for two days during which I went on burning the wood for daily use and getting into the ship as much as I could possibly find room for anywhere . . . and on the morning of the 31st the others having been previously burnt, the Admiral ordered me to burn this one. I did so, of course, though I very much regretted it. In these five vessels we thus burned uselessly a quantity of excellent firewood, which scarce and valuable as it is to the Russians was also very valuable to us . . . But of these five vessels the greater part might have been made into gunboats for bombarding . . .[9]

Byam Martin recorded in his journal of 9 May, after talking with Captain Otter of HMS *Alban*:

> Captain Otter says that among the prisoners he has had on board, he has observed no sign or symptoms whatsoever of disaffection to the Russian

[9]NMM Codrington Papers.

Government, either among the Finns, Esthonians, or Livonians, who are the only sailors in the mercantile or national marine. At first he was afraid of his prisoners as they were numerous, – he and all his officers were armed, and the men with their cutlasses; but the Russians were so tractable and well-behaved that gradually the revolvers and other weapons were laid aside, and the prisoners did most of the work of the ship. He says the vessels taken are very clean and well-appointed and the sailors, particularly the Finns, highly intelligent and able to read and write.[10]

Captain Cooper Key reported, after a year and a half of blockade, in a report from HMS *Amphion* to Rear-Admiral Dundas on 28 October 1855,

The effect of the blockade is painfully visible at all the islands and villages with which we communicated. The inhabitants are in great distress for want of their usual supplies; and all indirectly testified to the vigilance exercised by our cruizers.[11]

Captain Sulivan endorsed this view of the situation in one of his letters home:

I believe the poor people, especially the Finns, are suffering sadly. When I went up to Cronstadt, I took two boats crossing the Gulf, one loaded with corn, the other with brandy, and five men in each. The poor men in the corn boat had been across to buy it, and were going back to Finland. The poor creatures said, when I told them they must not cross or their boat would be taken, they could not starve, and must risk anything rather than their families should do so. I could not take the poor fellows' all, so I let them go, corn and all, only taking one bag for our poultry, and giving them tobacco for it, to their great delight . . . The brandy-boat was from the south side, going to cross and trying to pass through the Finnish islands *all the way to Sweden*, to change their brandy for things they were greatly in want of. They were in a low, poor boat, with two boards nailed up its sides, but quite unsafe. I explained to them that they could not pass our ships at several points before they got to Sweden, and that they would be taken and lose all, and I persuaded them to go back, which they did; I could not find the heart to add to the misery of these poor people. Those at home who are so anxious to prolong the war little understand what they would feel were our country in the state of this one; and I fear it is the poor who suffer most, and the Finns more than all, as they had the most trade and ships.[12]

[10]NMM Byam Martin op cit.
[11]NRS, 1855.
[12]Sulivan, op cit.

Captain Sulivan went ashore on one occasion in 1855 to enquire about a sick farmer he had seen the year before. He found the farmer's daughter at home.

When she recognized me she brightened up, and was sorry she did not recollect the 'good Captain', whom all the people here liked so. About three weeks since some sailors broke into the house in the night, and stole what little tea, sugar, and coffee they had got from the ships, as well as a few silver spoons – all they had. What is more cruel still, they had just stored their hay – their only food for the cows and stock in the winter – when some of our men set fire to it, and of course destroyed hay-house and all. They will probably lose most of their cattle through it. She said she thought they were French sailors; but I fear not, for we have many vessels here and I do not think the French have . . . I fear the poor Ålanders have suffered much this year; their vessels have been taken, and all that understanding I established, and Admiral Napier approved of, has been done away with. A new vessel was building when the vessel was lying here last year. The men went on working at her on a promise from Sir Charles that she would not be destroyed. She was launched this summer and since taken by us. The Russians have ill-treated them for their supposed friendly feelings to us, and now we treat them as regular enemies also.[13]

The year 1853 had been an unusually good one for Åland's farmer-shipowners. The war was to hit them hard. According to Georg Kåhre,[14] the Åland fleet in 1853 comprised 122 vessels totalling 5227 läster. By 1855 it was reduced to 101 vessels totalling 3919 läster, a diminution of 20 per cent both in numbers of vessels and in tonnage. Nearly half of this reduction represented vessels sold, some of them nominally to continue to operate under Swedish registration, but Åland ownership, and to be returned after the war. Others were sold to Germany. The losses in revenue were perhaps more important. According to the Crown Bailiff's accounts, quoted by Kåhre, the total revenue earned by Åland vessels in 1853 was 36,675 roubles, in 1854, 12,000 roubles and in 1855 only 4483 roubles. Recovery was rapid. In 1856 the reported revenue was 33,700 roubles.

These figures must not be taken at their face value, however. Blockade runners' profits were by no means all documented officially. While there were tragedies and disasters, there were also success stories. As Kåhre puts it,

[13]Sulivan, op cit.
[14]Kåhre, op cit.

Sailings evidently did not stop altogether during the war years; they were, however, restricted to spring and autumn, when the waters were considered free of enemy watchmen. The occasional blockade runner must also have taken darkness and mist as an ally in familiar waters where the skipper had his own special routes and landmarks. Between Eckerö and the Swedish coast, the risk was taken even during the lightest part of the year; if winds were favourable the crossing took two or three hours.[15]

Kåhre quotes one or two examples of successful blockade running:

Farmer Matts Boman from Geta sailed in 510 roubles with his 26 last jakt *Fama* in 1854 . . . This was hardly less than the vessel was worth; she had been built five years earlier. *Fama* made two passages to Sweden with wood and Baltic herring, one from Sweden to Åbo with 'goods' and one back from Åbo to Sweden, similarly with freight . . . A 13 last smack from Finströms Bergö, *Svahn*, already ten years old, sailed in 500 roubles in the same year from three trips to Sweden with wood, herring, rye and cattle, taking return cargoes of salt each time. The Finnö schooner *Frigga* earned the same profit on one passage from Sweden to Åbo with coal . . . She took on her cargo of coal, 950 barrels, in the late autumn of 1854. She met obstructing ice and remained in Geta, frozen in. Her passage continued with the first open water.[16]

As many of the Åland vessels as possible were concealed in the *viks* and *fjärds* of the inner parts of the archipelago, places hidden from the sea, sometimes many miles from open water. There are hundreds of these sheltered inlets, some of them in the very heart of the archipelago and the great majority of them were never visited by vessels or boats from the British fleet. The most secret of all was Bamböle Vik, right in the heart of Fasta Åland, the biggest island, a long narrow fjärd running north and south with its entrance through a complex of narrow channels to the north and deep water to its southern extremity. Here, in this sheltered secret place, which even today is little visited except by local boats and the shores of which are not easily accessible from the land, an unknown, but certainly a large number of Åland's little vessels – as they then were – were anchored and rigged down against the long siege. The Royal Navy never found this hiding place.

But it was in Åland that the serious raiding began.

[15]Kåhre, op cit.
[16]Ibid.

II

'Take, Burn, or Destroy'

When the British fleet eventually left Älvsnabben, after its prolonged stay, on 5 May 1854, Admiral Plumridge was ordered to proceed with a squadron of paddle-steamers to reconnoitre Åland and blockade the Bothnian coast towns. Rear-Admiral James Hanway Plumridge had entered the navy in 1799, was commissioned in 1806 and during the Napoleonic Wars distinguished himself in actions involving raids and landings by boats. He was made commander in 1814 and post-captain in 1822. He was lucky in finding various forms of employment, including that of Superintendent of the postal packets of Falmouth, and for six years he sat as Member of Parliament for Falmouth. By the normal process of seniority he was raised to flag rank in 1852 and in 1854 the *Neptune*, a sailing vessel of 120 guns, became his flagship, though in fact he spent much of his Baltic service on board the paddle-frigate, *Leopard*, which was under the command of George Giffard.

The squadron comprised the *Leopard*, the *Odin*, the *Valorous* and the *Vulture*. The *Odin* and *Valorous* were 16-gun paddle-frigates. *Odin* was commanded by Captain Francis Scott, *Valorous* by Captain Claude Buckle. *Vulture* was a smaller vessel with six guns under the command of Captain Frederick Glasse. Admiral Plumridge's orders from Sir Charles Napier were to examine as far as practicable the islands of Åland and proceed to blockade the Gulf of Bothnia. These orders were dated 5 May 1854 and between that date and 10 June Admiral Plumridge, Captain Giffard and the squadron embarked on what was intended to be an orgy of destruction which drew from King Oscar I of Sweden the comment, 'To burn and harry, as at Brahestad and Uleåborg, was barbarous and unworthy of our time'.[1]

Admiral Plumridge does not appear to have been ordered to raid the Finnish coast towns. If George Giffard is to be believed, the responsibility

[1]Isaksson, op cit.

for this policy rested with him. George Giffard appears to have been an aggressive, self-opinionated officer who saw service problems only in tactical terms, but who was an extremely competent seaman. His job, as he saw it, was to destroy the enemy and his property, not to consider too hard whether in so doing he was furthering the purposes for which war had been declared, or even whether those of the other side facing him at a particular moment were, in any real sense the enemy, or whether the property which happened to be available for destruction was, in fact, the property of the enemy at all. There were probably other and deeper reasons for the vigour and enthusiasm with which he set out to harry the Finns. From what has already been quoted of his published reminiscences it is apparent that he was utterly exasperated with the weakness and vacillation of most of his superiors and with Sir Charles Napier in particular, especially with Napier's failure to determine the true position of the Russian Squadron. George Giffard was convinced the squadron was anchored in April in the main southern approaches to Sveaborg, but outside the protection of the guns of the fortress. As has already been made clear he had moreover, older and deeper reasons of his contempt of Napier. He had served with him before in the Syrian Campaign.

Giffard, unlike Keppel, Paget, Codrington, and above all, Sulivan, does not come through his own writing as a thinking man, but as the typical 'good fighting officer' of any age. He was dependent on his naval career for his living and, like a number of other captains in the Fleet, almost desperate for the opportunity to bring himself to notice through action, any kind of action, in a war in which the circumstances of the Russian Baltic Fleet, the ambivalence of the British Government's policies and attitudes to the Baltic campaign, and the weakness of the British command, combined to eliminate any possibility of the opportunities for spectacular action and conspicuous service for which officers like George Giffard were thirsting.

After his service in the Syrian campaign, Giffard had been employed on the East Indies and China station in command of the steam sloop *Vixen*, notably in service well suited to an officer of his type – against pirates on the Borneo coast, for which he was promoted post-captain, on 26 December 1845. The achievement at this crucial stage of his career, which ensured that he had merely to go on living to become a full admiral with a KCB, must have been a nice Christmas present. But he was not employed as a post-captain for some time. As he put it,

> And now a Captain in the Navy, just 30 years old, I found myself at home with nothing to do. As the winter came on the famine in Ireland increased, and in January 1847, I was appointed one of the Relief Commissioners, and sent to the County of Donegal. . . . I returned to England, married and settled down, finding little chance of active employment afloat.[2]

He was finally appointed to the crack paddle-frigate *Leopard* in January 1853, an appointment towards which his previous steam experience must have been a great help, and was at first employed in the Mediterranean. He served in the Baltic Campaign of 1854 and in the Black Sea in 1855 where he was made a Companion of the Bath, but he was never employed again after the Crimean campaigns, going on half pay steadily up the ladder of automatic promotion until he became a full admiral in 1877, by which time it was 21 years since he had held any kind of naval command.

The circumstances which led to the decision to raid and destroy on the mainland of Finland can be told in Giffard's own words

> 6 May. Blowing hard from Southward. Eleven sail in company, but no Commander-in-Chief. Noon. Observed him about ten miles to leeward, and he made signal for me to go on board *Duke of Wellington*. I must say, when I saw him, I did pity him, he was trembling, and said to me, 'Giffard, I do not know when I shall recover this'. I thought to myself, If you would only resign the Command; but the other Admirals were no better.
>
> 7 pm Admiral Plumridge rehoisted his Flag, and we proceeded to Faro Sound, to fill up coal. Vegetation was now making great strides, wild flowers were beautiful and numerous, blue and pink nepaticas plentiful, great contrast to the late fields of snow. Admiral Plumridge informed me that he was to have command of a Flying Squadron of steam frigates, in the Gulf of Bothnia.
>
> 8 May. Left Faro Sound, and passed the Fleet off Gollsko Sando.[3]

They went through the Åland Islands. They did not conduct an effective reconnaissance. They met with thick fog and mirage effects and much floating ice and Admiral Plumridge was very afraid of the navigation in the labyrinth. Nevertheless they destroyed some farmers' vessels. Isaksson describes the way the squadron worked:

> On Åland the Plumbrigg, as the residents of Wårdö called him, started his ravaging against the vessels of the coastal population. The usual procedure was that the captured sailing vessel was plundered of all equipment, barrels, and anything else of value. Thereafter the sails were hoisted and the vessels set on fire.[4]

[2]Giffard, op cit.
[3]Giffard, op cit.
[4]Isaksson, op cit.

George Giffard describes the approach to Åland.

> 15 May. Proceeded with *Valorous*, *Odin* and *Vulture* in company for the Åland Islands. *Valorous* got on a rock and in assisting her we got on another, and were some hours getting off again. My old Chief was in a very excited state, and told me it was the first time he had ever been aground. I endeavoured to comfort him by remarking that I had often got aground, and that we must expect to do so in these unsurveyed waters.[5]

Admiral Plumridge excused himself for the failure to look properly at Åland in a long semi-official letter to Sir Charles Napier of 16 May,

> *Leopard* 16 May 54
> Off Alland Islands.
>
> My dear C-in-C,
> Since I left your flag I have been to Faro where I completed our coals from an ullage left in a collier whose demurrange would have increased from £5 to £7.10s the next day. The *Odin* proceeded some few hours before me with the laden Collier but I soon picked them up and accompanied them to a good safe and convenient anchorage called in the chart Orenground where she and the whole of her cargo continues up to the present time untouched – I have called off 'Gripsholm', the Governor is still at Stockholm consequently I have not seen him or have I been able to obtain a pilot for Alland Islands –on falling in with the *Valorous* Capt Buckle reported having succeeded in taking her up to Wardo. I considered I was so far justified in ordering him to lead up the *Leopard* followed by the *Vulture* and *Odin*.
>
> We entered the numinous cluster of Islands and Rocks yesterday morning with beautiful fine weather, I had previously had Capt Buckle on board and he pointed out that which he considered the best channel entrance, I told him truly that I knew nothing about the locality, but if he could cautiously lead us up I would follow being very desirous of carrying out your orders as to 'taking up a position off the Islands of Wardo and Mashaja', at the same time I observed to him, should he on entering it be mistaken, or even after entering it, I should not mind returning at once, not on any account to go fast, keep the leads going and make the fathoms of water as he proceeded – we had not followed many miles up when we found ourselves in a channel of rocks and rocky islets where the *Valorous* made the signal, 'standing in to danger' which was quickly followed by 'I am on shore', I immediately anchored on the first signal and the two ships astern did the same.[6]

It is not easy to interpret Napier's orders to Plumridge to take up a position 'off the Islands of Wardo and Mashaja'. Wårdö is easy enough,

[5]Giffard, op cit.
[6]NMM Napier Papers.

though the commune of Wårdö actually comprises some dozens of islands of widely differing sizes. It would appear most likely that by 'Mashaja' the Admiral meant Michelsö, in which case the squadron was presumably meant to try to get into Prästösund, in the vicinity of Bomarsund, where there are 30 metres of water and easy access, if you know the way. But without proper hydrographic work in advance, the outcome of an attempt to get into Prästösund was predictable.

Admiral Plumridge continued,

> Since my last date we have been skirting the fields and lanes of ice up to the northward, but it was not sufficiently broken up to enable us to approach near enough to reconnoitre the several harbours, or would it indeed been prudent, at this early part of the season to attempt so doing until we should have procured Pilots: therefore from the 'Ostra Quarken' Northwards we have been keeping the Swedish shore on board, looking out for Pilots arrived at the several little harbours and fishing stations. . . . My search for Pilots acquainted with the east side of the Gulf had hitherto proved fruitless and it was not until 3 June that by accident we found the Master of a small Russian schooner laden with Pitch, that would render necessary information: as he offered his services, they were readily accepted and up to a certain time we found him useful and cautious but before we reached Tornea he was quite beside himself and has continued in a state precluding his doing duty. Now however he is on top of the list and I hope he may again prove serviceable on the east coast: . . . Having read in the papers that a blockade has been announced by our Minister may I be excused for asking whether this Gulf is thereby intended to be included? Otherwise I see no hindrance in so far as Norwegian and other neutrals from the trade of Russia being carried on to the utmost extent, in fact we have met numerous of the former and Swedes bound up to the Northward for Russian cargoes of Timber, Tar, pitch etc – and have to regret that I have no authority to 'warn them off'.[7]

Giffard explains more briefly,

> We now proceeded to the North and made the land between Bjorneborg and Christinostad on the 17th, large fields of ice extending five miles off shore, on the coast of Finland, no landing, crossed to the coast of Sweden, and visited several small harbours, to try to get a pilot. 21st. Obtained a pilot at Umea and proceeded to the harbour of Bjorneborg, a snug, well-sheltered anchorage in seven fathoms good water, but few inhabitants, country rocky with small fir trees, no supplies. 23 May. Anchored in Skeleften [Skellefteå in Sweden] River to complete water, which was fresh alongside; people very

[7]NMM Napier papers.

civil and hospitable, no fresh meat or supplies to be had. 24 May. Fired a Royal salute in honour of Her Majesty's birthday. A party of ladies came down from the town of Skeleften, seven miles off, to see the ship, and a large number of the inhabitants who were entertained to the best of our means, the ladies drinking the Queen's health.[8]

They were now on the Swedish side of the Gulf of Bothnia and had proceeded far to the north. They were almost opposite Oulu, (Uleåborg) at the time the most northerly settlement of consequence on the Finnish shore. The ice in this upper part of the Gulf can form exceptionally to a depth of eighteen feet and is often still solid in late May. Giffard goes on,

In the afternoon joined the squadron, *Valorous*, *Odin* and *Vulture* off the edge of the ice which extended from shore to shore, across the Gulf, with large detached masses from ten to twelve feet thick floating about. 26th. Observed some boats among the ice, and on coming up with them found that they were Finnish fishermen shooting seals, gave them each a glass of grog and sent them away rejoicing. 27th. Anchored in the passage leading up to Old Carleby: thick weather. Wished to examine the harbour but the Chief would not venture among the shoals and rocks, on which the surf was breaking, so ran out to sea again.[9]

There follows a passage of great importance in the history of the Baltic campaign and its influence on subsequent events in Finland. Giffard continues in his *Reminiscences*,

My Chief had frequently consulted me as to what we could do to injure the enemy, and I advised that we should visit all the ports on the coast, and destroy or capture the shipping and naval stores. We therefore anchored off the entrance to the harbour in a well sheltered place with that intention. But the rocks and breakers were too much for his nerves, and he insisted against my remonstrance on leaving the place. I felt very angry at being made a fool of, and I fear showed it, for on the following day he again applied to me, and I told him it was no use my giving an opinion as he would do nothing. This had the desired effect, and after consulting with the other three Captains it was decided that we should attack Brakestad and Uleaburg.[10]

It was as a result of this policy, to use Giffard's own words, 'to take, burn, or destroy', that to lay up in their home ports became the most

[8]Giffard, op cit.
[9]Giffard, op cit.
[10]Ibid.

dangerous course of action for Finnish merchant shipping. Giffard's journal at this point becomes almost a gleeful catalogue of the wanton destruction of property, ships, timber and pine tar, and the buildings in which stores were kept. To judge from the journal, he was not aware that the people he was attacking were not Russian and was totally unaware of the complex situation in which the Finns were situated vis-à-vis Russia at the time. He may have known of the continued export of tar across the Gulf of Bothnia (see page 161), but if he did he took no account of the fact that its eventual destination was a Britain much in need of it. Every reference to the local inhabitants is to the 'Russians', and he had apparently neither been briefed as to the situation in Finland or troubled to brief himself. Nor does he appear to have been informed, nor again to inform himself, as to the structure of British trade with Finland or the likely ownership and eventual destination of some of the property he took delight in burning. For some of it, it appears, had already been bought by British merchants and some of it would have been bought from them by the British Government to service his own fleet. Least of all does he seem to have realized that no attack on Finnish towns would have the slightest effect in any way on the Russian authorities, or on the course of the war, or indeed have any effect except to impose loss on poor people and thereby alienate Finns dependant to a degree upon British merchants.

His aim, he says, was 'to show the people the misery that war caused to all sides'. At Uleåborg he threatened a deputation under a flag of truce that he would bombard the church if he was met with any resistance. When he learned that the attack on Kokkola (Gamla Karleby) had been successfully repulsed by the local inhabitants, he wrote of this brave act of self-defence in war as 'treachery' for which the Finns should be punished. Certainly, the activities of the British Squadron in the Gulf of Bothnia in the early summer of 1854 achieved the purpose of extending the misery caused by the war, but it achieved very little else except deeply to alienate the Finns. Giffard was a very early advocate of total war.

At Oulu (Uleåborg) Giffard records,

8 pm Left Brakestad and proceeded north for Uleaborg. 31 May. The sun rose at 1.20 am. Sent boats with the master to sound and buoy the passage, we did so by mooring poles which we cut on shore with 32 lb shot. *Valorous* rejoined having cleared the ice with great difficulty. The floats of the paddle-wheels of all the ships, were much broken by the ice. Captured two small schooners and a small brig and anchored them with a prize crew in charge. 1 June. Proceeded slowly with boats ahead sounding among the shoals towards the anchorage off Uleaborg, one of the crew of the captured schooners undertaking to pilot

us among the numerous rocks and shoals, and after great difficulty anchored off the town. A flag of truce came off, begging us to spare the town. Informed the deputation that the town and private property would be spared, as long as the people kept quiet and didn't fire on the boats; we would only destroy the shipping and naval stores. 9 pm Sent the armed boats of the squadron under Lieutenants Priest and Graham, to take, burn, or destroy. 2 June, 8 am Boats returned, having found that the Russians had scuttled all the shipping afloat, but our men burnt them as well as a number of buildings, with large stores of timber, spars, tar and pitch, estimated as worth half a million. The fire from the immense quantities of pitch, tar and timber, could be seen for many miles around.[11]

The official reports make depressing reading. Napier reported to the Admiralty on 18 June,

I beg leave to inclose Admiral Plumridge's report of his proceedings in the Gulf of Bothnia, from the 5 May to 10 June, by which their Lordships will perceive that he has destroyed 46 vessels afloat and on the stocks, amounting to 11,000 tons; from 40,000 to 50,000 barrels of pitch and tar; 6000 square yards of rough pitch; a great number of stacks of timber, spars, plank and deal, sails, rope, and various kinds of naval stores, to the amount of from £300,000 to £400,000, without the loss of a man.[12]

Giffard claimed that at Brahestad he had destroyed one brig under repair, one newly launched barque, three schooners, five sloops, 'and four large vessels under construction'. *Finland's Skepps Kalender* records the loss by burning on 30 May of the new full-rigged ship *Hoppet*, the new barque *India*, an unnamed new full-rigged ship, the full-rigged ship *Molla* built in 1844, the schooners *Titus* and *Wilkas* and the sloops *Bas* and *Kirppu*. In addition, the barque *Sophia* and the galeas *Ahtia* were captured in ports away from home on 28 May and a half-finished ship and barque in the same state were destroyed on the slips on 30 May. It looks as if the raiders could have claimed even more damage than they did. Similarly, at Uleåborg, Giffard claimed a bag of eight laid-up schooners, four brigs, one laden sloop, one laden schooner and one brand new brig just launched, while 'off Uleåborg', whatever that may mean in this context, he claims five barques building and nearly complete and three schooners, one empty and two laden with tar. *Finland's Skepps Kalender* gives 'six large vessels and a schooner under construction burned by Englishmen', together with the

[11]Giffard, op cit.
[12]NRS (1854).

barque *John*, the schooners *Catarina*, *Mesack*, *Seuruus*, *Snall* and *Kajana* and the sloop *Olof*. The six new vessels correspond with Giffard's claim but it is hard to reconcile the rest of his statement with the facts.

A very interesting incident occurred when Giffard went ashore at Oulu (Uleåborg) after the raid.

The Governor met us on landing and after exchanging civilities conducted us over the town; a neat well-built place, houses of wood, a fine large church, and about 6000 inhabitants. It was rather curious our walking about an enemy's town under the escort of the Governor. He spoke English remarkably well and hearing my name asked me if I was any relation of the Captain of the 'Tiger' steam frigate in the Black Sea, and finding I was not, told us of the capture of the ship by the Russians and the death of the captain.[13]

Giffard's visit ashore took place on 3 June 1854. HMS *Tiger* had been lost by stranding and subsequent bombardment by the Russians immediately south of Odessa, her crew captured and Captain Henry Wells Giffard fatally wounded on 12 May. Captain Giffard had not died until 1 June, and it is probable that the news of his death was rumour, based on the fact that he had been very seriously wounded in the action. Nevertheless the speed with which the news had travelled to the extreme north of the Baltic was truly remarkable.[14]

It is very interesting to compare Giffard's account of the attack on Uleåborg, given above, with the account given by Borodkin. Borodkin says,

The account given by an eye witness to the ravages of the British, Professor S Baranovsky of the University of Helsinki, puts these 'civilized seafarers' in the full light of the fires they started.

On 20 May, British troops arrived at Brahestad aboard 3 frigates. About 4 kilometres from the town, the British boarded the launches, some of which were armed with a cannon. When the enemy approached the vessel standing in the shipyard, one of their officers asked 'Are there any troops there?' When the reply was negative, he said, 'What a pity. We are going to set fire to the shipyard and that fine vessel will have to be burnt'. He was referring to a newly-built vessel which had just been copper sheathed. When all the workers

[13]Giffard, op cit.
[14]Of the three main strands of the ancient family of the Giffards, descended from Osbern Giffard of William the Conqueror's retinue, George Giffard was of Giffard of Halsbury in Devon and Henry Wells Giffard, great-grandfather of one of the authors of this book, of Giffard of Rushall in Wiltshire.

had been driven out of the shipyard, the British set fire to it. One by one, 13 vessels, the timber store, five buildings, many barrels of tar, salt and pitch, 2000 cords of wood and more fell prey to the raging flames. In all, property worth 300,000 roubles was burnt. The stocks of timber were destroyed on the grounds that the British considered the wood war contraband, since it could have been used to build gunboats. There were no military personnel in the town, not even any person in uniform. There was a similar lack of Government buildings but 'the English gentlemen' nevertheless let everything go up in smoke. One brig belonged to a Swedish merchant and a schooner to a Russian. Part of the goods burned had already been bought by British traders. The British sailors, however, took no notice of any of these particulars but burned everything indiscriminately without there being any need whatsoever to do so. And if the entire town did not go up in flames, it was only because the wind, luckily, was blowing in the direction of the shipyard.[15]

The Russian claim that some of the material destroyed had already been sold to British merchants seems the more likely to be true in the light of correspondence from Finnish merchants to their British agents which was continued in other ports during the war. Thus, on the 19 June 1854 the house of Hackman in Viipuri (Viborg) wrote to their associates in London, Henry Dresser & Co, apropos of business they might have through other Finnish merchant houses,

> The news of the misfortunes which have drabbed Uleåborg and Brahestad will have reached you 'ere this, but we trust you are no losers thro' the destruction of the tar and wood stores by the English fleet.[16]

There is other correspondence of June 1854 about the removal of timber, the property of English merchants, from the range of the fleets' guns. More specifically, of other raids a year later, Hackmans wrote to Cox, Heisch & Co of London,

> In consequence of the affair near Trångsund on the 13th ulto, when some rockets thrown from the english men-of-war came down as far as upon Turkinsaari, we have considered it necessary for the safety of Messrs Langton and Robinson's 70 Std Deals and Battens, to remove them from Turkinsaari to Samonsaari, an island situated behind our town on an inlet of the Gulf, where according to the best of our belief the goods ought to be safe for all danger of war.[17]

[15]Borodkin, op cit.
[16]Hackmanska arkiv op cit.
[17]Ibid.

The Times condemned the raids in leading articles in late June and early July on the grounds that the material destroyed was not contraband but intended for export to Britain and already partly paid for. The waging of this kind of warfare against Finland, a nation with good trading relations with Britain, would preclude rather than encourage major political changes in Finland. *The Times* also carried a report of the bad effect the raids had had on Britain's standing in Sweden.

In Finland the effect of the raids was to prove crucial, producing great and widespread anti-British feeling. As the news of the destruction spread through the country, not only the inhabitants of the coastal towns but also the farmers and foresters inland were greatly shocked. In the Press Admiral Plumridge was dubbed an arsonist and British naval warfare compared with the raids of the Vikings. The war was seen as a plundering expedition by the British against the Finns. In the words of a modern Finnish historian,

> The logic of events moved the Finns to take an attitude towards the war . . . These opening moves in the Crimean War stirred up real hatred of Britain, and at the same time caused loyalty to the Emperor to become more pronounced. In their crisis, the Finns looked to him for protection. In this way, what had failed to happen in the country during the adaption to the new conditions after 1808 finally came to realization. The change in attitude affected the burghers and especially the farmers.[18]

The coastal towns were duly warned by the raids on Oulu (Uleåborg) and Raahe (Brahestad), and they took precautions accordingly. Pietarsaari (Jacobstad) and Kristiinankaupunki (Kristinestad) provide good examples of what was done all around the coasts. Jacobstad, after a period of depression in the 1840s, at the beginning of the 50s had a large sailing fleet. As we have already seen, many of these vessels – 15 in total – were sold abroad shortly before the war began. Others were laid up abroad. The inhabitants feared an enemy landing and widespread destruction of property. So, of vessels remaining in the port, the barque *Mainio* and the schooner *Eous*, which were both under construction, were launched incomplete and removed to the inner archipelago where they were laid up, camouflaged, together with the schooners *Aktive*, *Tähti* and *Albanaus*. Under construction also was the barque *Najaden* and she and the barque *Louise* were deliberately sunk in sheltered water, both later to be raised and sold to Swedish owners. Timber from the shipbuilding yard was thrown into the sea, the town magazine was blown up and the inhabitants of

[18]Paasivirta, op cit.

Jacobstad removed a good deal of their property into the countryside inland. All the navigational beacons were removed.[19]

In fact the paddle-frigates of the *Eldamiral*, the Fire Admiral, never reached Jacobstad in 1854. The *Odin*, accompanied by the *Hecla*, tried to find their way in on 8 June but missed the channel and had to return. But the wanton destruction in the north had really frightened the merchants and together they made representation through their British agents and partners to seek to persuade the British Government to put a stop to the destruction. The great trading house of Peter Malm in particular made representations in June through Rew, Prescott & Co in London, describing the raids as 'unnecessary and barbaric'.[20]

The difficulty was largely one of communication. Sir Charles Napier himself had no knowledge of what was going on in the Gulf of Bothnia, much less the government in London. Mr Grey, the Minister in Stockholm, bewailed the difficulty of finding out where the units of the fleet were at any one time. As he wrote to Napier on 9 June 1854,

> I also send you in another despatch all the information we have received regarding Admiral Plumridge. It is possible that the next steamer which arrives from the north may bring some further news and I shall at any rate wait for that before I send anybody in search of intelligence, for if the Admiral is now on the Russian side of the Gulf as the papers suppose, I should have no means of communicating with him.[21]

In the autumn, when the British Fleet, ignorant of Baltic sailing conditions and scared of the ice and fog, had prematurely departed, the Jacobstad vessels which had been sunk were taken up, loaded and sailed over to Sweden, where some of them were sold. Small vessels made passages across the Gulf of Bothnia in both directions with great financial advantage to owners and merchants. Peter Malm's barque *Charlotte*, which had spent the previous summer in a Swedish port, was loaded with salt (which had now become a very valuable commodity) and sailed over to Jacobstad where she spent the winter. As we have already seen in Åland it was a bad winter and the sea lanes into Jacobstad were not open until mid-June 1855.

In the town hall of Kristinestad there is a most interesting document. It is the 'account of the precautions taken and the sacrifices made by the

[19] Al Ahlström, *I Kulturens och krimkrigets tecken* (Jacobstad, 1948).
[20] P Wikström, *Utveckling i samverkan* (Jacobstad, 1981).
[21] NMM, Napier Papers.

inhabitants of Kristinestad during the war years of 1854 and 1855 in the defence of the town, and to facilitate military operations'. It was no doubt prepared for the purposes both of convincing the Russian authorities of the zeal of the townsfolk in defending the Grand Duchy and of obtaining compensation for the financial outlay involved. Hence it records much of the sort of action that was taken in the Bothnian towns in an attempt to counter the activities of Captain Giffard and his colleagues and is worth quoting in full:

1. From the spring of 1854 when war broke out, and until the summer of the same year the town financed the installation of a telegraph service which was to be used to give early warning of the arrival of enemy ships off the coast.
2. At the entrance to the town harbour the inhabitants built one large and several smaller gun batteries of stone and earth, but as the soldiers stationed in the town had no cannon to place on the gun batteries, the town obtained these partly by direct purchase, and partly from other districts. Ten small cannon and the gunpowder for priming them were purchased. Iron cannon balls were cast at the iron foundry in the parish of Närpes, and lead cannon balls were manufactured in the town. The total number thus produced amounted to about 800 rounds, and cost the town the sum of..... 893.–
3. The cost of building the gun batteries and the establishment of a military magazine came to about 1400 days' work, which at 35 Kopek per day amounts to 490.–
4. At the mouth of the harbour 75 beams coupled together by iron chains and hooks were submerged in those channels through which it was feared the enemy ships and sloops would come. This material cost..... 300.–
5. In the dock area houses and buildings were demolished to prevent the outbreak of fire during a bombardment and thus protect the adjacent parts of the town. The loss of these buildings was estimated as amounting to 206.–
6. One hundred and forty Russian rifles were available for issue to the citizens on demand for the purpose of assisting the army if required. A volunteer force of 150 young men was given instruction in target shooting. Ammunition (ie powder and shot) for this volunteer force was provided by individual public-spirited citizens.

In 1855 when the naval action commenced, and enemy vessels were observed in the Bay of Bothnia, the town found itself without a military defence. Even the weapons which had been distributed the previous year had been collected and removed. In

this defenceless state the town was fiercely attacked on 25 June and the gun batteries built by the townsfolk were destroyed.

In July when the army was again stationed in the town, the inhabitants rebuilt the gun batteries destroyed by the enemy, and in addition built a 2 km long military road at a cost of 200 days' work, which at 35 Kopek per day amounted to 700.–

The town's cannon were again installed on the rebuilt gun batteries, to be used in the event of a future invasion. However, the enemy did not return during the whole of the summer.

Total cost..... R.2589.–

Kristinestad, 13 March 1856
Signed: MH

We have already described the sales of vessels from Kristinestad which took place before the outbreak of war and the subsequent war losses on the high seas. The people took their moveable property inland. Timber and ships were hidden in secluded places. There is one very happy story of local enterprise and determination in avoiding the British blockade. It concerns the barque *Chatarina*, a new vessel, completed in the early months of 1854 and immediately deliberately sunk in a fjärd where she lay all summer. As soon as the British were withdrawn, she was raised. In the words of Walter Sjöblom,

> One large vessel is however mentioned by name as a successful blockade breaker. In the war year of 1854 the *Chatarina*, of about 280 old lasts and in the ownership of Simon Anders Wendelin, was being loaded up with a variety of goods which could then be disposed of as occasion offered: lumber, tar, pitch, salt beef, pork, bread, butter, and rope tackle, all for transport for Sweden and if possible to Stockholm. Loading was commenced at the beginning of December and was completed in the middle of the same month, some days before Christmas. After the vessel was 'cleared' it was 'sawn out' through the ice from the inner harbour of the Town out to the Härkmeri Beacon. For that work which, as a consequence of the prevailing very cold weather, took up a couple of weeks with a daily labour force of 400 men and sometimes more. The wind blew, for the whole time, from the north quarter.
>
> On the 27 December however there was a change in the wind, with a south east gale blowing in a milder temperature. The ice which by now had set solid as far as the sea was broken up by the gale. Now the opportunity was favourable to be off, and attempt to beat the blockade. On Sunday, 31 December, that is on New Years Eve, it was reported at 2 pm from the Town Hall Tower, where the watch was posted, that the ship had weighed anchor and had set sail. By 3 pm the last contours of the blockade breaker were discerned and the *Chatarina* was set on a westward course. After a long and anxious wait for the owner over a period of two weeks there came a letter – the telegraph was not then in existence – the very welcome news that the ship, after a difficult voyage of eight days, had reached Furusund.
>
> Nearly double the normal crew had been assembled in Kristinestad for this voyage, since it was assumed that this would be necessary . . . After discharging some cargo in Stockholm, both the ship and the remaining cargo were then sold, a specially favourable price being obtained.[22]

The local defence system which the Russian bureaucracy sought to organize and which was described in Chapter 8 signally failed in Oulu (Uleåborg) and Raahe (Brahestad). It never failed so completely again and at Kokkola (Gamla Karleby) it had a great success. Indeed, after Gamla Karleby, though there were many forays ashore, there were no more fire raids on coastal towns. Giffard gives one version of what happened:

> 9 June. Our Pilot being very ill, we were left to grope our way down the gulf, under easy steam, with boats ahead sounding, and after 11 hours work, cleared the shoals and proceeded south under sail to save coal, passing large masses of ice: thick, misty, cold weather. 10th. *Odin* and *Vulture* rejoined off Jacobstad. These ships had sent their boats to destroy shipping at Carleby, but the Officer in Command had carelessly anchored off the town to give his men their dinner, and the enemy brought down some field pieces under cover of the houses, and suddenly opening fire, sank some of the boats before they could get under way, causing a loss of 53 men, killed, wounded and taken prisoners. Had ordinary caution been used this would not have happened. The officer in command should have done his work first, or else have taken hostages from the town when he first communicated with the authorities; but he thought that as he had met with no resistance at first and had spared the town which was then at his mercy, he was safe, and was caught in a trap. I wished to go in again with all the Squadron and punish them for their treachery, but the chief did not think it advisable.[23]

If Uleåborg and Brahestad were legitimate targets, so was Kokkola (Gamla Karleby). It had a merchant fleet of its own, most of which had been sold before the outbreak of war. Four of its ships had been captured or destroyed by the British. The barque *Odessa* lay in Hull discharging at the outbreak of war so that its Master, Henrik Wiklund, and his wife, who was on board, were interned for the duration of the war. The town had a thriving business in the export of Stockholm tar and timber, mainly to Britain. Because of the metre or more of land rise which has taken place since 1854, the outlines of the harbour have changed since the abortive raid took place.

[22] Walter Sjöblom, *Kristinestads Historia* (Kristinestad, 1915).
[23] Giffard, op cit.

The sites of the tar sheds which lined the northern side of the harbour in 1854 are now a little inland. Here, among the woods, are bare patches of ground, almost as if there had been a paved and tarred road here. In fact, the Stockholm tar spilled and seeped from the barrels and soaked into the earth for scores of years and has left the earth as hard and black as a modern road.

The *Illustrated London News* of 1 July gave a good and clear account of what happened from the British point of view:

> The Gamla Carleby Affair.
> By letters from the Baltic fleet, of 20 June, we have received a more accurate account of the melancholy affair at Gamla Carleby. It appears that after the crews of some of the steamers of Admiral Plumridge's division had destroyed the shipping and marine stores in Uleaborg and Brahestad, in the Gulf of Bothnia, the *Vulture* and *Odin* approached Gamla Carleby (Old Carleby), on the evening of the 7th ult, but could not get nearer than about four miles and a half, as they drew too much water for the narrow creeks leading to the town. The *Vulture* and the *Odin*, in fact, although the former is only a six-gunner, were unable to render any assistance to their officers and crew forming the expedition, and hence, in a great measure, the deplorable loss of life.
>
> About seven pm the boats of the two steamers were manned and armed – there being in all nine boats, two pinnaces, two paddle-box boats, four cutters and one gig, with 180 officers and men: the entire expedition being under the command of Lieut C A Wise, of the *Vulture*, who was accompanied by Lieut Madden, Lieut Burton, of the Royal Marine Artillery, and by Dr Duncan, all of that steamer. The boats were then rowed towards shore, and after a long pull, anchored near the storehouse at the entrance of one of the creeks leading to the town. Lieut Wise and Lieut Burton went on shore – a flag of truce having been previously displayed – and communicated with the Burgomaster. The other boats remained about half a mile distant. Lieut Wise demanded the delivery up of all the ships in the harbour and all the Government property, promising in case of compliance, not to shell the town or the inhabitants. He and his men, however, were not allowed to enter Carleby, although he offered to go unarmed, and declared that he merely wished to ascertain whether there were any Government stores in the place. Whilst Lieutenants Wise and Burton were holding a parley with the Burgomaster of old Carleby, the latter had at his side a military-looking person in plain dress, no doubt a high Russian functionary, as the Burgomaster and the other municipal authorities appeared to be guided by his advice. To the twice or thrice repeated question whether there were any Russian troops in or near the town no answer was given, and that silence was considered by Messrs Wise and Burton as significant; the latter observing, after pushing off from the shore, 'We shall for a certainty have a fight'.
>
> Lieut Wise having returned to the boats forming the expedition, the flag of truce was withdrawn; some boats were sent ahead for the purpose of sounding, and the others followed closely. One of the boats of the *Odin* was ordered to reconnoitre one of the creeks leading to the town; on passing near some buildings the boat's crew perceived a number of soldiers, and turned back in order to report the discovery. That moment, however, a temporarily raised wall was thrown down, and a volley of musketry was poured on the boat, killing Lieutenant Carrington; Mr Montague, mate; and Mr Athorpe, midshipman; and wounding Lieutenant Lewis, RM, and Mr M'Grath, midshipman, as well as fourteen seamen and marines. The boat itself was disabled, and was towed by another one to the *Odin* which was still lying in the roads. The other boats, which had on board four 24-pounders, howitzers, and two 12-pounders, howitzers, immediately opened fire, one gunner of the *Vulture* – an excellent hand – firing not less than twenty-seven times before he fell wounded. The fire was steadily maintained on shore, but the boats, with the exception of one belonging to the *Vulture*, were soon rowed out of range. The unfortunate exception was one which got aground. The last time it was distinctly seen it was disabled, and drifting with the current. By this time the number of the enemy had greatly increased, and it was calculated that there were not less than 500 riflemen. There is some obscurity, or rather diversity, of opinion respecting the fate of the missing boat. Some think a shell burst right over it, killing or wounding all in it; others, that it got aground on the piles in the creek, and that it was captured by the enemy. In that boat – which was the paddle-box boat of the *Vulture* – were Mr N I Morphy, mate, and twenty-five seamen; and, in another boat belonging to the same steamer, one marine was killed and six were wounded; so that the entire loss of the two steamers in killed, wounded and missing, was 52. In one boat of some 18 persons, not less than 11 were killed or wounded. In the beginning of what may be called the action, the enemy had only one field-piece; but, towards the close, they had trained up five.
>
> The firing from the Russian troops lasted an hour and ten minutes, and had not the elevation of their guns been too high, the loss on the side of the English would have been still greater. Moreover, they commenced firing too soon; had they waited until the boats were further into the creek, and then opened their volley, not a single Englishman, it is calculated, would have escaped. One of the boats of the *Vulture* was pierced in numerous places with grape shot, and had two of her oars broken.

There are still many records in the town of Kokkola (Gamla Karleby) of the repeated visits of the British fleet during the summer of 1854, but the most valuable record of the one attempt to land is in the diary of a factory owner, Carl Johan Nyström.

> *JUNE*
> *2 Friday*. Today Roos journeyed off with his Theatrical Troupe. I was occupied for the whole day in packing up and conveying my goods and effects against the possible arrival of the English.

3 Saturday. Occupied in the above mentioned work, since we had been informed through relay runners that the enemy had caused terrible warehouse fires in Uleåborg and in Brahestad. In the first named between 50 and 60 thousand barrels of tar, besides timber, and boats.
4 Whit Sunday. The whole day idle since the Englishman was expected every minute.
5 Whit Monday. In the morning I conveyed my dear Mother to Wetavessi, and in the afternoon Sneckendahl and Dahlin also came here and we dawdled about until 10 o'clock in the evening going home at ½ 12 and were informed on our way back that the English had already approached, whereupon we got ready as quickly as possible and marched out to Hallkokari because it was there that he was being awaited and remained there until 9 o'clock in the morning. He did not approach but on the contrary went off to sea. Today the military arrived to stay – Infantry and Cossacks. I broke the stock of my double-barrelled shotgun.
6 Tuesday. No rest in sleep. Today the Artillery arrived with two cannons.
7 Wednesday. Home at work until 5 o'clock in the evening when the English were again sighted whereupon together with several of my friends I went off to Brännеriet where we clearly saw two ships. I got orders to stay there and dispatch a report, as soon as any boat was put down from a ship, to General Went who was dwelling in Bhöm's house; boats were put down, nine in all, the report was sent off and the General arrived. They approached until they came to a halt on the Beckbruk shoal, where a flag of truce was hoisted on one boat and it was steered to the mouth of the channel when Mayor Roos, Commercial Counsellor Donner, O R Kuntzell, Capt Österberg, Captain E Wallin, and A Forsberg went to meet them but did not agree to what they desired, whereupon they threatened that they would burn down the Town, to which we replied that we can do nothing more and are ready for anything, whereupon they who were conducting the parleys turned back and rejoined the rest of the squadron, and charges for the cannon were immediately prepared.

One boat went near Mustakari but turned round and then came back towards Hallkokari where our military were posted between the magazines, when the Artillery opened fire on it, as well as small arms fire on the others. The English quickly and smartly replied with both cannon and rifle fire, but none the less took a good beating. One of their boats with a cannon was captured with 21 prisoners, 6 dead and two badly wounded. The affair was seen by me from Brännеriet and it lasted a good hour. I returned home at night and ate at Kellman's after which I went and had a look at the prisoners who had been conveyed to the Town Hall, after which I went and laid down for an hour in Sneckendahl's house.
8 Thursday. In the morning to Hallkokari to have a look at the ravages of the night's events. I dug out 1 grape-shot and one rifle-shot as a memento of this foolhardy attempted landing by the English in Gamla Carleby in the night between the 7th and the 8th June, 1854. In the afternoon a boat was reported coming from one of the ships and carrying a flag of parley (truce), but having got no reply from the land it went back on board ship, and the latter then weighed anchor and went off to sea (Deleted: The prisoners were sent today to . . . under Cossack Guard). C Sneckendahl journeyed off in the evening to Wasa.[24]

The *Odin* lost three officers and three men killed. Two of her officers and 15 of her crew were wounded. All these returned to the ship. The *Vulture*'s losses were much greater. From one of her boats she lost one killed and four wounded. The entire crew of her other boat was lost together with the boat itself. Nine of the boat's crew, including the officer-in-charge, were killed and the rest taken prisoner. The total of casualties represent well over a quarter of the attacking force. The boat and her bronze cannon were captured intact by the Finns. The dead were buried in the Marie burial ground where their grave and headstones are still well kept today. There is also a large memorial to both the Finns and British killed in the attack in the vicinity of the area where it took place.

The captured boat is today carefully preserved and displayed in its own boathouse in the English park at Kokkola (Gamla Karleby) and is of great interest as the only surviving example of the paddle-box boats which were carried in the paddle-frigates of the mid-nineteenth century. The idea that the upper parts of the paddle boxes of steamers might comprise useable boats was put forward in 1838 by Captain George Smith. After trials in 1839 (conducted at a cost of £268) the idea was adopted for paddle-frigates. These big boats were stowed upside down on top of the paddle boxes – indeed they themselves comprised the top of the box. Over thirty feet long, very burdensome and massively built, the righting and launching of these boats, given that these frigates had no steam deck machinery, must have been a big job requiring the strength of many men. James Peake's *Rudiments of Naval Architecture* published in London in 1851 describes one of the several methods by which this job was done. The shape of these boats and the way they were stowed on board is clearly shown in a number of illustrations to this book. The *Vulture*'s boat, as it is to be seen in Gamla Karleby today, is diagonally built, has eight thwarts and eight positions for oar crutches on each side, four mast positions and two large holes where the boat was hit by cannon ball. It is 9.7 metres long, 3.3 m in the beam, and the tops of the stem and stern posts (although the boat is identical at both ends) are 1.4 m above the lowest part of the rockered keel.

[24]Kerstin Martinazzoli 'Affairen vid Halkokari', *Osterbottningen*, No 203 (5 September 1970).

British vessels hovered off Gamla Karleby many times in the summer of 1854 and in the next summer. But they never came in again in force. There were a number of further raids on Finnish coastal towns, especially in the summer of 1855, but no more mass destruction of private property, except for that of merchant ships at Usikaupunki (Nystad) and here the British claims were much exaggerated. Landings from open rowing boats on the wharves and foreshores of towns were liable to impose an unacceptable level of casualties if the shore was defended. The people of Gamla Karleby, stiffened by a small force of Russian troops, stopped what otherwise might have been a campaign 'to take, burn, or destroy' all round the coast of Finland. The only way of ensuring that the boats were not resisted – and even then there might have been heavy casualties – would have been to destroy the town first by bombardment from the sea, easy enough with towns built almost entirely of wood. But it is doubtful if even Giffard would have thought such an action wise.

The Finns' success in defending Gamla Karleby enabled the Russian authorities to exploit the new strong current of pro-Russian, or rather pro-Emperor, and anti-British political feelings. Much was made of it in Russian propaganda both at home and abroad. The expressed sentiments of ordinary Finnish-speaking people are caught in a fragment of a broadside song – one of many – which sees the British raids as the punishment of God for the people's sins. It contrasts the English martyr St Henry, the legend of whose mission to bring Christianity to Finland in the eleventh century was preserved in folk poetry, with the conduct of the landing parties from the Royal Navy in 1854,

O it saddens my soul
And it is so very sorrowful,
When that band of western powers
Sends the scourge of anger.
It brought once the light,
And the dawn broke
Over the poor lands of the North.

If St Henry right at the beginning
Had believed things would turn out like this,
In the grip of the Turk he
Would not have come to Finland
To preach peace to the people,
And in pursuit of his teaching
Given up his life.

So for the dawn we thank
England from our hearts;
But to a man we shall grasp our swords
With all our strength to protect
Our shores from destruction
And to defeat the enemy,
When our Emperor commands.

O Lord! the Prince's help,
Grant strength to the authorities
To handle our enemy;
Do not reproach us for our sins!
O Lord do not punish
Whatever our evil deeds deserve!
Grant your grace to us once more!

A local farmer, Mr Kankkonen, Finnish-speaking and therefore typical of the majority of the population, had played a leading part in the action. He became a symbol of the will of the people to join in the defence of their country jointly with their Russian brothers. His portrait was painted and hung in the Governor-General's residence in Helsinki. There is more than one 'Kankkonen's Gun' preserved today. In the changed atmosphere the Emperor was able, in the context of defending the Finnish coast, despite the exemption from conscription of the Finns for fifty years which still had several years to run, to introduce a measure of conscription, calling up four battalions of Finnish infantry. Although this move was not universally popular it had the political effect of strengthening further the feeling that the Finnish people were playing an active role in defending their country and Emperor against the British.

Admiral Plumridge summed up the situation in his diffident way, in a private letter to Sir Charles Napier of 16 May. He said,

> . . . I cannot refrain mentioning the disquietude and pain I have experienced from the loss sustained by the boats of the *Vulture* and *Odin* together with the meagre details I have been able to collect and forward for your information on this most distressing case. No doubt the coasts south of Gamla Carleby will be found in a state of defence for it is supposed they had two regiments with field pieces there, consequently whatever business that can be accomplished must be under the protection of the guns of the Squadron. But to get them to bear and be serviceable it is absolutely necessary that we should have one, two or more steamers of light draught of water (12 ft) and the approaches to several harbours and places that are or may be hereafter thought worthy of attack may be so far known as to make sure of getting our Squadron, drawing at least 16 feet, in a sufficiently close position to cover the boats and landing

party, should the latter be thought proper, and to cover the towns if possible by the steamers' more close position: you will I hope pardon me for saying this much, but I have really found by experience since I left your flag how vastly valuable such an addition would prove to the force now under my direction.[25]

As for what was thought in Britain, and in the fleet, of this campaign, even Earp, writing in 1857 as Napier's principal apologist, felt obliged to say,

> Nor was this destruction of property worth going after. Very little with the exception of a few barrels of pitch found at Brakestead, was the property of the Russian Government. It was the private property of shipbuilders and others, and no small portion was English property! upon which money had been advanced, as is customary in the English market. Apart from this, the materials destroyed were the property of the Fins, who had not offended us, and with whom it was politic to maintain a good understanding, this great object being frustrated by a wanton destruction, which gave great pain to the Admiral Commanding in Chief, and which barely comes within the pale of civilized warfare.[26]

Captain Sulivan wrote in connection with an incident which was to take place at Hangö in 1855,

> We have heard the Finns are terribly exasperated against us, through the destruction of their private property by Admiral Plumridge last year in so wanton a manner. The Gamla Karleby slaughter last year was the first effect of that un-English and unchristian proceeding, and I have no doubt this may be traced to the same feeling. So terribly do unjust acts leads to retribution.[27]

Captain Paget was of a closely similar view. He wrote,

> Plumridge, with the paddle division, was now sent in to the Gulf of Bothnia, where they signalized themselves by the destruction of half a millions worth of property, belonging, it is much to be feared, to inoffensive and friendly inhabitants.
>
> I do believe that this wholesale destruction, impolitic though it undoubtedly was, was undertaken and carried out by orders from home. It was profitable to no-one, for I do not believe the Squadron made a shilling of prize money, and it has endangered the hatred of us on the part of the Finlanders, which will make them fight us *con amore*; indeed, they have already manifested their revenge by the butchery of above 50 of the *Vulture*'s crew, at Gamla Carleby, a small town, north of Åbo, when the vessel's boats were on a burning excursion.[28]

[25]NMM Napier Papers.
[26]Earp, op cit.
[27]Sulivan, op cit.

Captain Keppel, having given a version of the Gamla Karleby defeat which is close to the apparent truth, though he wrote it as early as 18 June when lying in the *St Jean d'Acre* in Barö Sound near Helsinki, went on to say in a private letter,

> Now it is little short of mutiny to scrutinize the actions of an Admiral especially when I may be placed tomorrow under his orders but in the first place I doubt the policy of burning empty merchant ships especially on the Finland coast where the native hearts are with us if their minds are not. Secondly, boats should seldom or ever be sent on such service out of sight of their own steamships. At all events I do not think I could order boats on any such doubtful service without being prepared to accompany them myself. But I dare say the whole business will like the Hangö (affair) sound well in the papers.[29]

The matter did not end there. Mr Gibson asked a question in the House of Commons. The *Annual Register* reported it on 29 June 1854,

> Mr Gibson called attention to the proceedings of Admiral Plumridge at Uleaborg and Brahestad in the Gulf of Bothnia and, disclaiming any desire to cast odium or reproach upon the officers of the Service, called upon the First Lord of the Admiralty for an explanation of the policy of the proceedings. These he declared were of a marauding character, undefended towns and villages on the coast being invaded and the unresisting inhabitants plundered. Among other defenceless places which had been attacked a descent was made upon Uleaborg, where, in spite of the proclamation that private property should be respected, a quantity of deals and tar was burnt – all of which belonged to private persons, and most of it to Englishmen. Remarking as a contingent disadvantage that such acts often entailed upon the country a series of the most perplexing claims, the Right Hon Member questions the policy of the system which carried on a great war by plundering and destroying the property of defenceless villagers.

Sir James Graham's reply was a small masterpiece of political irrelevance. He made no reference to the incompatibility of the wholesale

[28]Paget, op cit.
[29]NMM Keppel papers.

burning of Finnish merchant ships and Finnish and British private property ashore with Lord Newcastle's instruction to the Admiralty of 29 March (page 137), which had expressed the policy of the government of Lord Aberdeen in just this matter. But in an entry in his journal on Friday 21 April 1854 Commodore Byam Martin perhaps gave expression to an undertow of feeling amongst some captains of the fleet,

> The Chaplain of the ship wants to know how the 26th, the day of humiliation and prayer [which had been ordered], is to be observed – I told him our errand was robbery and murder – and that in such a case humiliation appeared superfluous and prayer a mockery. I have no orders on the subject.[30]

[30]Byam Martin, op cit.

12

Reconnaissance

The Swedish Press gave due attention to Sir Charles Napier's visit to the capital in April 1854. He was taken from Älvsnabben to Stockholm in a Swedish gunboat and after the interview with King Oscar, about which the King is reported to have said in an aside that they 'spoke together as gentlemen', left by the north gate of the Royal Castle where he was greeted by the 'most distinguished gentry' of Stockholm. After the war the discussions were reported in greater detail. Things appear to have been much as might have been expected from the account of the Swedish attitudes to the war given at the end of Chapter 7. Napier praised the Swedish *skärgårdsflotta* and asked for Sweden's active support. The king replied with a flat refusal. It was good and well, he said, to have a friendly foreign fleet visiting the Baltic, 'but may God help us if we are subsequently once again alone with the Russians'.[1]

The fleet lay at Älvsnabben until 5 May in weather, which was frequently very bad, with heavy winds and snowstorms. To quote Captain Paget,

> Here we refreshed, watered, and wooded the Fleet, and although all communication was forbidden with Stockholm, for what reason we could never make out, we were well pleased to get out of the fogs and bad weather which prevailed at this time. The Admiral spent some days in Stockholm, and the people . . . rushed in thousands to see the Fleet, reminding us of our own dear cockneys on the Thames on a Sunday. If possible, too, they were more noisy, especially after they had refreshed themselves in their demonstrations of amity. I really believe these people are disposed to join in the war against Russia, for they have many old scores of treachery and bad faith on the part of that Power to wipe off; but they are so mortally afraid of the Russians that, unless the Western Powers were to promise a large force during the winter

[1]Isaksson, op cit.

months for their protection, I am persuaded they will remain neutral. . . . It must not be supposed that, however preferable the snug harbour of Elgsnabben to the fogs and disagreeable and bitter weather at sea, there were not many and loud lamentations that we were by our inactivity giving time for the frozen squadron to cut their way into a safe harbour in spite of us, and these murmurings were increased by occasional reports in the Swedish newspapers that the ice in the Gulf of Finland was beginning to break up. Still we move not.[2]

It was at this stage that the fleet was joined by the first unit of the French contingent, the 100-gun two-decked screw-steamer *l'Austerlitz*. There had been criticism and complaint from the French that the British Fleet had left Danish waters without waiting for this vessel to join them. Now, as Paget put it, she

came steaming in, and passed close to the bows of the *Duke of Wellington*, when the two warriors (the latter and Napoleon), whose busts formed the figureheads of the two ships, met for the first time in close alliance, and seemed astonished at the singularity of their position. . . . We lingered on at this place until the 5 May, much to the annoyance of everybody, thus losing all chance of preventing the escape of the Russian squadron, for, by the time we quitted Elgsnabben, the Gulf of Finland was entirely free from ice.[3]

Meanwhile the paddle-frigates went out on reconnaissance. George Giffard recorded,

3 May HMS *Driver*, Capt Cochrane joined company, and reported having boarded a Bremen vessel which had wintered at Helsingford. The Master stated that the ice in the harbour broke up on the 27 April, and that 20 Russian ships of war were then ready for sea.

Ice off Hogland unbroken. Proceeded to look for Senior Officer or Commander-in-Chief with this important intelligence.

4 May Communicated with *Imperieuse*, Captain Watson, who directed me to look out for the Commander-in-Chief and Fleet, about 25 miles to the West, thick foggy weather.

5 May Met *Euryalus*, Captain Ramsey, who directed me to seek the Fleet near Landsort. On leaving *Euryalus* a dense fog came on suddenly, and though so near *Leopard*, we were a considerable time in the boat before we could find her, even with the help of a compass. Steamed for Landsort lighthouse.

Noon, stopped engines, being near the land by the soundings, when we suddenly from the masthead observed the lighthouse over the fog; shaped a course, and ran for the anchorage of Elfsnabben, and soon left the fog behind us.

1 pm, observed the fleet at anchor. Made signal 'Enemy's Fleet ready for sea'.

2 pm, joined and communicated with Commander-in-Chief.

4 pm, took HMS *Neptune*, Admiral Corry, in tow, and proceeded in company with the Fleet (15 sail of the line) a strong breeze and dense fog came on, and the heavy 80-gun ship was poking me up, but would give no orders. Most fortunately when passing in I had observed a small white building on the shore, and now caught a glimpse of it and the shore at the same time through the fog. Not a moment was lost the helm was put up, and we ran out to sea through the narrow channel followed by a number of the fleet, who having hove to caught sight of us, and at 8 pm we passed the lighthouse of Landsort again, and kept under easy steam outside. This was trying work for the nerves, and when some three months after I waited on Admiral Corry, he told me he was going to resign his Command and return home, as his nerves could not stand the fogs. I said I had been much struck by his quiet and cool conduct, when I towed him out of Elfsnabben under such dangerous circumstances, to which the summer fogs were a trifle. His reply was 'Giffard, I did not leave my cabin, I could not'.[4]

Now the main fleet under Sir Charles Napier at last began its reconnaissance of the Gulf of Finland. Most of May was spent learning the channels between Hangö and Helsinki. The line of the blockade across the mouth of the Gulf of Finland was held so tightly that 'not a single Russian sail was able to show itself in the Baltic'. Sir Charles Napier had four obvious targets, Kronstadt, Suomenlinna (Sveaborg), Tallin (Revel) and the fortress and naval base building at Bomarsund. Of these, Kronstadt was by far the most important, since to attack Kronstadt would have been to lay open St Petersburg, and though there could be no question of the conquest of Russia, with her vastness, her climate, and her limitless resources of manpower, the political force of a serious threat to Kronstadt would have been decisive on the course of the war – as it was to be in 1856 when it became a reality.

To take Suomenlinna and Helsinki, sheltering behind that formidable but quite outdated fortress, would have deprived the Russian fleet of the second most important of its three Baltic bases and would have provided a major diversion, necessitating the movement of even more troops which might otherwise have gone to the Crimean Peninsula. But to take and hold Suomenlinna and the Finnish coast to Viipuri (Viborg) would have

[2]Otway, op cit.
[3]Ibid.
[4]Giffard, op cit.

required, in addition to the fleet, a land force in size comparable to the army which had been landed in the Crimea. The Government had simply not provided the hastily assembled fleet with the equipment necessary for an attack on naval bases heavily protected by massive stone forts armed, certainly in the case of Kronstadt, with Paixhans guns with their exploding shells. This equipment would have comprised principally steam-propelled shallow-draught vessels covered with heavy armour plating. Such equipment became available, largely as a result of the initiative of the French, in late 1855 and 1856, and its effectiveness was demonstrated against forts in the Black Sea. The reality of the threat to Kronstadt and St Petersburg then became obvious.

It was not, and never had been, the policy of Lord Aberdeen's Government to conduct operations on this scale in 1854. The Baltic Fleet had been sent out to do what it was equipped to do. It was to impose a limited blockade on the coasts of Finland, Russia, and Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. By its presence it was to prevent the Russian Baltic Fleet from passing out of the Baltic to present a threat to the coasts of Britain and to British merchant shipping. It was to bring it to battle and destroy it if an attempt was made to break out. It was to reconnoitre the coasts of Finland and the north-eastern Baltic and in particular to test the defences of Kronstadt, Suomenlinna, and Tallinn, and to solve the mystery of what was going on in the Åland Islands. If possible with the equipment available, the fleet was to deal with the Russian fortress and naval base under construction there. At the same time, it was making much the most important contribution to the Allied war by holding down great numbers of Russian troops and great quantities of Russian equipment, which would otherwise have been on their way to reinforce the Russian army in the threatened Crimea.

However, in the summer of 1854 the political climate was changing in Britain. Although war had been declared for several months, nothing seemed to be happening. The British army was encamped on the plain outside Varna where it was not improving as the result of the ravages of disease and the psychological consequences of inaction. Meanwhile, the great steam fleet in the Baltic – potentially the most formidable fleet in terms of its destructive power against another fleet of line-of-battleships and frigates which had ever been sent to sea in history – was doing nothing spectacular. The pressure on the Government for some sort of blow to be struck at Russia became stronger as the summer advanced. The situation was not improved by the fact that though there was no correspondent of *The Times* with the Baltic Fleet to do the hatchet job on the navy that was later to be done on the army in the Crimea, both government and public were becoming increasingly aware all was not well with the higher command.

Enough has been quoted already to indicate that not only Sir Charles Napier, but also his supporting admirals, were not the men to make the best of their opportunities, or even to realize, and having realized to exploit, the powers of the great fleet they commanded. Besides the letters quoted here, many more were reaching Britain from the officers of the fleet which were not sparing in their criticism of the admirals. Many stories, some of them no doubt highly embellished, were getting around. It was a great mercy for the Government and the Royal Navy that the story of the failure to determine whether or not there was a large Russian squadron lying at the mercy of a steam fleet outside Suomenlinna in April never reached the Press.

A competent high command would have sensed the changing situation at home and the need for some spectacular action and have been aware that such action, in the developing climate, if it could be represented as successful, would have had the support of the Government. A competent government and administration would have made it clear to the command of the Baltic Fleet that action over and above its orders was called for. But in the situation detailed above, could any large-scale action against the Russians, other than the destruction of the important works at Bomarsund, have been undertaken in 1854? It is interesting to consider Captain Codrington's views, writing to Admiral Berkeley, then the Second Sea Lord, in March 1855, when he said,

> I never did or will blame Sir Charles Napier for not doing what circumstances prevented him being able to do; but I do blame him for not having even attempted to do, that which, with the means at his disposal, he might have done.[5]

As to what Captain Codrington had in mind as to what might have been done, he gave an indication in a letter to his sister written from the *Royal George* actually off Kronstadt on 22 July 1855. He said,

> Had that wretched imposter who was in command last year but permitted his captains, etc to build gunboats, and gun stages or rafts as we wished and as we asked, and so to try to force our way in by the north channel this time last year when the Russians had *no* steam gunboats, and we had some besides the

[5]NMM Codrington Papers op cit.

armed small steamers and tugs latterly sent out, we should have forced our way in, have been masters of that inner navigation, and bombarded and burnt Kronstadt, assuredly.[6]

When the reconnaissance of the Gulf of Finland began even the most reasonable of the upper middle-grade officers of the fleet were becoming disillusioned. Captain Keppel wrote to his sister Polly on 27 May 1854, from the roads of Hanko (Hangö),

> The only thing doing is that by the steamers and frigates looking out along the coast and occasionally prigging some merchant vessels stowed away in some creek or corner among the thousand small islands along the Finland coast. The line-of-battleships formed two fleets, we screws are in advance, our Chief who is beginning to make himself particularly disagreeable, lives in a state of horrid nervousness and does not know his own mind two minutes together, I have no doubt that if the Russian Fleet were to come out he would know what to do with them but Charlie Napier, Second in Command and Charlie Napier with responsibility are two different men. He frequently says he is much too old for this sort of work and most assuredly speaks the truth when he says so. As it is, he is irritable, finds fault with everybody and everything and is most unjust in his censures. All this is a great pity as it is impossible to imagine a better feeling than that which pervades the whole Fleet, both officers and men. I do not imagine there is the slightest chance of the Russian Fleet coming out of their strongholds and in which, unless we are prepared to make a sacrifice of ships and men, it would be folly to attack them. At Helsingfors they have not more than 8 line-of-battleships, the remainder are at Kronstadt, there is no doubt that in the passage to Kronstadt which is very narrow, they have explosive machines below the surface with which they would endeavour to blow up any ship attempting to run in. There their ships are and there they will remain but there is plenty for a portion of the Fleet to do in other directions. The French Fleet have joined Admiral Corry. We are now very strong, stronger much than the Russians many of their boasted fleet of 28 sail of the line being unfit for sea. We have 33 sail of the line, many of them screws which makes them equal at least in the proportions of two to three. I should like to see it tried with a larger proportion. I am quite confident that the eight screw line-of-battleships we have here are quite equal to any 20 sail the Russians could bring out. With the remainder of the Fleet there is Aland to be attacked and a large fleet at Revel to be destroyed and some forts here which are daily increasing in strength and number . . . We know from deserters that they now have between 2000 and 3000 troops in the neighbourhood. Three days after our arrival we saw troops with artillery marching in that took nearly an hour to pass.[7]

[6]Ibid.
[7]NMM Keppel Papers op cit.

Hanko (Hangö) is the most south-westerly point of the Finnish mainland. It sticks out into the Gulf of Finland and there is no way for shipping bound east or west to avoid it. For nearly all the rest of the way from Stockholm to St Petersburg, once the Åland Sea was crossed there was sheltered water within easy reach of small sailing vessels at any point. But Hangö Point has no shelter. In the days of the cogs of the towns of the North German Hanse it was a dreaded high point on their crawling passage east. Even in the nineteenth century it divided those who sailed west and north from those who sailed east, rather as Land's End in Britain divided the 'down homers', the ketches and trading smacks of the Bristol Channel and their crews, from the similar vessels and similar men who traded along the south coast of western Britain in the English Channel. Kuggskär, an islet due west of Hangö Point, marks by its name a rough sheltering place for the cogs caught out by the weather before or after rounding the point.

There is still plenty of evidence of a fascinating and visible kind of the use of tiny harbours in the islets off the Point – even smaller now than they once were because of the land rise over the centuries – as sheltering places. Between two of these bleak skerries of ice-smoothed rocks is a narrow sound, Gäddtarmen, the 'stomach of the pike'. This wild little harbour for centuries provided a good sheltering place for small vessels east or west bound. Sometimes they must have lain windbound for days, even weeks on end. The evidence remains, the names, initials, crests, *bomarken*, of the men of these vessels, carved into the face of the granite in this exposed place. There are scores of them, the earliest dating from the last days of the cogs, from the second half of the 1500s. These carvings on this lonely milestone on the long voyage from western to eastern Europe are unique. It is as if well-carved names, crests and dates from the time of the Spanish Armada onwards were to be found on the isles of Scilly, or the Shetlands.

For the whole of the time that Sweden was a great power, from the 1500s to the 1700s, Hangö was a most important central point for all sea voyages in the Baltic and eastwards, but it was essentially a maritime place, a trans-shipment point, making its living from the sea and not from the land. Because of the long and difficult land route to Hangö from the main part of the Finnish mainland, the settlement and trading place which grew up was not fortified at this time, so no town developed within a fort's protection. The Swedish Kings developed Ekenäs, and later Helsinki, instead. But as the threat from Russia increased in the second half of the 1600s, fortifications were built on some of the islands off Hangö Point. After the war between Russia and Sweden in the early 1790s, which culminated in the brilliant Swedish naval victory at Svensksund, it was

decided to fortify the islands permanently, and two strong points were built, one on the island which became known as Gustavsvärn and one on a rock which became known as Gustav Adolf. The forts being built on these islands, still incomplete, fell into Russian hands in 1809. As designed by fortification engineers of the Swedish Fortification Corps, Gustavsvärn (Gustav's defence) would have been a strong fortress, capable of repelling an enemy fleet of the time which was approaching the main channel from the south and also capable of preventing an enemy from approaching from the east by the sheltered waterway in the archipelago. It is to be remembered that these forts were being built as protection against Russia for an important Finnish trading place, and against the type of weapon, especially the shallow-draught rowing and sailing gallies, the *skärgårdsflotta*, which the Russians were likely to bring against them.

Early in 1854 Hangö had a total strength of about 200 men. When war became imminent, it was decided to strengthen the fortress system against a possible allied landing by new construction, by additional armament, and by greatly increasing the garrison. Lieutenant Colonel von Moller, who had been wounded at Borodino, an able and energetic officer, was placed in command and was given a thousand men of the Eighth Finnish Line Battalion. Work began towards putting the fortress in a state in which it would be able to defend itself. Substantial numbers of guns and ammunition were also transferred to Hangö, though the guns were old and not all the ammunition was usable. More men were sent to the fortress, Prince Fredrik's Grenadier Regiment and a detachment of field artillery with eight more cannon and 200 men. When the British Fleet first approached on 18 April 1854, although the strengthening of the fortification work was still not completed according to plan, the fort was considered nearly ready to repulse enemy attack.

This was really boxing with shadows. The Hangö forts had been built when Finland was part of Sweden as a strong point at the western limits of the archipelagos of the Gulf of Finland to protect the sheltered sea lanes with Sweden, vital to Sweden's defence against Russia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the mid-nineteenth century the situation was reversed. The war was an extraordinary one. The defenders had vast land forces but, because of neglect, because of the most adverse conditions for training, and because of the technical backwardness which followed on the fact that Russia was not industrialized, they had no effective fleet. The attackers, on the other hand, had the most powerful fleet which had ever existed, however badly it was commanded, but because of the policy of its home Government, were without land forces. It was, in fact, impossible for

the contestants to get to grips with one another. So the presence of the Finnish coastal forts became little more than symbolic. The one exception was Bomarsund, the new fort, built to serve Russian, not Swedish ends in the new situation in which Finland was Russian territory. This was potentially a great naval base thrown out into the west and largely free of the long winter ice, so that its use as the principal naval harbour after Kronstadt could have turned Russia into an effective sea-power – assuming that foreign technology was bought and the administration and status of the Imperial Navy improved.

The coastal forts served no purpose in the mid-nineteenth century context except as a regional military headquarters. Such damage as could be done to them by bombardment from the sea was of no significance to the Russians, or to the war since there was no question of capture by land forces after preliminary softening up by bombardment. Yet there they were, and because they were there they must be attacked, although attacking them could in no way affect the course of the war, except in terms of international propaganda. Their defence, however, gave the Finns a chance to inflict casualties on the enemy who had attacked their merchant fleet and burned their property.

The Russians were well aware of the doubtful value of the coastal forts. It was argued in the High Command that their defence held down large numbers of men without giving any corresponding advantage since the enemy were not attempting landings in force, that they should be abandoned and destroyed to prevent the enemy occupying them and using them as bases for raids. The orders to abandon and blow up the forts at Hangö came on 23 August 1854, by which time the Russian High Command was confident that the Allied land attack would be concentrated on Bomarsund and there would be no landing on the mainland of Finland, By 27 August the forts at Hangö had ceased to exist, except as ruins, and the local population benefited greatly from the acquisition of disposable materials.

But before then, because it existed it had to be attacked. A Finnish account of what happened relates,

> On the 18 April the following day English ships of war were seen off Hangö, but remained, to begin with, out of range of the artillery. Vessels were sounding the channel and it was thus that the parties first exchanged shots.[8]

[8]Colonel Reino Aaltonen, *Hangö Fästning*, translated into Swedish from Finnish by Ole Torvalds (Hangö, 1971).

This incident appears to have been a preliminary reconnaissance by the Master of the British Fleet, Mr Biddlecombe, accompanied by a hydrographer, Mr Evans, master of the *Lightning*, who were sent forward in the *Hecla*, Captain Hall, paddle-sloop of six guns, to examine the area.

When the fleet left Älvsnabben, on 6 May, Captain Sulivan was ordered to take the *Lightning* to join the *Arrogant*, Captain Yelverton, which was maintaining a blockade patrol across the mouth of the Gulf of Finland, and to examine both Hangö and Wormsö, the anchorage east of Dago Island, off the coast of Estonia at the south of the entrance to the Gulf of Finland. Sulivan conducted a characteristically thorough survey. He was already convinced that an attack on the Hangö forts would lead to fruitless loss of life and that the proper use of the fleets was in reconnoitering Sveaborg, from a base in the sound inside the island of Nargen, off Tallinn (Revel). Such a reconnaissance might have led to the bombardment of Suomenlinna (Sveaborg) in 1854. In practical terms, unless followed up by a commitment to engage substantial land forces in Finland, this would have achieved little or nothing, but in the terms of the shadow war which was going on it would have been a significant propaganda move which might have concentrated the attention of the Allies on the Baltic in 1855, instead of a year later, and shortened the war accordingly. However, Sulivan's views did not prevail, and he carried out yet another and even more detailed reconnaissance of Hangö Point, advising Sir Charles Napier that a bombardment was possible, though, as Sulivan put it himself, in a private letter of 22 May,

> Mind, I never gave any advice as to whether this place should be attacked or not – I have all along felt that if we did it most effectually it would be of little use to us, and not worth the risk, the loss, and the ammunition expended. All I have been anxious about is that, if it is to be attacked, care may be taken to do it in the most careful way, so as to have as little loss and damage as possible.[9]

In fact, a bungled attack was made. In Reino Aaltonen's words,

> On the 9 May the enemy again appeared off Hangö without however initiating any action [this was Sulivan in the *Lightning* with the *Arrogant*]. . . . Three days later, on the 23 May, Hangö Fort had its turn . . . A detailed and obviously reliable account of the attack was given by some Hangö residents who followed the battle. . . . For the purposes of the attack the English used

[9]Sulivan, op cit.

> six steam propelled Frigates and Corvettes, these being armed with heavy artillery. A little after midday a two-masted warship steamed up the main entrance channel in the direction of Gustavsvärn. . . . It was met by so accurate a fire from the fort that it had to stand in under the protection of Ryssö to inspect its damage. . . . The fight went on for five hours and the artillery fire at times was most intense on both sides. Since the distance was only 1 to 1.5 km the Fort's artillery could effectively respond. But it is true that some of the shots from these fell all too short, just as they did one year later at Sveaborg. The fire from Gustav Adolf clearly did not reach the vessel which was firing from the Andal skerries and the fire from Meijerfeldt, at the commencement of the fight, fell so short that Second Lieutenant Daniloff, who was in charge of the optical telegraph, was sent from the command post on Drottningberg with an order about it for the Fort. . . . Especially characteristic of the English fleet's action was its skilful use of the archipelago conditions, which pre-supposed a good knowledge of these shallow waters. The English had also diligently carried out soundings on each occasion when they had moved into the waters around the Fortress. . . . The vessel that suddenly appeared from behind the islands and later retired into the protection of them gave the battle the character of a game of hide and seek. . . . Admiral Napier did not wish to expose his Fleet to heavy losses. Hence he employed only light forces for the attack, but this was unable to bring about the desired result. The defenders' losses were limited to eight wounded, and some damaged buildings. As to the English losses there are no reliable facts. . . . By its successful defensive action the fortress had prevented the strong British sea power from getting a foothold on Hangö. The outcome of the battle increased to the highest extent the defenders fighting morale and competence in their own strength. The Tzar promoted von Moller direct from Lieutenant Colonel to Major General. . . .[10]

It is not difficult to reconcile this report with that Sulivan wrote in letters of 22 and 24 May.

> . . . to my surprise I saw *Dragon* come in and anchor only sixteen hundred yards from the large fort, and shortly after begin to fire. I hurried back, supposing I should have to bring in more steamers, as it seemed madness placing one alone at a distance that the forts could so easily hit, and I saw the shot striking her, as we went back a little outside her. I was ordered to take *Magicienne* and *Basilisk* under my orders, and take them where I proposed. I went on in *Magicienne* (as the other had to get her steam up), and anchored her where she saw into the flank and rear of the large fort at 2100 yards. Two guns from that fort and two on the flank of the ten-gun battery fired at her, but the shots fell a hundred yards short, while her large ten-inch gun threw the shell

[10]Aaltonen, op cit.

into the fort. . . . I then went back in my boat to meet *Basilisk*, and found *Lightning* close to *Dragon*. She had brought down the Master of the Fleet, who had first placed *Dragon* there, and certainly made a great mistake, as she was six hundred yards nearer than I proposed to place the shelling steamers; and though she hit the fort well, her shell made no impression on the stone walls or the earthen parapet. If they had been fired a little farther off, and so dropped into the fort, they would have been more effective. She had then a number of shot in her hull, one man killed and one wounded, and one shot close to her shell-room under water. . . . It was a perfect bungle, intended, I believe, only to try the range for shelling; but the *Dragon* having been improperly placed so close made it look like a serious attack. I hope it is not going to be attacked, for it is not worth to us the loss and damage the ships would meet with; and, if he sends smaller ships in, they will be beaten, and the large ships will be obliged to join, and so compromise the whole squadron. 24 May. The Admiral sent for me this morning and I had a long talk with him about the forts, etc, and was glad to find that he had no intention of sending the ships in against them. But he seemed inclined still to try shelling at long range on the large fort, and asked me where the block-ships and steamers could be placed, so that he has fallen back on what I first suggested; and had not the *Dragon* been so imprudently placed where she was and so got mauled, it would have been all right, and I believe he would not have fired a shot at all, which is certainly his best plan. The Master of the Fleet was present part of the time and said that I was right. I had advised 2500 yards, and it was entirely his own doing that the distance was altered. The poor Chief is really too shaky, nervous, and borne down by the responsibility to have such a charge on him. He has no plans or systems, but the impulse of the moment alone guides him, and I trust we may have no serious thing to do, requiring careful plans and system. He is now thinking of Bomarsund; but that is a stronger place, and would be far more difficult to attack.[11]

Rather than move forward into the Gulf, the fleet lay first off Hangö and then in Barösund, now known as Porkkalanselkä, a relatively sheltered area of water immediately west of the point of Porkkala, between twenty and thirty miles from Helsinki. On 18 April 1854 Sir Charles Napier had reported to the Admiralty that he had sailed for Stockholm from Danish waters leaving the *James Watt*, the *Monarch* and the *Valorous* behind to complete coaling. Two vessels had been detached to blockade the coasts of Latvia and Lithuania. Rear-Admiral Corry with eight vessels had been ordered to patrol the mouth of the Gulf of Finland. Napier reported his failure adequately to reconnoitre the defences of Sveaborg (and to determine whether or not there was a Russian squadron in the ice outside) as due to adverse weather. He added,

[11]Sulivan, op cit.

I have not reconnoitred the Åland Islands, as they are not approachable without pilots. On the return of the *Lightning* from Stockholm, I shall probably receive some definite information about them, and as the season advances I shall see what can be done. By the papers furnished me by the Admiralty, I find that in 1808–9 the Fleet never entered the Gulf of Finland till the month of July. I should wish their Lordships' instructions on that head.[12]

Not surprisingly this communication produced a somewhat tart response from the office of the Secretary to the Admiralty on 2 May,

. . . I am to observe that in the year 1808–9 there were no ships of war propelled by steam employed in the Gulf of Finland; my Lords therefore consider that there is material difference in this respect to the present time, and that every consideration should induce you to occupy such positions within the Gulf as may best enable you to intercept the movements of the enemy, and to watch the principal ports on both shores. It has been with this view that the surveying vessels attached to your squadron have been supplied with buoys and lights; and your own judgment will direct you to seize the earliest opportunities to ascertain the anchorages to which you may be able to resort, or to force an entrance for shelter; as well as the positions in which the ships under your orders can be most advantageously dispersed, or most easily collected in case of necessity.[13]

Sir Charles Napier soon had two other incidents in which vessels under his command had been involved to report to the Admiralty. In the absence of news of other action in the war, north or south, both were to be made much of in the Press in Britain and subsequently by naval historians. In fact both actions were no more than raids on open coastal towns for the purpose of taking merchant ships, the private property of non-Russians, for the prize money that came to the captains and crews of the naval vessels involved. Neither could possibly have had any influence on the war, and both must have caused hardship to poor people. One of these incidents was in the traditions of the navy of fifty years before. Captain Cooper Key, he who decided that his future lay in steam some years before, in command of the *Amphion*, a screw-frigate 34 guns, accompanied by the *Conflict*, Captain Arthur Cumming, a screw of eight guns, arrived off Libau on 16 May. Libau, a port on the coast of Latvia, is now known as Liepaja. Here Cooper Key had learned that there were several merchant ships laid up. He anchored off the town and demanded the surrender of them within three

[12]NRS, 1854, op cit.
[13]Ibid.

hours. If they were not surrendered, he threatened to bombard the town. Since the place was without defences, the town's authorities had no alternative but to comply, though they refused to send the ships out and told Captain Key that he would have to come and get them. The officers and crews of the two naval vessels between them made prizes of eight laid-up vessels which they took off. Captain Cooper Key, in reporting to Sir Charles Napier, succeeded in making the most of a piece of bold and successful impudence by giving much of the credit to his fellow Captain of the *Conflict*, Captain Cumming, in the following terms,

> The fact of the town of Libau, containing 10,000 inhabitants and formed by nature with unusual facilities for defence, being temporarily taken possession of by about 130 men without a shot being fired, I attribute almost entirely to the judicious conduct of Captain Cumming –[14]

This feat, according to Earp, brought the total of merchant vessels, mostly Finnish, captured by the fleet to 49. One of these had been captured in the second of the two raiding expeditions. Hearing that merchant vessels were discharging at Ekenäs, now known as Tammisaari, a small town and port sheltered behind a mass of islands of the archipelago, north and east of Hangö Point, Captain Hastings R Yelverton in the *Arrogant*, a screw-frigate of 47 guns, supported by Captain William Hall in the *Hecla*, made a raid on the town. This involved the navigation of complex channels among islands for a distance of some 12 miles from the open sea. Not surprisingly after Uleåborg and Brahestad, though Captain Yelverton's report to Sir Charles Napier makes it clear that he was surprised, they were strenuously resisted by such scratch defence forces as could be rapidly got together. The result was a brisk running battle in which casualties were inflicted on both sides. Captain Hall, an officer noted for his daring, initiative and aggressiveness against Chinese pirates when in command of the East India Company's armed steamer *Nemesis*, led the way through the narrow fjärds and persisted to the degree that he was able to capture and tow away the barque *Augusta* of Helsinki, built in 1848 and still with undischarged salt on board her. According to Reino Aaltonen, the ships were opposed by only three companies and four field cannon, which were all that Lieutenant General Ramsay, the commanding officer of the Ekenäs coastal section, had at his disposal to spare from the defence of Hangö. Fifty men were detached from one of the companies which belonged to the Finnish Grenadier Sharp-

[14]NRS, 1854 op cit.

shooters Battalion and these ambushed the ships with rifle fire as they passed through a narrow channel, then called Vitsand, about six kilometres from the town of Ekenäs, with the result that the *Arrogant* and the *Hecla* had to pause and seek shelter in a nearby inlet. By the following day, General Ramsay had received reinforcements, a battalion from the Prince Frederik Grenadier Regiment with three further companies of the Finnish Grenadier Sharpshooters Battalion. The guns and two of the Grenadier Companies, one of them locally recruited, were allocated to the narrows of Vitsand. The Russian Grenadier Battalion was placed at Lappohja (Lappvik) further up the channel towards Ekenäs. Two companies of the Finnish Grenadiers remained to defend Ekenäs itself. The four light field guns which were all the defenders had were too light to do much damage to the ships, but nevertheless they gave a good account of themselves. In the words of Captain Yelverton's official report of 20 May to the Commander-in-Chief,

> I . . . did not expect to find the enemy so well prepared to receive me. Owing to the *Hecla*'s light draft of water, she led the way – a task not easy to perform in a narrow and intricate passage, exposed as she was to the first of the enemy's fire.[15]

There is considerable disagreement in the matter of the number of guns and the size of the forces opposing him between Captain Yelverton's account and that of Reino Aaltonen. Yelverton claims he overcame two batteries of guns in the narrow channels and faced a third at Ekenäs itself and that he was pursued by 'a considerable body of Cavalry and Infantry, moving abreast of the ship as she advanced'. He claimed credit for overcoming stiff opposition, 'The engagement lasted longer than I expected, as they returned to their guns twice in the midst of our fire, and were only compelled to leave them when their guns were destroyed by our shot'.[16] The *Arrogant* reported two men killed and four wounded, the *Hecla* one killed and four wounded. According to Aaltonen, the defenders lost Major Djergatschoff of the Grenadier Regiment and three men killed, including two Finnish Sharpshooters, the first Finnish Grenadier sharp-shooters to be killed in the war. Six men were wounded.

It is to be hoped that the prize money paid on the *Augusta* was worth it. It may have been to Captains Hall and Yelverton. On Monday 26 June 1854 *The Times* contained the following,

[15]NRS, 1854 op cit.
[16]Ibid.

On Saturday another Russian prize, a barque, over 500 tons, called the *Augusta* cut out of Ekeness by HM Steamships *Hecla* and *Arrogant* arrived at Orfordness from Hango Bay in charge of a prize crew. . . . The *Augusta* is said to be one of the most valuable prizes yet made. She and her cargo being estimated at £70,000.

The day after there was a further report in *The Times*,

The Russian barque cut out from Ekeness arrived at Sheerness on Sunday last in charge of Mr Arthur L Galbraith, Mate of the *Arrogant* . . . She was built at New Karleby in 1848, and is laden with salt.

£70,000 is a ridiculous over valuation for a 500 ton vessel and a cargo of salt in 1854, but even at £7000, the equivalent of several hundred thousand pounds today, she was an unusually valuable prize. One wonders what information it was that made Captains Yelverton and Hall so determined to make a prize of the *Augusta*, even at a cost of three deaths and eight wounded. They had another reward. Sir James Graham described this little action in the House of Commons as, 'a feat, which, though not on a large scale, was a gallant one, and, as an exploit, worthy of the best days of the British Navy'. More than that was the praise of a senior Russian officer. Lieutenant Alfred Royer, a survivor of the loss of HMS *Tiger* off Odessa in May 1854, while a prisoner in St Petersburg was interrogated by the Grand Duke Constantine who told him:

> of all bold and seamanlike operations this of Captain Hall's – taking his steamer seven miles up a creek of intricate navigation, in an enemy's country – is the most daring I could have imagined; I cannot but admire such gallantry, even in an enemy.[17]

The short summer was slipping by and there were still three major objectives unachieved, the reconnaissance of Sveaborg, the reconnaissance of Kronstadt, and the reconnaissance and possible attack upon Bomarsund. Captain Keppel summed up the situation in a letter to his brother-in-law, Harry, of 6 June 1854,

> . . . we are now about 20 miles in a direct line south-west of Helsingfors, the cathedral of which place, as well as part of the Russian Fleet we can distinctly see from our masthead. The gallant old Charlie has lost lately, by his vacillating conduct and evident reluctance to advance, much of that

[17]A Royer, *The English Prisoners in Russia* (London, 1854).

> confidence we had in him when we started, he is too old and too prejudiced to ancient warfare to make proper use of and appreciate the wonderful power of steam, the size of ships, weight of metal and long range of guns now placed at his disposal. This noble Fleet in younger hands would have, before this, put us in possession of Sveaborg, as to Kronstadt perhaps it would be as well to leave that alone but there are fortifications at Revel, Aland and Hango that ought to have been destroyed, the Fleet has been well supplied with stores, ammunition, provisions etc. We make 'our own water', I suppose our experience does not allow us to fathom the wise intentions of the warriors of the last century but in our humble opinion Old Charlie is as much out of place here as Scarlet the coachman of the old Portsmouth Regulator would be driving a loco. Yesterday the Master went to sound in Miolo Road, where, with the correct charts we have, we ought *now* to be, I suppose we shall advance in a day or two but after the miserable exhibition we made at Hango we expect but little to be done there. Old Charlie seems to think that his name alone is to frighten the Russians.[18]

In the middle of June the French fleet joined the British in Barösund and their arrival cut off a half-hearted attempt to survey Suomenlinna (Sveaborg). As Keppel put it in a letter of 13 June,

> Going into Baro Roads – we have been off Helsingfors but not within 9 miles of the nearest fort. We saw their ships at anchor in the harbour and very inviting they looked – from the cathedral at Helsingfors they could have the satisfaction of seeing off their own port and in the anchorage of Baro 19 English line-of-battleships, Corry's Fleet having gone in there as we came out this am. We have been joined by the French Fleet, 7 more ships of the line. We are now an enormous Fleet and we shall do nothing. It is the impression in the Fleet that old Napier has his private instructions not to act, but I think it is nothing but age telling on him.[19]

A week later on 18 June he wrote,

> . . . Best thanks for the snuff. . . . I must own that from our C-in-C's statement at the Admiralty that this was to be the 'bloodiest war on record' and then the subsequent signal of 'sharpen your cutlasses', and 'if the enemy will not come out to fight we must go in to them' etc, that both officers and men were led to expect that active and energetic measures would be immediately carried out, we were naturally worked up to a high state of excitement and caused a sort of enthusiasm amongst the men such as I have never before witnessed; although we had observed a nervousness and

[18]NMM Keppel Papers op cit.
[19]Ibid.

uncertainty about our Old Charlie's movements the real truth of what we had to expect did not break on us until the Hango business. We now find that we had come here to be looked at only and to our good friend Baldwin Walker alone is the credit due for the sending of such ships that their appearance is sufficient to keep the Russian Fleet within their fortified ports. . . .[20]

On 20 June 1854 Sir Charles Napier wrote to Sir James Graham summarizing the position as he saw it. He said that he had established a complete blockade of the Gulf of Finland, he had had the Åland Islands examined and he had reconnoitred Suomenlinna (Sveaborg) as far as 'Muolo Roads' (that is Mjölö, Kuivasaari, where the Russian squadron was reported trapped in the ice), 'but as for going into Sveaborg it is quite impossible . . . the only way to take Sveaborg would be by a large military force occupying the Islands and throwing shells into it'. He went on to say that there were three courses open. One was to be content with the blockade of the Gulf of Finland (he did not mention the Gulf of Bothnia) but, 'that won't please the people of England'. The second was to go to Kronstadt and offer battle, which the Russians would not accept, or attempt the harbour, 'I hold the latter to be impossible'. The third was to attempt to besiege Bomarsund, 'landing 10,000 seamen, and making soldiers of them'. The French admiral and he had decided to reconnoitre Kronstadt, leaving a considerable force to blockade the Gulf, 'with the screws, six French ships, and one or two frigates. I shall come back as soon as possible, and hope to find some troops here, or that Sweden has consented to assist; for if we do not attack the Aland Islands I don't see what else we can do'.

Sir James Graham replied on 27 June that on his return to Barösund Sir Charles would receive 'full instructions from me respecting an attack on the Aland Islands'.[21]

On 9 June Keppel wrote to his brother-in-law,

> Since I last wrote we have been joined by the French Fleet. If you were pleased with the sight that you saw at Spithead what would you now think of the sight in Barösund, some 40 pendants or flags, 27 of them being ships of the line. The best possible feeling seems to exist between the two countries, nothing but exchange of visits and dinners. The French C-in-C is a most courteous gentlemanlike fellow, but older and ten times more nervous than our Chief. They, the French, are quite prepared to help us at doing nothing, their's are, all but one, sailing ships, as yet they have never moved except with a fair wind and then they only joined us at a rate of five miles a day.

[20]NMM Keppel Papers op cit.
[21]NRS, 1854, Introduction. op cit.

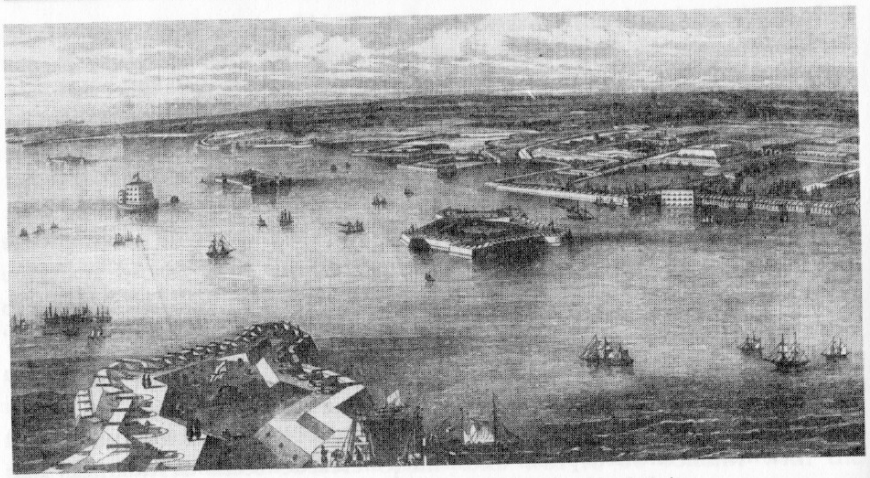
> Nevertheless they answer as well as ourselves to keep the Russian Fleet from coming out by intimidation, and they make an agreeable break in our peaceable Fleet. To complete the scene we have two *pleasure* yachts anchored in the centre of us which by and by reminds me that I must put this by and go and dine with Lichfield and Lord Euston on board the *Gondola*. The other yacht is the *Esmerelda*, belonging to a Mr Campbell . . . The *Esmerelda* is fast to us by a hawser. She mounts 4 brass guns and looks very fierce and has been named by the Fleet as the young *Acre*. On the whole we are very jolly and try to think of anything but fighting.
> 20 June. We are all well and jolly. What with exchanging visits and civilities with the French we have little or no time to spare. I am sorry to think that Plumridge's buccaneering expedition against the poor Finlanders in the Gulf of Bothnia is generally regretted, even by those having given him orders so to act. I still maintain that men too far advanced in years are as unfit to command as those too young . . . Harry [Stephenson] was much amused the other day. The marines and field pieces were landed on one of the islands with rocky and uneven ground. I never saw such a mass of men afloat in boats before. The sailors lugged the field pieces over the rocks and having taken a position the cannonading kept up would have pleased you very much. Harry was very active, the Admiral having sent him on messages – a sort of flying ADC[22] . . . The little fellow is just as well known throughout the Baltic Fleet as his uncle . . .[23]

Captain Paget describes such reconnaissance at Sveaborg as was made.

> On the 12th the Admiral got up his pecker and steam, we boldly proceeded off Helsingfors, where we anchored for the night at a distance of about eight miles from the entrance. We had already seen and counted the masts of the Helsingfors fleet from the lighthouse on Reuskar Island, which partly forms the anchorage of Baro Sound; but we were delighted to have a nearer view, and we earnestly demanded a small steamer from the Admiral to go in and reconnoitre. But, strange to say, this opportunity of making a reconnaissance, which might have proved invaluable in the event of our hereafter attacking the place, was denied to us, nor did the Admiral himself leave his ship.[24]

Instead of a detailed reconnaissance of Sveaborg, the combined fleets sailed for Kronstadt. Commodore Byam Martin, giving what must be the first eye-witness description of the appearance of a steam-screw battle fleet at sea, confided to his journal on 23 June,

[22]Probably the origin of the family tradition that twelve-year-old Harry swam under enemy fire with dispatches in his mouth. See *A Royal Correspondence: Letters of Edward VII and George V to Admiral Stephenson* (London, 1938).
[23]NMM Keppel Papers op cit.
[24]Otway, op cit.



The fortress of Kronstadt as drawn by an Illustrated London News *artist.*

It is a very grand and very remarkable sight, to look on this great fleet, steaming rapidly along in a calm, through a sea quite deserted – forty columns of smoke rising high in the air and then settling down on the northern horizon in a long dense black mass – making known the approach of the hostile fleet towards the Russian capital, by means of a cloud of Durham soil.[25]

Captain Paget completed the picture,

On 22 June the English screw fleet, now consisting of the *Duke of Wellington*, *Royal George*, three-deckers; the *St Jean d'Acre*, *Princess Royal*, *Nile*, *Edinburgh*, *Majestic*, *Caesar*, *James Watt*, *Cressy*, *Blenheim*, *Hogue* and *Ajax*, with a host of frigates and paddle-steamers, and accompanied by the French fleet, quitted the anchorage of Baro on a lovely calm morning, leaving Admiral Corry with the sailing division, consisting of the *Neptune* and *St George*, three-deckers; a position not much to his taste, in fact it worried him so much that he applied to be superseded from his command, and shortly afterwards quitted for England, much broken in health. As I said, we started on the 22nd, and formed three lines, the centre, in which *Princess Royal* was, and the left, being British the right French. The *Acre* and myself towed up two little yachts, the *Esmeralda* and the *Zephyr*,[26] who had come to see the fun. It was a cruise in the latter with Lord Lichfield to reconnoitre Cronstadt that immortalized us in the *Times* as being chased by the Emperor in person.

This enormous fleet, with its wreaths of smoke, must have looked like three black serpents wending their way through the air to encircle the devoted

[25]NMM Byam Martin, op cit.

[26]Paget has clearly mis-recollected the name of Lichfield's yacht, the well-known *Gondola*.

city, and the commotion among the small coasters was ludicrous. At night our way was illumined by alarm fires on the coasts, to warn the people of our approach; and on Saturday, the 24th, we got sight of the golden cupola of Isaac's cathedral, as well as the spires of Cronstadt. What must have been the feelings of the thousands of helpless beings when they saw this mass of enemies approaching! I speak only of those who were as ignorant of the real means of offence it possessed as the good people of England, who had been gulled by the press into the belief that we had only to *walk over* Cronstadt into St Petersburg. Of course the Emperor, and indeed all military men, must have been quite at their ease as to the possibility of our capturing Cronstadt without a large land force, but it must have been to him even a very exciting sight.

The position taken up by the combined fleets was off the low, wooded island of Sescar, and the rear of the line stretched over towards the Finland coast. I think I have described elsewhere the character of the scenery to be the same eternal lowish, undulating land covered with pine forests, and the beach fringed with sand. Occasional patches of land are cultivated, and especially as we approached the capital some few straggling villages might be seen; but it is a very poor and unproductive country on both sides of the Gulf of Finland. . . .

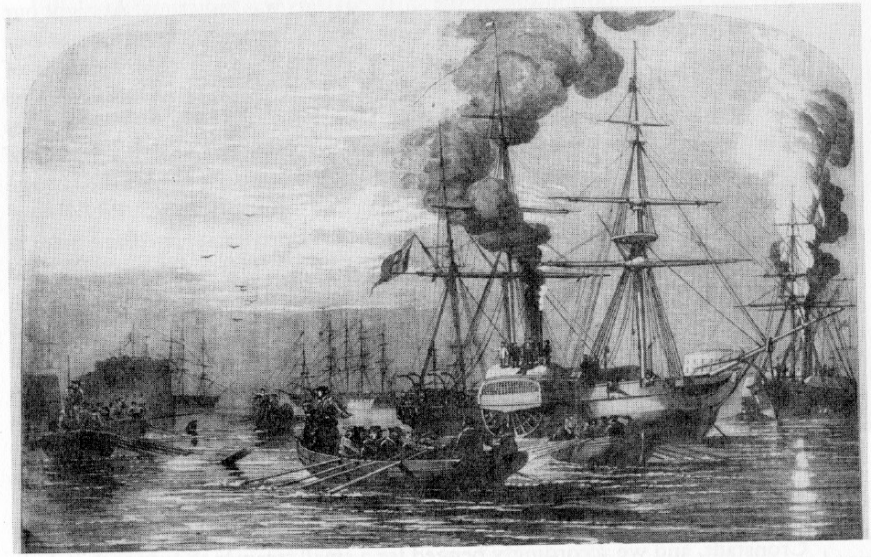
We, the captains, were necessarily very desirous of reconnoitring Cronstadt, and we accordingly begged for a small steamer to approach it; but, as usual, we were refused, so we got on board Cochrane's ship, the *Driver*, who was going in with the Master of the Fleet to search for infernal machines, said to be 'as thick as daisies' in the passage. We could see nothing of these bugbears, but we fancied we had caught a very fine specimen, which turned out to be a broken staff-post showing above water, with a chain and stone attached to it . . . In these parts, instead of the usual buoy such as we have to denote shoal ground, the Russians use a pole and flag. Very gingerly did they haul it on board, I promise you.[27]

Lord Euston, writing from the yacht *Gondola*, gives what is perhaps the first description of minesweeping on active service:

One day we sailed in the yacht to within three miles of it, [(Kronstadt) – This incident is illustrated in the engraving after Brierly at Plate 18] and another day we went farther in in a Steamer. When with the Steamer we tried to find some combustible machines supposed to be sunk in the channel up to that place. We thought we had found one, and set to work very gingerly to lay hold of it; a cable was got round a piece of wood which just showed itself above water and after pulling away for some time it was at last brought under the bowsprit . . . [It turned out to be the marker referred to by Paget] The Steamer we were in and another paddler lay abreast of each other with a cable between them and dragged the channel for some distance but with no effect.[28]

[27]Otway, op cit.

[28]Lord Euston, later 6th Duke of Grafton, 'Off Cronstadt, June 30th', writing to his brother Lord Frederick Fitzroy, Suffolk Record Office.



Boats of HMS Driver *searching for mines off Kronstadt in July, 1854. This was probably the first instance of minesweeping on active service and Lord Euston's description of it is quoted in the text. This* Illustrated London News *engraving is based on a sketch by W O Brierly who was present at the time. The distance between the vessels and the forts of Kronstadt and the anchored Russian fleet was somewhat greater than the drawing suggests.*

Paget continued,

> I also had a trip with Admiral Chads to the north side of Cronstadt. We observed a line of hulks moored across inside the northern pass, and that there were many guns pointing in that direction on the island itself, and I doubt not they feared attack in this quarter, which is certainly the weakest side. Captain Robb proposed to make rafts from our own spare topmasts, etc with timber from the island of Sescar, which abounds with fine Scotch fir trees and larch, and to place 10 inch guns on them, and send them in on the north side into shoal water. We calculated that they, drawing but two or three feet, might approach within two thousand yards of the dockyards. Commander Boyd, of the *Royal George*, brought also before the Commander-in-chief a very ingenious idea of the same nature; but if Cronstadt had been his own property he could not have been more averse to damaging it, and he therefore pooh poohed all these officers and their inventions. From henceforth I do not believe anybody troubled themselves much about attacking.[29]

[29]Otway, op cit.

Captain Codrington, lying off Kronstadt in the *Royal George* was no less frank. He wrote to his sister on 29 June 1854,

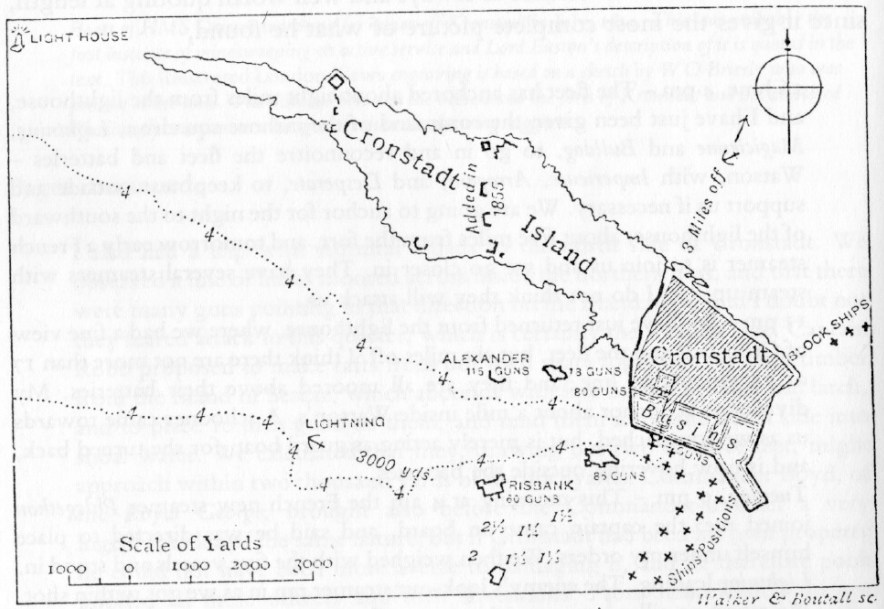
> The other day one of our superiors in a confidential chat with me mentioned that finding from the Chief's expressions that he had no plan or idea of attack or of tactics in the event of our meeting the Russian Squadron at sea, he spoke to him on the subject, pointing out how advantageous it would be to discuss the matter with his juniors and his Captains beforehand, so as to get their opinions on the subject and then express his own wishes in a general way, so that individual ships might know how to govern themselves under unforeseen contingencies; as once in action few signals could be seen owing to the smoke of guns and funnels . . . I therefore thought him quite right, but the Nelsonian discussions he suggested on naval tactics, advantageous as they were, must be the growth of a very different professional atmosphere from the one we now breathed in – one in short in which mutual confidence thoroughly pervaded all ranks . . .[30]

Kronstadt was reconnoitred more closely by the indefatigable Sulivan. His account is clear and concise as always and well worth quoting at length, since it gives the most complete picture of what he found,

> 26 June. 4 pm – The fleet has anchored about eight miles from the lighthouse, and I have just been given the command of the inshore squadron, *Lightning*, *Magicienne* and *Bulldog*, to go in and reconnoitre the fleet and batteries – Watson, with *Imperieuse*, *Arrogant*, and *Desperate*, to keep near outside and support us if necessary. We are going to anchor for the night to the southward of the lighthouse, about five miles from the fort, and tomorrow early a French steamer is to join us and we go closer in. They have several steamers with steam up, but I do not think they will attack us.
> 11 pm – We have just returned from the lighthouse, where we had a fine view of Cronstadt and the fleet, but six miles off. I think there are not more than 17 or 18 sail of the line, and they are all moored above their batteries. My division is at anchor about a mile inside Watson's. A schooner came towards us as we approached, but is merely acting as guard boat, for she turned back, and is now hovering outside the batteries.
> *Tuesday*, 9 pm – This morning at 4 am the French new steamer *Phlegethon* joined me; the captain came on board, and said he was directed to place himself under my orders. We then weighed with the five vessels and stood in, *Lightning* leading. The enemy's look-out steamer ran in as we got within shot. We stood on till we were within two miles, when I made the signal to the others to stop, and we went on to about 2500 yards from the grand fort (Risbank); but seeing them loading two very large guns on the flank nearest to

[30]NMM, Codrington Papers, op cit.

us, and training them on us, I sheered out again to 3000 yards and then anchored, and had a most leisurely look at everything, getting a good sketch of port and ships and doing all we required. They had a large frigate-steamer and four others with steam up, but they did not move out. Their guard steamer was evidently without guns, merely a fast little vessel, and she got bolder and came nearer and nearer every time. She took a look at us; but she being unarmed, I would not fire on her. . . . The two lines of ships I have marked [see map below] are the positions we thought their ships were in from information, but we find them all above the batteries where I have marked the crosses with their broadsides to the channels. There are only six sail of the line, and a heavy frigate waiting outside and one in the basin. There are three more of blockships to the north-east, not rigged, and beyond them, to the north-east, three frigates ready for sea, and two frigates and one corvette blockship. There is also one two-decker in dock. Having completed all, we ran out, joined Watson's Squadron, and we all went on while I breakfasted with him, and then we led them all round to the north side, Watson's ships anchoring when pretty near. We ran on with the others, and I intended anchoring my squadron in five fathoms, and then going on to three in *Lightning*; but by this time it was blowing hard from the westward, and, not



Kronstadt as Sulivan saw it in 1854. He wrote, 'We stood on [in Lightning*] till we were within two miles, when I made the signal to the others to stop, and we went on to about 2500 yards from the grand fort (Risbank) . . . I sheered out again to 3000 yards and then anchored, and had a most leisurely look at everything, getting a good sketch of port and ships and doing all we required'. From the* Life and Letters

liking to anchor them in shallow water with a gale coming on, I hauled off a little to six fathoms, and we all anchored about three miles north of Cronstadt, and in front of their line of ships to the north-east, where they have also in line this evening 13 heavy gunboats, probably to annoy us at night; but it blows too hard now. I have had three hours sleep this afternoon, to be ready for anything tonight. It seems strange that we should be quietly lying at anchor within three miles of such an enemy's fleet; but it is all-important steam that enables us to do so. In the dusk they might push gunboats within range unless a good lookout were kept, so I do not like to go to bed, particularly as we are the inshore vessel. A steamer has just been running rather far out on the other side, where we were this morning, but *Desperate* (which we left on that side to look out) has weighed and stood in, and the steamer ran back. I do not think they will attempt to molest. Their ships look rather slummy in their appearance; and as they cannot evidently make up more than 17 or 18 sail of the line, it is impossible for them to come out: Our English screw ships alone could destroy them. They are all placed to resist an attack, and evidently think of nothing else. The channel is certainly formidable and quite impregnable, as the following sketch of it will show. After passing all the heavy forts below, if not destroyed by them, our leading ship would have all these 124 guns and two three-deckers broadsides raking her, besides those of all the ships at longer distances on her starboard bow. If she could possibly survive all this and pass between the three-deckers, carrying away their bowsprits, she would find the broadsides of three two-deckers close above pouring it into both bows.[31]

Captain Sulivan wrote to his wife again on 1 July.

The Admiral went in *Driver* yesterday afternoon: he would not go with us – I really believe because he wanted us to go ahead to explode any infernal machines before he came to them. His head is full of these things, though we have now run over all the ground outside the forts and actually are not blown up yet. I led him in the north side first, till he turned and then sent for me, and made me point out everything to him; then we ran round to the grand position. We ran on some way ahead, and I hoped he would go where I had anchored before 3000 yards off; but before I reached that I saw they had placed the target with a flag exactly where we had anchored, and we heard single guns all day, probably practising at their longest range. We also fancied we saw several guns all pointed for one spot, so we stopped a little outside the flag, the admiral having previously stopped half a mile outside, and was hoisting our recall as we rounded to. I asked several officers to go who had had no chance before – Hewlett, captain of flagship, both the engineers, the Master of the flagship (a very nice fellow), the chaplain, lieutenant, and a volunteer. The Admiral would not go to the lighthouse, so I got leave to go

[31] Sulivan, op cit.

there, and we anchored; and after all had dined with me, we spent some time in the beautiful evening on the top, returning to the fleet before dark.[32]

And then again on 3 July,

Yesterday morning we moved from off Cronstadt down to Seskar. The afternoon before, after closing the mail, the Chief told me to take all the captains and commanders in the fleet to see Cronstadt, and a signal was made that all who wished could go in *Lightning*. I had nearly all, besides a few junior officers; but the chief would only allow me to take them to the lighthouse – not inside. We had a fine view of the fleet; and I took a Russian prize – the first I have taken – mounting ten guns; but they are wooden ones, and the vessel is so small that I am going to send it home as a present to the boys. We would not allow anything left in the lighthouse to be touched; but I thought as I saw this little ugly model of a brig about a foot long, I might fairly take it.[33]

Sir Charles Napier duly reported to the Secretary to the Admiralty,

Duke of Wellington, off Cronstadt, 1 July 1854.
Sir, I have to request you will inform their Lordships that the combined fleets arrived here on the 26th ultimo, after anchoring one night at Seskar.

I have in conjunction with the French Admiral well reconnoitred Cronstadt, and I find on inspection it agrees so well with the different charts and plans sent to me by the Admiralty, that I have nothing to add except that the difficulties of approach are great, and the batteries are so strong that any attack upon Cronstadt appears to me, with our means, perfectly impossible, and I believe the only way to attack Cronstadt is by a large army landing on the coast and beginning with St Petersburg.

2. I inclose Captain Sulivan's report, who I sent in several times, and I think his is the most accurate of any I have had, and it agrees pretty nearly with my own observations. I have, etc.

Charles Napier.[34]

At greater length he reported privately to Sir James Graham on the same day,

You will see by them [drawings by Lieutenants Nugent and Cowell] that any attack on Cronstadt by ships is entirely impracticable. In going in to the south, the batteries are most formidable – all constructed of solid masonry: they are three and four-deckers, of stone instead of wood, and ships going in

[32]Ibid.
[33]Ibid.
[34]NRS, 1854 Op cit.

would be raked by them the moment they came under fire, and would be sunk before they reached the ships, which are placed with their broadsides bearing also on the passage. The channel is narrow, and we had, in running in, a quarter less five, four miles from the ships, hardly enough for the *Duke of Wellington*. I conclude there would be less higher up, and it is most probable that there is only room for one ship, so that the chances are that they would be sunk one after the other, or, if the smoke from the guns and the funnels were dense, they would miss the channel and go ashore. All attack from the southward by ships is, therefore, out of the question; and it does not appear to me to be necessary to lay down infernal machines, which by all accounts they have done. In addition to the drawings, I send you a chart with the distances set off in circles, to show the possibility of an attack by *gunboats*, throwing shells 5000 yards, provided the enemy let you alone . . . .

I now turn to the north side of Cronstadt. That is certainly the weakest point. A landing might be made on the island by any number of men, and the town might be besieged. But you must expect the Russians will always outnumber you, and if you fail, your army would be lost, whilst if you succeed, it would probably be starved during the long winter. I presume, therefore, that will not be thought of. It may, however, be bombarded . . .

PS The best plan of attacking Cronstadt would be by beginning with St Petersburg. You might land an army either to the north or south, and march on it; but it must be an army that they could not meet, and you must not have a reverse, otherwise it would become a campaign as disastrous as Bonaparte's.[35]

Perhaps the last word lies with Captain Codrington who on 20 July wrote to his sister,

But oh! to go and build steamers drawing 11 or 12 feet when we want them with only 5 or 6!! It makes all the difference. But they have been possessed with the idea of screw-steamers as being for war purposes superior to paddle-steamers, and for a year or more past they have been racking their brains to devize a screw-steamer of light draught enough, a thing not possible. For the depth required for the crew, a steamer must have a draught of about 12 feet. A paddle-steamer may be built to draw almost *inches* instead of feet. It is true that the screw being safer as a man-of-war against shot can more securely approach an enemy's batteries and ships. But it is precisely that quality we do *not* want here now. We are not desiring to send them under batteries, or alongside line-of-battle ships, but we want them by distant firing with the extreme range of heavy guns when the enemy can't with any certainty hope to strike them at all, to burn and destroy the town and the fort and the ships to which their number and their peculiar armament and speed and light draught would make them so superior in hard and telling blows. And now we hear

[35]Williams, op cit.

that they have been wasting their time in England on a draught of 12 feet!!! And the season is fast going! Those vessels may prove of great use as fast despatch boats of considerable force, but they will not, I fear, help us to burn Cronstadt as paddle-steamers of light draught and heavy guns amidships would. For what purpose we would in this ship of war using her own materials (and not spoiling them) with the addition of 40 water butts, turn out in one day a floating stage with two long 68 pounders on it, or, (borrowing from our neighbours what is better) with two of the long distant range guns for shell and solid shot. Boyd after much thought and work, drew out and made a model of this his proposition and I sent him with it to the Commander-in-Chief the other day. We are now on our way to the Aland Islands, it is supposed, with a view to taking the forts at Bomarsund. If we take the bull by the horns and try to do it by sending in two line of battleships, which is, I hear, all there is room for abreast of the central circular fort of 80 guns in granite casements, we shall find that granite will beat wood, and will not burn, blow up or sink, like wood: for while we are with our broadside fighting those 80 guns; three distant forts mounting about 40 or 60 guns at from 1200 to 1400 yd on us, and in different directions and altitudes above us, are plumping us with a plunging fire these ships cannot return, but if we land a good force to attack behind, the game will be ours.[36]

It is quite astonishing that Captain Codrington, a senior officer of the fleet in command of one of its major units, was not aware at this time that that was precisely what was planned.

[36]NMM Codrington Papers, op cit.

13

Sulivan's Trail

While the fleet lay off Kronstadt, its officers were startled by the arrival of the paddle-sloop *Hecla*, Captain William Hall of the Ekenäs adventure. In the words of Captain Paget:

> . . . with signals flying that 'Bomarsund has been successfully bombarded'. By whom? It appeared that he, being bound with letters, or some such thing, to Plumridge, had collected two or three paddles, and popped into Bomarsund, blazed away at the fort from a distance of about 2000 yards. They might as well have fired pea-shooters at it from that distance, as we discovered when we got there, and found that the Russians, in derision, had painted black spots on their walls, to show where the *successful* bombardment took place. This Hall is a capital fellow, and a very gallant one too; but he talks too much. However, in this world, I believe, it is the way to get on, for that most modest and meritorious Yelverton, who planned and commanded the affair of Eckness, has never had from the public the slightest acknowledgement or even encomium.[1]

Captain Hall in his *Hecla* had been ordered by Sir Charles Napier to steam and sail to the mouth of the Gulf of Bothnia and, having found Admiral Plumridge, whose squadron was blockading that Gulf, to convey the Commander-in-Chief's orders to him to make his way to Barösund to take on board provisions. In the admiral's absence, Captain Hall was instructed, as senior officer present, which he was by one year over Captain Buckle of the *Valorous*, to take charge of the squadron, comprising the *Valorous*, the *Vulture* and the *Odin*, all 'steamers', that is paddle-frigates, and continue the blockade. What had actually happened was that he took from a fishing boat an Ålander who was ready to show him the way into the *vik* of Flaka in southern Lemland and here he captured what he variously described as a 'Russian brigantine' and a 'Russian brig', in fact, an Åland

[1]Otway, op cit.

merchant schooner, and a *galeas* bound in from Sweden. He then returned to Lågskar where he found the *Valorous* and the *Odin*. He appears to have decided to take advantage of his short period of independent command to perform an exploit calculated to bring him to favourable attention at home, if not in the fleet, that is to attempt a raid on Bomarsund. In the words of his report to Admiral Napier:

> . . . having arranged with Captains Buckle and Scott my plan of operations, and ordered them to be prepared against red-hot shot, rifle shot and the likelihood of getting on shore, etc, I proceeded through the Archipelago of the Åland Islands, the channel in several places being only from one to two cables lengths wide, but not less than five fathoms water; *Hecla* leading the squadron in close order. At 4.30 pm entered the narrow channel of Angosund, firing on the woods as we passed to prevent surprise from riflemen, and on opening the strong fortifications of Bomarsund I made the preconcerted signal (white ensign at the main) to engage forts, and opened fire with the *Hecla*'s 10-inch guns with shot and shell which was followed by the other ships. . . . At 10 observed that the shell of the squadron had set fire to the public store-houses and buildings in the rear of the fort and part of the fort itself. At this time nearly every shot and shell fired by the squadron appeared to take effect. The action was continued with great spirit until after midnight, when I made the signal to discontinue the engagement, the squadron having expended nearly all their shot and shell for the large guns, and the fire from the enemy had slackened to only an occasional shot . . . having left the extensive military government store, houses in rear of the fort, and part of the fort, still in flames, and the fire increasing . . . I beg to inclose a list of casualties during the action, which I am delighted to say is slight, only five men having been wounded.
>
> The ships were hulled repeatedly by the enemy's fire, and the spars and rigging also suffered, and the boats of the *Hecla* were rendered for the time unserviceable.[2]

Borodkin gives a somewhat different account of the action,

> Since the enemy were at a range of 1000 fathoms (2100 metres) from the fortress, it was not worth wasting powder to fire at them, and the fire decreased on Bodisco's orders. The enemy now took up new positions with the object of being able to shell the fortress along its length but, in doing so, encountered the concealed battery and a line of sharpshooters who did not lose the opportunity to open fire on the vessels. The battery had been set up on a promontory sticking out into the Lumparfjärd and it was armed with four cannon. Two companies of the Finnish Grenadier Sharpshooters

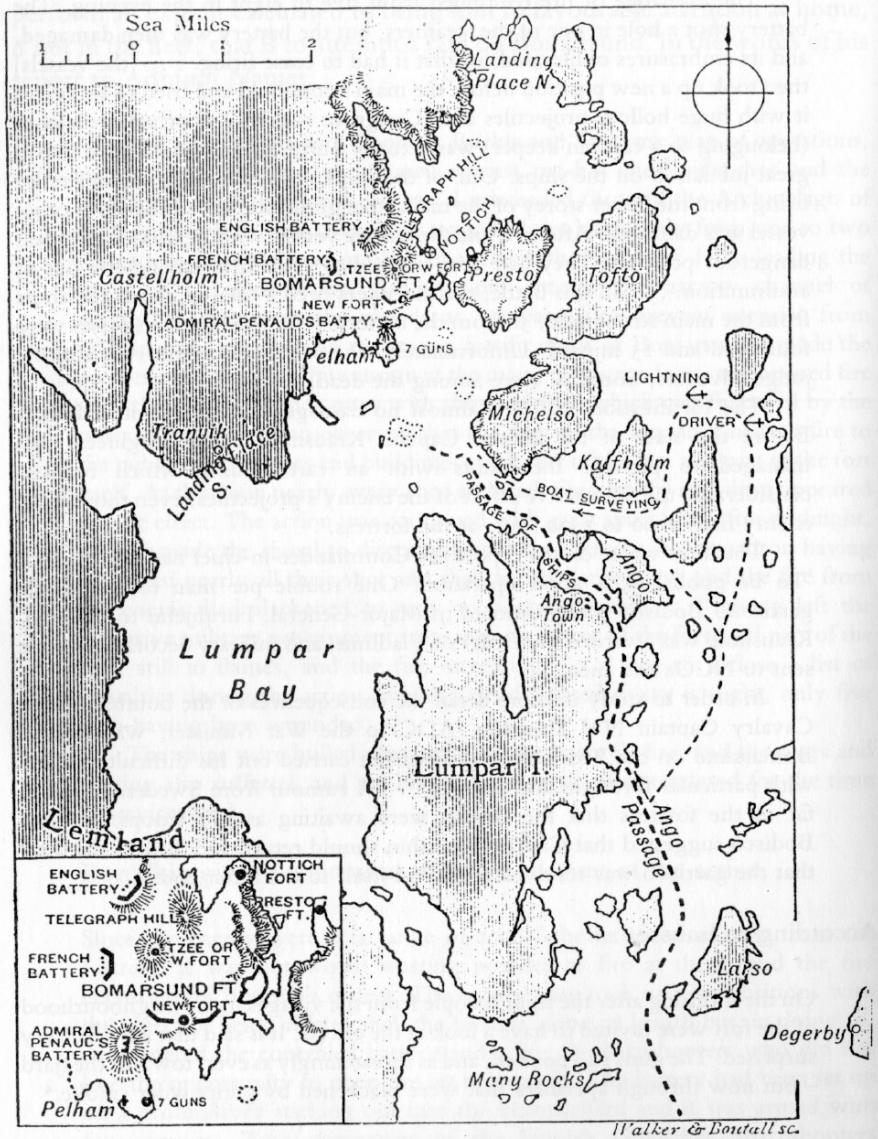
[2]NRS, 1854 op cit.

> Battalion served as the battery's escort. With them were Major Grahn and Lieutenant Colonel Furuhjelm and the latter officer now took command of the battery and its escort.
>
> The exchange of fire continued from five to eight in the evening. The battery shot a hole in one of the steamers, but the battery was then damaged, and its embrasures obliterated, so that it had to cease firing. . . . [the vessels] then took up a new position before the main stronghold and tried to set fire to it with huge hollow projectiles and 'Congreve rockets'. A private residence (belonging to a canteen keeper) was actually burnt down, which gave rise to great jubilation on the ships. One of the ships, however, was set on fire by firing from the lower storey of the main stronghold and the rudder of another vessel was damaged. After a while the enemy vessels withdrew, seeking a less dangerous position. They had been obliged to cease fire, having run out of ammunition. . . . In this battle, the defenders fired a total of about 300 shots from the main stronghold, 56 from the battery. . . . The fortress's losses were four dead and 15 injured. Unfortunately, the doctor, Borovkovich and the judge advocate, Sorokin, were among the dead.
>
> The fortifications suffered almost no damage from the bombardment. Before the start of the action, Captain Kraushold of the engineers had managed to provide the vaults with an earth filling which reduced considerably the destructive effect of the enemy's projectiles, even though the enemy fired 2000 to 2500 shots at the fortress. . . .
>
> The Tzar wrote on the report the Commander-in-chief had sent to him: 'To be published; a good operation. One rouble per man to the whole garrison'. Bodisco was promoted to Major-General, Furuhjelm to Colonel, Kraushold was awarded the Order of Vladimir, and military decorations were sent to NCOs and men. . . .
>
> In order to study in more detail the consequences of the bombardment, Cavalry Captain N V Shenshin, ADC to the War Minister, was sent to Bomarsund on the Tzar's orders. Shenshin carried out his difficult mission with particular foresight and energy. . . . A rumour from Sweden spread as far as the fortress that the British were awaiting assault troops. General Bodisco suggested that Captain Shenshin should return and inform the Tzar that the garrison was resolved to defend itself to the bitter end.[3]

According to Isaksson:

> On the morning after the fight, people from the villages in the neighbourhood of the fort were invited to have a look at the effects. It is said that all were very surprised. The guns still pointed, and as threateningly as ever, towards the fjärd – but now through apertures that were blackened by gunpowder smoke.[4]

[3]Borodkin, op cit.
[4]Isaksson, op cit.



Sulivan's Trail as he sketched it himself. From the Life and Letters

Captain Hall's exploit is criticized in the private accounts of his contemporaries, and in reporting it to the Admiralty, Sir Charles Napier noted,

> However I admire the skill of Captain Hall in placing his ships out of range of the guns of the fortifications which were within range of his own guns, and the decision of the firing of our steamers, I have considered it my duty to disapprove of attacking, in the temporary absence of his Admiral, a fortification of such magnitude without adequate means, and without the smallest prospect of reducing it; and although they succeeded in setting fire to the storehouses in the rear of the fortifications, it was done at the expense of firing away all the shot and shell, and rendering Admiral Plumridge's Squadron inefficient till a fresh supply arrives from England.[5]

Rear-Admiral Byam Martin recorded Napier's reaction in his journal on 29 June 1854 and subsequently:

> Sir Charles does not seem to take all that Hall says for gospel – for he told me that he was 'such a damned liar' that you could not believe a word of his reports. A lad named Lucas [see below] . . . dined with the Admiral who cross-questioned the lad as to the number of field pieces – the horse artillery, etc, which Hall had reported as opposed to him – certainly the boy's answers did not tally with Hall's official statement . . . Napier called Hall a 'shallatang' which is Scots for charlatan.[6]

Nevertheless Captain Hall achieved his wider purpose. The action was reported in *The Times* on 5 July in glowing terms which suggested that his squadron was the first to penetrate the labyrinth and see Bomarsund. The bombardment was very well received at home and provided the Government with evidence to satisfy the public that something was happening in the war. Sir James Graham was able to praise the skill of Captain Hall in Parliament. Hall was transferred to command of the 60-gun screw *Blenheim*.

Perhaps of greater historical interest, C D Lucas, an acting mate, who had picked up and thrown overboard from the *Hecla* a Russian shell with the fuse burning and thereby undoubtedly saved his own life and that of many of his fellow crew members, was promoted lieutenant and in due course became the first VC. His career prospered, he was posted captain, he married Captain Hall's daughter and in retirement became an admiral.

[5]NRS, 1854 op cit.
[6]NMM, Byam Martin, op cit.

In fact, Captain Hall in penetrating the labyrinth of the Åland Islands was following a well-marked path. Captain Sulivan had been there before him, spending two weeks finding the way the fleet must go if any attempt were to be made on this naval base to be. Sulivan's problem was to find if there was a channel into the Lumparfjärd through which a battle fleet could make its way to bombard the fort and, in the event, land a substantial body of troops. There was one potential channel, the Ängösund, between the island of Lumparland and Ängö in Wårdö Commune. The Russians had been told that it was wide and deep enough only for frigates, and then only with difficulty. On the strength of this, as has already been said, they dismantled the battery they had constructed on the island of Hararna at the head of the channel through the Ängösund. This decision was to prove disastrous. In Borodkin's words:

> It is a noteworthy fact . . . that the local pilots had given assurances that the depth in Lumparfjärd did not exceed 22 feet and that the channel was so narrow that even frigates could only pass through with difficulty. According to the same pilots there were, within range of the fortress, underwater rocks through which two frigates at the most could manoeuvre at the same time. According to the pilots' statement, only small steam vessels could pass through the north entrance. 'It later turned out', Chatelain, an eye-witness to the events in Åland wrote, 'that where we expected only frigates would be able to go, even ships of the line passed, and that an entire squadron could manoeuvre in the channel that we had taken to be too narrow for two frigates.' This state of affairs can only be explained by the pilots having measured the depth of the water solely on the basis of sea charts which had been drawn up over a 100 years earlier, and perpetuating their errors. It is therefore not to be wondered at that the British possessed charts of much more recent date and that they could thus demonstrate brilliantly their ability to operate at sea.[7]

The British, in fact, as Sulivan has already been quoted as saying, had no reliable charts of the Åland Islands. After the abortive attempt by Admiral Plumridge and Captain Giffard in the *Leopard* to reconnoitre in May, the approaches to Bomarsund were left severely alone until the end of the month. What happened then is once again best told in Captain Sulivan's own words:

> Near Bomarsund, Aland Islands, 4 June. I have been so hard at work that I have been unable to write, and yet it has been the most interesting cruise I have yet had. On Sunday last (28th) the chief told me that he wanted me to go to the Aland Islands at once; but as he could hardly spare me two steamers, I asked for *Driver*, just come in. She draws only 14ft 6ins. He gave me her, and I made a good selection, for she is far handier than any large steamer I have seen, is well handled, and her commander, Cochrane, a son of Lord Dundonald, is a most zealous, pleasant assistant, and I could not have hit on a better. Knowing that the admiral ought to have sent the senior engineer officer with me, as we were going to reconnoitre forts, I asked him to come with me, and the captain of the fleet got permission for him . . . I received orders to examine the channels to Bomarsund, to examine the forts, and *to sound alongside them*. Rather an amusing order, considering it is daylight all night, and it is an instance of the way the chief gives orders, for he never meant it, as he cautioned me against going too near, particularly to avoid the gun-boats, 30 of which were said to be here, and said that he would 'have no fighting for fighting's sake'. I assured him I was not so fond of it as that, and that he might rely upon my taking every care.[8]

[7]Borodkin, op cit.

Sulivan with the *Lightning* and *Driver* entered the Åland Archipelago in the neighbourhood of Ledskär at the southern tip of the main island of Lemland, having laid his course in from Lågskär. He landed in the vicinity of Rönnskag on the east shore of Lemland where he saw a boat going in,

> and wanting information about which islands had soldiers on them, and where their gunboats were, we went in three boats after her; but we only found the deserted boats and their provisions. There was a pretty farm, fine pasture, and cows, and we walked some way in, but only found barns. I left a shilling in the boat's head sheets, to prove to them we did not want to injure them.[9]

The two steamers then crossed the Ledfjärden and, according to the diary kept by Emil Theorell, the Swedish lieutenant who was with the party as interpreter, they anchored inside the Island of Brändö in Föglö community (Sulivan's letters are by no means so specific as to where they went), from where they pulled in boats to Flisö, but were unable to make any contact with the inhabitants, who fled in panic.

They pulled round to Degerby, the largest settlement in the neighbourhood, where much the same thing happened. As Theorell wrote, 'it was disgusting to see how terrified people were of us – two men walking alone'.[10] Sulivan did his best to establish friendly relations and believed that

[8]Sulivan, op cit.
[9]Ibid.
[10]Theorell, op cit.

he had done so. He managed to purchase milk and eggs. In fact, the fear of the British which was so marked everywhere that *Driver* and the *Lightning* went was largely the product of the 'take, burn, or destroy' policy of Admiral Plumridge and his captains who had been active in the Islands capturing and burning the farmers' little *galeaser* and *jakter*. Åland tradition and some local written evidence quoted by Isaksson[11] also suggests that, although no Letters of Marque were issued, the fleet had a tail of unofficial privateers, pirates, bully boys in vessels, who, like the yachts already mentioned, followed the big ships, in their case for what they could loot and steal from the defenceless villagers. Georg Kåhre is quite explicit on this subject when he says, 'The inhabitants of Föglö, however, lost two newly-built schooners, *Föglö and Valfrid*, which fell into the hands of privateers . . . The local people made a clear distinction between the enemy's proper naval fleet and the privateers. They were regarded as pirates, more or less unauthorizedly sailing under the British Flag'.[12] These gentlemen did nothing to enhance the reputation of the British navy. And not all the acquisitions of sheep and cows was done in the gentlemanly way adopted by men of Sulivan's calibre. There were still fragments of oral tradition about these days of the high summer of 1854 in circulation among the people of Wårdö Commune in the late 1970s. Captain Karl V Karlsson of Grundsunda, then in his early 80s, told us that his father was born on the island of Bussö, the little island immediately north of Ängö, in that war year of 1854. In later years he was proud of having been told that the English officers had said that he was a beautiful baby. But the British sailors stole sheep from the family farm. One of them got his belt around the horns of a ram to lead and pull it to the shore, but the ram got away with the belt still around its horns. The belt, which was of leather, about two inches wide with a knife in the sheath still attached to it, was still hanging in one of the barns in Bussö in the 1920s.

In Degerby Captain Sulivan learned (Isaksson tells us)[13] that the Russians did not regard the Ängösund as navigable by big vessels. The Ängösund was the key to the conquest of Bomarsund. It is the name given generally to a navigable channel leading from the vicinity of the modern ferry terminus at Långnäs in a northerly direction between the east coast of the main island of Lumparland and the west side of the islands of Söderholm, Tvegata, Randholm, and Ängö with Timrö, now joined to it

[11]Isaksson, op cit.
[12]Kåhre, op cit.
[13]Isaksson, op cit.

by the land rise, to Lumparudd – Lumpar Point – the northerly extremity of the main island of Lumparland Commune. The passage was a complex one, but it so happens that there is a continuous channel, or series of linked channels, of deep water all the way through from the Föglöfjärden to Lumparudd and then on through Prästösund to the deep water to the north of Bomarsund. Had the Russians not dismantled their battery on Hararna, where the Ängösund opens out into the Lumparfjärd or Lumparn, they could have maintained complete control of the passage. That battery and a few companies of riflemen stationed at the narrows where the modern ferry to Ängö crosses the channel would have barred the way to the allied fleets.

The Russians appear to have made no attempt to control this vital channel. To the north of the Ängösund there is no deep water passage from the south to the site of the Bomarsund fortifications. The water around the islands of Bussö, Kalvholm, and Bergö in Grunsunda Fjärden, south of the main island of Wårdö, all the water north and east of the Island of Sandö, of Östra and Västra Simskäla, north all the way to the Låga Skärgården are littered with rocks, pink granite which comes up straight from the shallow water to make a labyrinth, a vast death trap, to those who do not know the waters with the intimacy gained from long usage. Not until you come to the far north of Åland, and gain access to the channels made by the Saggöfjärden and the Boxöfjärden and the Simskälafjärden, round between Bergö and the northern tip of the main island of Wårdo, is there a deep-water channel south all the way to Bomarsund, to what was to be the great harbour created by the building, one day, of the stone mole between Prästö and the skerries of Slätskär and Krokskär. This is the way the Russian warships and supply ships came to Bomarsund. This is the way, when Wårdö blossomed forth into a great merchant shipowning community ten years after the war was over, her deep-water merchant vessels came to the harbours of their home villages, Båthusvik for Vargata, Östervik for Grundsunda.

All this (except for the channel to the north, which the allied fleet never discovered) the calmly competent hydrographer, Sulivan, with the two historic vessels, the *Lightning*, the second steamer ever to have been built for the British navy, and the *Driver*, the first vessel with a steam engine ever to have circumnavigated the world, learned in two weeks of ceaseless work, endlessly probing the channels, sounding from boats, landing and seeking information. First they made a preliminary survey of the Ängösund. In Sulivan's words, 'The next morning we worked our way through most intricate passages (but I think I can get a line-of-battle ship through them), till we passed the narrow passage leading to Bomarsund,

which is in the north east corner of Lumpar Bay . . .' Then, in search of a wider channel in which the ships would be less vulnerable to attack by rifle and cannon fire from the shore than they were in the Ängösund, they explored a little to the north and from boats landed on the west side of Michelsö, climbed the cliffs there and lay down on top, from which vantage point they had the first view of the legendary, mysterious, and very incomplete 'defence works' at Bomarsund. The subject of so much speculation and espionage lay across the blue, sparkling waters of Lumparn. They made sketches. Sulivan wrote to his wife, 'The large one, mounting 92 guns in casemates, exactly resembles a new terrace in a fashionable watering place, the top having no guns, but a wooden roof to protect it from the weather'. They had a brush with a small party sent from the fort to see what they were up to and then,

> The next morning we ran back to the entrance of the Ango Passage, as I felt confident they had taken no steps to oppose us there; in fact, the governor seemed entirely to neglect his means to annoy us; but as he had no gunboats he had no power afloat . . . At the entrance to the Ango Passage we had great difficulty in finding a channel between two islands, a rock with 6 feet of water on it nearly blocking it up. At last, by shaving very close, we led the *Driver* through; but it was anxious work. We then ran up in a fine clear channel to Lumpar Bay, and we anchored about 3000 yards from the forts. We then had a capital view of them, both from the *Driver*'s masthead and from the rocks on the cliff, our old position, and we got some soundings in the bay.[14]

Trying to get through Bussöfjärd and Grundsundafjärd (where the road bridge now runs across between Töftö and Wårdö) to the deep-water channel to the north of the forts in Vargatafjärd, they ran into shallow water. They then tried to find the way up the east coast of Wårdö, but again ran into shallow water in the vicinity of Östervik. They landed from a boat and on the cultivated land at the head of Östervik they found Carl Anders Sundman, a farmer/skipper, 25 years of age with a young wife and children at home. He had gone out to repair a field fence. Although he tried to escape, he was captured and asked through Lieutenant Theorell to say whether the channel north, which led eventually out of the maze of rocks and skerries east of the Östervik, was to the west or east of Skatklobb, a small wooded island off Östervik. The channel is, in fact, to the east, leaving the islet on the port hand going north, and Sundman, threatened with a pistol, answered that the local *galeaser* went that way.

[14]Sulivan, op cit.

The people of the little community, Grundsunda, were as frightened as usual, but when Lieutenant Theorell talked to them some of them came back and told him that the 'take, burn, or destroy' brigade had already paid them a visit with the aptly named *Vulture* and the unfortunate *Valorous*. To quote Sulivan again,

> we found that two steamers, probably Buckle and Glasse's had been there, and burnt two vessels. The ships had anchored outside in the open, but sent their boats in. We found several coasting-vessels sunk in a cove [which can only have been Östervik itself] to save them from the English, and one nice schooner afloat, but empty. I found that the chief wealth of the poor people consists of these little vessels, and I assured them I would not injure or take one of them; even the vessel afloat would not be worth the sending away men in her, and it would be, I think, cruel to burn her, particularly as all these islanders are much attached to Sweden and hate the Russians.[15]

Skipper Sundman and another man who had been taken with him were released and given some sugar and coffee and pamphlets in Swedish entitled *How Do I Find Salvation?* Captain Sulivan with the *Lightning* and the *Driver* went his way through the maze of rocks and skerries to Kumlinge. If the tone of his letters to his wife is to be believed he had no idea of the ferment of feeling in the Åland communes. The Ålanders were torn apart by their fear and dislike of the Russians, their horror of the British with their policy of destruction, their persistent loyalty to neutral Sweden, and their own strong sense of their communal identity. Skipper Sundman reported his unhappy adventure to the district officer at Bomarsund, but he had committed a technical offence in that he had given away some of Captain Sulivan's religious tracts. He was charged with having 'received gifts and distributed them, thereby furthering the purposes of the enemy', found guilty and sentenced to death by the district court of Wårdö, acting in fear of the Russians. He was incarcerated in Kastelholm. Lieutenant Theorell noted in his diary on 28 July, 'We learned that the pilot we used in *Lightning* in May was taken prisoner and sentenced to death. They say he is in Kastelholm. If that is true I intend to help him out of there'.[16] Not for the last time, it appears that Emil Theorell's influence seems to have been considerable for a junior officer of the Swedish Navy. It is not perhaps wholly surprising that a raid by French troops on Kastelholm during the siege of Bomarsund resulted in Sundman's release. After the capture of

[15]Sulivan, op cit.
[16]Theorell, op cit.

Bomarsund and the effective taking over of control of the islands by the Allies, he was allowed to go home and there he remained with his young wife and family under threat of death until the Court of Appeal in Åbo, away from the local tensions and fears, acquitted him. But the stresses and terrors for a totally innocent man and all his family, brought about by the equally innocent act of one of the best of British captains, must have been appalling.

Captain Sulivan never found the way into Bomarsund from the north. He sailed to Kumlinge and from there across to Simskäla, where he claimed to have been well received,

> We landed at a village, where no-one ran away or seemed afraid; but a nice family, father, mother and daughter, received us with smiles, and we found that the news had come of our having treated the people well on the other islands. This family had a nice new log house, very clean, like all the others, and with bed places one above the other, built to one wall like the berths in a ship, in the same room where they live and cook [a physical necessity for survival when you lived on the 60th parallel and were dependent on wood burning stoves in the winter]. This is the general plan with these little farmers, who have a few cattle, sheep, and a few acres of land in rye and potatoes, with plenty of good log barns, cowsheds, etc for their stock. A print of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert preparing for a ball, she putting her gloves on, hung alongside the King of Prussia and the Prince and Princess of Sweden . . . The most singular thing is, we got the best information about the forts from the eldest girl: she had been pressed with the rest of the population to work there, carrying up sand to the top of the fort – they have sand laid to a depth of three feet. The people were forced to work, but were all paid.[17]

A few days later Captain Sulivan was to write of the people of the archipelago:

> A few evenings ago a small sloop was stealing along the channels . . . We found her full of hay, and the crew consisting of husband, wife, and son, a boy about ten. We soon quieted the poor woman's fears by releasing the vessel. I was surprised to see in such a little vessel such a nice clean cabin, and a woman doing such work, yet neatly dressed, with a regular fashionable lady's monkey jacket over all, and very clean. She was very fair and clear-skinned, with auburn hair like many English women. She had in the cabin a small Testament and Psalter in one case. It is certainly not creditable to us as a nation that we should be so behind in education those we have previously considered half-barbarous Finns. They can hardly believe that numbers of people in England cannot read.[18]

[17]Sulivan, op cit.
[18]Ibid.

He completed his survey of the Ängösund, 'going through the channels that had taken us so long to find in a few hours at full speed. We anchored off Ango Passage for the night, wishing to look for deeper water into it. This we found the next morning . . .'[19] On his way back to Ledfjärd and the open sea beyond Lågskär and the labyrinth he called at Degerby again to attempt to buy sheep but, in Theorell's words, 'all in vain as the crying ladies did not want to part from their stock, not for love or money'.[20] The food was essential to survive the coming winter. Money was useless to them. Here Sulivan was asked that if he came again he should take away as prisoner the government policeman, Mr Ohrblom, who happened to be away from his station that day, but who was a thorn in the flesh of the local people, 'the very devil' according to Lieutenant Theorell. As Martin Isaksson says,[21] the original words in Åland dialect must have been 'länsman är en riktig jävel'.

Thus by the hard and skilful work of a dedicated hydrographer, the road to Bomarsund for big ships was opened up and the highway was marked by Sulivan's trail. According to a deposition by Police Officer Liljestrand at Degerby this trail comprised cairns painted white on islets, skerries, and rocks, and painted marks on cliffs, all the way from Ledsund to Ängösund.[22] It was this trail that Captain Hall followed in the *Hecla* to burn up his ammunition in a piece of fruitless but romantic exhibitionism.

But it was soon to be used for an altogether more serious operation.

[19]Ibid.
[20]Theorell, op cit.
[21]Isaksson, op cit.
[22]Isaksson, op cit.

14

The Fortress Falls

Captain Sulivan's report to Admiral Sir Charles Napier was thoughtful and conservative. It did not envisage the taking of Bomarsund by ships alone. His description of the fort and his assessment of the possibilities of taking it, written with the aid of Major Nugent of the Royal Engineers, who had accompanied Sulivan in the *Lightning* throughout the long survey and had been promoted, is worth quoting at length. It formed the basis of the eventual decision to assault Bomarsund and contains much detail which is relevant to the understanding of the attack.

> The large fort has only guns in the two tiers of casemates. The top is covered by an iron roof, to protect it from the weather. The casemates appear small, and do not give a large angle for training the guns – probably 30 of which might be brought to bear on one ship . . . The towers are all of similar construction – two tiers of casements, with an iron roof above . . . On the slope of the hill, behind No 1 tower, an extensive new building is going on, which is evidently intended for a new and very heavy fort, from its position commanding the bay, and flanking the approach to the large fort. It will, if completed, materially add to the difficulty of attacking the place by sea.
>
> The tower on Presto Island is on the extreme low point which forms the channel. It is apparently formed with four casemates in most of the sides. About ten guns can be brought to bear on one point, and the same number, or rather more, from the northern tower on the opposite point of the passage. This tower is circular. Other works are being commenced, which will make the defences most complete.
>
> With regard to attacking the forts by ships, it is quite impossible to make any serious impression on any of the forts by shelling at long range, as there are no guns on the roofs, and besides being bomb proof, a depth of sand has been recently added to the large fort. For a more direct attack by large ships, about six or seven could be placed at a range of about 1400 yards. They would be opposed to the fire of about sixty guns in the large fort, and at the range of some 2000 to 2300 yards to the fire of the guns in the towers, which it would be almost useless to return. As at 1400 yards the fire of the ships would do very little damage to the masonry of the fort, I think it would be totally

> useless to place ships at that distance from it, unless for the purpose of covering the approach of three or four heavy ships, to take up a position within the smaller bay at a range of 500 or 600 yards, which would be the only means by which the large fort could be silenced; but these ships would probably suffer so severely from the cross fire of the three towers, in addition to the direct fire of from 50 to 60 guns in the large fort, that their success would be doubtful. The attention of the two northern towers might probably be occupied by ships on that side, but the guns in the western tower would, from its position, do serious injury.
>
> On the whole, therefore, I am of opinion that an attack by ships would be attended with a loss and risk too great to warrant the attempt, unless aided by a sufficient land force to assist, by first carrying the tower by assault, or by regular approaches; or by carrying on direct approaches against the large fort from Presto Island.[1]

Captain Sulivan made this report on rejoining the fleet on 11 June 1854. On 20 June Sir Charles Napier reported to the Admiralty in terms which have already been quoted (page 212) and was told by Sir James Graham, replying on 27 June, that on his return from the reconnaissance of Kronstadt he would receive full instructions with regard to the attack on Bomarsund. On 11 July the Admiralty issued the instructions,

> Having given our best attention to the able and well executed survey that you and your officers have made of the fortifications and approaches to Cronstadt, we acquaint you that we have full confidence in your judgment, and place complete reliance on your report; you have offered the enemy battle at the mouth of his impregnable fortifications, of which opportunity he is not inclined to avail himself. It will now be for you to seek for other points where he may be more vulnerable, and to cause him all the annoyance possible on his own shores, and in his own waters. You must always bear in mind that the great object in view, since the enemy dare not meet you in fair fight, is to render his fleet useless, by confining it to its moorings within the fortified harbours.
>
> Commodore Grey, with the ships named in the margin and transports, will leave Calais Roads on the 14th, having on board 9000 French troops under the command of General Baraguay d'Hilliers; they have been directed to repair to Faro Sound, to await communication from you. The troops must be removed without loss of time from all the ships of war under Commodore Grey's orders, as their services are imperatively required elsewhere, and they are to return to England with all possible dispatch, so soon as the troops and all ordnance stores required by your fleet have been removed.
>
> The transports are to remain for your disposal, observing that many of

[1] NRS, 1854 op cit.

them have not the full number of men on board that they are calculated to carry.

Whatever may be the operations that you and your French colleagues may deem it right to undertake, you are never to lose sight of the great responsibility that rests on yourself – the primary object being the close blockade of the enemy's fleet and of the Gulf of Finland.[2]

On the same day, 11 July, the Admiralty authorities issued another letter to Sir Charles Napier,

I am commanded by My Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to acquaint you that Brigadier-General H Jones having been appointed to proceed to the Baltic with a portion of Sappers and Miners, to act in conjunction with the French Army under General Baraguay d'Hilliers, My Lords consider it most desirable that you should take his opinion, and consult with him on all military operations proposed to be undertaken by the combined forces.

Brigadier-General Jones has been instructed to carry out the peculiar service on which he is about to be employed, with the utmost cordiality and deference towards the French Generals who are superior to him in rank; always stating frankly his opinion to yourself, as to the propriety or otherwise of the proposed operations on shore. . . .[3]

Brigadier-General Jones, who had some previous knowledge of the Baltic, had indeed been instructed accordingly in a letter from the Duke of Newcastle of 14 July, which added,

The only British troops that are at present destined for this service consist of the Company of Sappers which will accompany you – but the Admiral is empowered to add a force of Royal Marines if he should see fit to do so.

The principal duty which you will have to perform will be to assist the siege operations in which the fleets and the French Army are about to be engaged, with your scientific knowledge and experience, and to direct any operations which the British forces may undertake on land . . . I need hardly point out to you, that the success of the service on which you are to be engaged, will greatly depend upon the confidence you may establish in the opinion of the Admiral in your judgment and discretion. . . .[4]

Thus it became apparent that what would now be called combined forces operations had been decided upon by the British and French Governments. The troops were to be French because there were simply no

[2]NRS, 1854. ibid.
[3]NRS, 1854 op cit.
[4]PRO WO 6/69 General Harry D Jones, Dispatches, Baltic.

British troops available, the reserve force having been sent to the Black Sea. The background for the decision was explained by Sir James Graham in a letter to Napier dated 2 July in which he said that the Cabinet had taken into consideration the statements contained in Napier's letter of 20 June. He went on to say,

We have collected also from the various reports that, with 10,000 men, Bomarsund and the Aland Islands may be taken; and being of opinion that the presence of the Allied Fleet in the Baltic must be marked by some result, we determined to propose to the Emperor of the French to send them forthwith 6000 soldiers, and these, in addition to your marines and to the troops now on board the French line of battleships, will raise the effectual military force at your disposal to 10,000 men.

The two Governments have arranged these measures in consequence: on the 14th of this month, 6000 French soldiers, with ten guns, 50 horses and caissons, will be embarked on board the British ships of war and transports, for conveyance either to Barösund or Faro, as may be thought most expedient. I incline to the latter place, an attack on Bomarsund being the first object, unless, indeed, you agree with the Emperor that Langhorn is assailable, in which case Barösund must be the rendezvous and Sveaborg the object at which we must aim.

I am disposed to begin with Bomarsund, but you and the French Admiral must decide; your success there may be reduced to certainty, and it will be the first hard blow in the battle. Moreover, while Sweden is hesitating, France and England will have gained a possession without her aid which she might have won for herself, and which to her is of inestimable value. She must become our suitor when we hold Aland, and we shall be enabled to command her future assistance on our own terms.[5]

The last sentence reveals a misunderstanding of the Swedish position as already explained in Chapter 9.

On 11 July, as well as the official communication already quoted, Sir James Graham wrote again privately to Napier to say that it was clear from his report of the reconnaissance of Kronstadt and from Captain Sulivan's report, that an attack would be extremely difficult and uncertain, even if it were supported by a force of gunboats and troops not at present available. He went on,

. . . it now remains for you to blockade the Gulf of Finland [again there is no mention of the Gulf of Bothnia] to keep the fleets at Cronstadt and Helsingfors disunited, and to await the arrival of the French troops, when you

[5]Williams, op cit.

and the French Admiral and General must deliberate on the operation to be undertaken by the combined forces.

Bomarsund will clearly be within your reach. Sveaborg, if it were possible, would be a noble prize, but on no account be led into any desperate attempt, and, above all things, avoid the least risk of the Russian Fleet slipping out of the Gulf of Finland when your back is turned. . . .

I am afraid that we shall not be able to send the whole of the 9000 French troops to the Baltic on Friday next, as I had hoped a day or two ago; the transports are not quite ready, but I am still confident that the whole number will be assembled at Faro on the 6th of August.

Sweden will not move unless Austria goes to war with Russia, and Austria still hesitates and hangs back. With 50,000 Swedes and 200 Swedish gunboats you might do something great and decisive before the end of September.[6]

It is evident from the foregoing that the British and French Governments had left the final decision for the employment of the troops sent to the Baltic with the French and British admirals and that it was accepted that no attack could be made on Kronstadt with the forces and equipment then available. The decision whether to attack Sveaborg or Bomarsund rested with the admirals, neither of whom was in supreme command. As Sir James Graham had put it in a letter of 28 May,

> The supreme command not being vested in either of you, mutual confidence and forebearance must be the rule, and the general plan of operations must be the result of previous concert and deliberation.[7]

According to Williams, on 10 July Napier wrote to Sir James Graham to tell him that he had agreed with the French admiral that Sveaborg could not be attacked, that a further attack on Hangö would be pointless, and that the objective of action with the troops would therefore be Bomarsund. This crossed with a letter from the Secretary to the Admiralty to Napier enclosing a memorandum from Sir James Graham transmitting detailed orders as to the disposition of the vessels carrying and escorting the French troops. The rendezvous was to be Fårösund, north of Gotland. In the event that Sveaborg was the chosen objective, then the fleet should proceed to Barösund where the troops were to be trans-shipped and the four sailing line-of-battleships carrying them were to be released forthwith to return to Britain. If Bomarsund was chosen, then the four line-of-battleships must

[6]Williams, op cit.
[7]Ibid.

not be taken into the Lumparfjärd as the hazards of the pilotage for such large vessels were too great. The troops must be trans-shipped into smaller vessels at Ledsund. The battleships were being towed out by four steamers which must return home from Fårö. The fleet's own steamers must provide towage from there on, and so forth.

On 24 July Napier reported finally that Bomarsund was to be the objective. Captain Sulivan in the *Lightning* was hard at work trying to find a better approach for the big ships to the anchorage at Ledsund. Five screw-steamers of the line and four sailing line-of-battleships, together with smaller vessels, were detached under Commodore (soon to be Rear-Admiral) Martin to maintain the watch on Sveaborg and Kronstadt.

The blockade of the Gulf of Bothnia was abandoned and Admiral Plumridge with his squadron of paddle-steamers was sent to maintain the blockade to the north of the Åland Islands and thus to prevent the relief of the fort through the northern channels. Thus Russian forces which had been assembled at Åbo, but without effective steamers, were unable to reinforce the garrison and Åland was cut off from mainland Finland. The rest of the fleet made its way to Lågskär and from there in the new channel, led by Captain Sulivan, to Ledsund. Here the line-of-battleships remained available to be called up by Admiral Martin should the Russian Fleet take the opportunity to attack. Napier's opinion, reflecting the Admiralty opinion quoted above, was that they were too big and too valuable to risk in the tortuous Ängösund. The transport of troops and the supporting bombardment from the sea was to be done by blockships and the paddle-frigates. This did not please the senior captains of some of the line-of-battleships, who were thus deprived of the opportunity of distinguishing themselves and their ships in action. Already on 22 July Captain Sulivan with *Lightning* in the lead and supported by the *Alban*, another hydrographic vessel, had taken the blockships *Ajax*, *Blenheim*, *Hogue* and *Edinburgh*, all 60-gun vessels, together with the 34-gun screw-frigate *Amphion*, forming a squadron under the command of Admiral Chads, through the Ängösund and on 24 July they were already in position in the Lumparn. Their passage of the Ängösund was the subject of a famous lithograph, made from drawings prepared by Oswald Brierly who was present during the campaign as a guest of Captain Keppel on board the *St Jean d'Acre* and who was on board *Lightning* when the passage was made. Sulivan himself described what happened.

> I went in *Edinburgh*, and we had an easy run for six miles, then anchored to find a better channel than my former one of 4 fathoms. I went in *Lightning*,

> soon found a narrow one, but with 5½ fathoms, bounded by rocks with only 4, 5, and 2 fathoms on them. We put some buoys down, and then I returned to *Edinburgh*, and we went on swimmingly through channels so narrow that the line-of-battle ships seemed like giants looking down on the small islands, and so right into Lumpar Bay in front of Bomarsund . . . as Mr Brierly, who sends sketches to the *Illustrated*, was, with a host of amateurs, in *Lightning*, I dare say you will see a sketch of it. It was the prettiest sight by far yet seen in the Baltic.[8]

Today it is possible to identify the exact spot from which Brierly's drawing was made, near the point where the modern ferry across the Ängösund leaves Lumparland. Brierly must have landed here at a later date in the campaign. On 22 July the French Squadron of sailing vessels joined the British Fleet in Ledsund, the sole French screw-steamer, the *Austerlitz*, having been allocated to Admiral Martin's blockading force. Under cover of darkness that same night a boat expedition from the blockships found deep water all the way north through Prästösund and rounded into Vargatafjärd, right under the guns of the tower of Notvik, and found a tolerable landing place for troops a little to the north. Next day Sulivan in the *Lightning* showed the Ängösund to senior French officers and the masters of all the British ships in the fleet.

Next day again he had to rescue the luckless Captain Buckle in the *Valorous*, which had gone badly aground near Degerby and was seriously damaged. A few years ago there was still an oral tradition current in Föglö as to how this stranding occurred. A woman had been taken off a fishing boat and pressed into service as a pilot. Asked where the shoals were, she pointed in the direction of the nearest rocks, she was understood to be indicating the channel and soon the *Valorous*, by accident or intent, was hard aground. This salvage action by Sulivan took him back to the scene of his earlier fraternizing with the local Ålanders and he took the opportunity to make prisoner Mr Ohrblom, the unpopular police officer who had been enforcing the rules of the Russian administration to the extent of preventing the locals from following their natural inclinations and trading with the fleet where trade was possible. According to Sulivan's own account, this arrest greatly improved relations with the inhabitants of Föglö.

On 16 June 5000 French troops sailed from Calais in four British sailing line-of-battleships, solemnly towed by four British paddle-steamers. Three days later, another 4000 left the same port in six transports and

[8]Sulivan, op cit.

the *Prince*, an iron merchant steamer 165 ft long, which was a big vessel for her day, though *The Great Britain*, 300 feet on deck, was still nearly half as long again as any other vessel afloat. Two French line-of-battleships were to leave under tow at about the same time with all the equipment necessary for a siege on board, including artillery, and with engineer officers. The whole French army force was to be under the command of General Achille Baraguay d'Hilliers, the 60-year-old son of one of Napoleon's generals. He was described in a lecture given in Helsinki in 1855 by Dr K A Bomansson, an Ålander who was a lecturer on the staff of the university, and who wandered around the French and British positions before the bombardment, as 'dignified and with strong features. He had lost an arm in a skirmish. He maintained firm control of his troops, which was greatly appreciated by the Ålanders, who feared looting and rape'. Captain Paget found him,

> the beau ideal of an old warrior, tall and bolt upright, with hard features and a skin like leather, and a long grey moustache, his eyes rather sunken and very piercing. He had but one hand, the other he left at Moscow in 1812. His manner is very abrupt, but in other respects he is very gentlemanlike, and takes snuff in the style of the Prince Regent.[9]

General Baraguay d'Hilliers came out to the Baltic in the Emperor's yacht, the *Reine Hortense*, and first paid a further visit to King Oscar in a foredoomed attempt yet again to persuade him to bring Sweden into the war. The French troops, or some of them, were reviewed by the Emperor Napoleon before they sailed. Captain the Hon Keith Stewart in *Termagant*, a screw-steamer which towed the sailing transports, saw most of the French troops as bearded, better dressed than their officers, and 'In their pockets these men have an unending supply of small articles: hairbrush, mirror, pipe and tobacco, letter paper, pen and ink. All eat enormous quantities of food but drink surprisingly little, and in moderation'.[10] The convoy stopped at Helsingør for coaling, provisioning, 'and entertainment', and again to coal at Fårö. When they approached Lågskär, the ubiquitous *Lightning* was there, waiting to guide them into Ledsund.

Despite Sir James Graham's instructions, Napier ordered the Hon F Grey, in command of the first contingent of transports, not to rendezvous at Fårö but to sail straight to Ledsund, on the grounds that he had not got sufficient ships to provide a towing force as well as maintaining the

[9]Otway, op cit.
[10]Ms in Coll Ålandsbanken.

blockade. There they arrived on 30 July. The second contingent and the two vessels with siege materials were delayed and did not arrive at Ledsund until 5 August. Napier, who does not seem to have realized the strength of the French forces and the weakness of the fortress, only a third completed in its defensive works, became anxious. Early August is still high summer in Åland and today tourists from Sweden and Germany and mainland Finland in their hundreds set up their tents in the first three weeks of the month in the camping ground near the site of the great fort. But Napier wrote to Sir James Graham,

> If the Russians can hold out till the weather gets bad, we shall be in a mess. All that can be done I will do, but this delay kills me. What the transports were ordered to Kiel for, having all the stores on board, God only knows; but they appear to have forgotten that this is August, and we are in latitude 60°NO!![11]

On the same day the *Vulture* returned from England bearing Britain's advance on the Paixhans gun, a Lancaster, but the only one available and with only a small supply of its ammunition. Two days later the French troops were embarked into steamers and taken up through the Ängösund. Six hours later, the vessels were all at anchor in the northern part of the Lumparn. By daylight on 8 August all the troops were ashore, including a British contingent of marines and 200 British engineers, 'the sappers and miners' who, together with 2000 French marines, by agreement with the French general were all placed under Brigadier-General Jones' command. That officer had prepared himself well. On 31 July he had spent all day in the *Lightning*, while Sulivan showed him and the army's engineer officers the forts north and south. Then again on 2 August Sulivan describes a reconnaissance by the top brass, British and French, which has all the charm of a summer day in the Royal Yacht.

> Yesterday the two Commanders-in-Chief – Napier and Duchesne – the French General-in-Chief, four other French generals, General Jones and all their staffs, went in the Emperor's yacht to examine the place, *Lightning* going with them and leading through the channels. . . . After seeing everything and shooting the poor forts tremendously with spy glasses, and carrying off every bit of them on paper, they wanted to go round to the northward. I told them that I could not take the yacht that way, as it was too intricate; and so they all agreed to stay in *Lightning*, and meet the yacht on our return. On our way round I got lunch, in the shape of cheese, sardines, biscuit, wine etc on the table, and in turn had the whole party in the cabin, beginning with the 'great guns'.[12]

[11] Williams, op cit.

General Bodisco and Colonel Furuhjelm had been prevented from hindering the free movement of British ships among the islands in the southern approaches to the fortress (so frequently a matter of comment by British officers concerned, and easy as it should have been) by the simple fact that they had not got enough riflemen to cover all, or even a few, of the islands, and they had no means of transport to move them around which could remotely keep pace with the steamers. These steamers introduced a new dimension into the life of the archipelago. In the words of one Åland account, 'everything happened so quickly; it was not possible to prepare flight or resistance before being surrounded. One just had to make the best of every situation'.[13]

From his appointment until August 1854, Colonel Furuhjelm kept a daily diary in Russian which is quoted by Isaksson.[14] He was very well informed. On 3 August 1854, when the last written report was sent to Åbo by General Bodisco, he knew that Åland was totally surrounded, that the fleets were in Ledsund and that French troops had embarked on 15 July. Roads and bridges around the fort were destroyed. Soon there were 25 ships of war anchored in Lumparen. The actual landing force comprised a brigade of infantry, a brigade from the 48th and 51st Line Regiments of the French army, one and a half batteries, a company of sappers, and 2500 marines. All these were French. Accompanying them were the canteen girls dressed in 'jackets, red trousers, skirts [over the trousers] and shiny black hats'. These were the subject of universal comment, somewhat varied in nature, among British officers and men and amongst the Ålanders themselves. In addition, there were the British marines and engineers under General Jones and the British sailors who were landed from the ships.

At the beginning of August, Bomarsund was manned by 2300 men and the main fort was equipped with 120 guns, but only 66 of these were mounted in the embrasures. On completion it was to have had 5000 men and 500 guns. Only three of its 14 planned defensive towers had been built. No curtain wall had been constructed. The fortress was beautifully built of brick faced with hexagonally-cut blocks of the local pink granite. Gun embrasures and the arches of doorways and the like were of whiter stone. The iron roof had been painted red but was now covered with several feet of sand. The three

[12] Sulivan, op cit.
[13] Valdemar Nyman *Vargata – en postvägsby* (Ålänsk Odling Mariehamn VI, 1973).
[14] Isaksson, op cit.

completed towers were, in the west, Bränklint (The Scorched Bare Rock), also known as 'Tower C' and to the British as 'Tzee'; Notvik (The North Creek), Tower U, which the British for some reason, even in official documents insisted on calling 'Nottich', and Tower Z on Prästö. Between them at the time of the attack they mounted about 50 guns. All three towers were designed and placed to guard the deep-water channel from the north into Vargatafjärd and the deep-water anchorage which was to be the Russian Fleet base. Like Singapore 87 years later, the stronghold was to be taken from the side on which it was not designed to defend itself. The greater part of the area today is thickly wooded. In 1854 the upper slopes seem to have been largely free of trees. They had been cut for construction work, fencing and for firewood and to deprive potential attackers of cover. Numerous drawings, and the accounts of contemporary observers, agree that, even in its very incomplete form, the fortress was a very beautiful structure.

In the main fort there were seven staff officers, 27 other officers, and 1628 NCOs and men. The rest of the garrison was divided amongst the three towers. Bränklint (Tzee) was under the command of Staff-Captain Tesche, brother of General Bodisco's wife. Notvik was commanded by Lieutenant Zverzhev, and Prästö by Lieutenant Chatelain. The three names indicate the wide area of recruitment of the Russian armed forces over the years. General Bodisco was in command, Colonel Furuhjelm, now the fortress was under attack, was given the position of his second in command.

When the threat of the attack from the south became real, an 'earth battery' was hastily erected under the direction of Captain Tesche on Grinkarudden, a point to the south-west of the main fort. It was equipped with four guns which were to prove to be a considerable nuisance to the attackers. Had the battery on Hararna, south of Michelsö, been properly completed, the fleets might have never have been there to attack at all.

On 8 August some 10,000 to 12,000 men were landed from the allied ships and disposed to their positions. The landings began simultaneously at 3 am, after the *Edinburgh* had fired a large number of rounds of grape and canister shot into the woods on the shoreline to clear them of possible enemy. The dispositions were made, in the words of Captain Keppel's diary of the assault, as follows:

> The site of the principal fort of Bomarsund appears to have been well selected, the approach to it is intricate, while there was not sufficient room on the sea front to afford ball practice for many large ships, the rear had a natural defence in an arm of the sea, as well as in two lakes or marshes, leaving only a confined space for an invading force, and easily defended.

> The General decided on three points of disembarkation – Two divisions commenced landing at an early hour on the morning of the 8th – one consisting of the Chasseurs de Vincennes supported by the 2nd Regiment of Light Infantry (these were to occupy the heights to the north and south of the village of Tranvik, crossing the main road from Kastleholm to Bomarsund) landed to the eastward of Point Tranvik. A second division consisting of the 3rd – 48 and 51st Regiments with two companies of artillery landed to the westward of this point, the whole then took possession without opposition of the different points assigned them, and afterwards advanced on Nora and Sodra Finby. A third division consisting of 2000 French, and 672 English marines, and four field pieces, served by bluejackets from the blockships, with some sappers under Brigadier-General Jones, landed to the northward near Hulta, whence he was to advance and occupy the land between Sibby and the sea, putting himself in communication with the French at Finby. These arrangements having been carried out, the forts became completely invested by land, viz, to the westward by the main body of the French army, and to the north by the French and English marines. The Allied Fleets being within sight to the southward were supposed to guard that side, while the east being awkward to approach by either land or water was left open to the enemy to extend their communications as far as Prasto, the other parts of which island were, however, continually being visited by steamers and boats from the Fleet, rendering any attempt to cross beyond dangerous.[15]

There are many detailed accounts of the action which followed – British, French, Finnish, and Russian – in official dispatches and letters, and the surviving records of local authorities; in private letters and diaries; in reminiscences, published and unpublished, of witnesses and in oral tradition. There are also the prolonged reports and discussions of military engineers and fortification experts who sought to find in the events evidence to support their own particular hobby horses in the great debate as to the effectiveness of guns against stone walls. As always in accounts of battles, they do not agree with one another, even on major points. Not merely do the Finnish and Russian accounts present a somewhat different picture from the allied side, French and British accounts vary and British accounts contradict one another in some matters of detail. The historian as usual is forced to make choices. A study on the ground of the limited area in which the battle was fought, now thickly forested, helps, as always in such cases. The battle did not go strictly to plan. According to British accounts the French did not keep to what was agreed and seized the initiative in order to maximize the glory, or, as we would say today, to gain maximum public relations benefit from the occasion. There was the usual confusion, with the

[15]NMM, Keppel papers, op cit.

French firing on a British patrol on one occasion and spies, it seems, moved freely in both directions.

The attack on Bomarsund gave the artillerists and fortifications specialists a field day and the subsequent arguments as to whether the stone walls of the forts stood up to the guns as well as they should, and whether the guns were as effective as they ought to have been went into great detail as to the weight of powder charge and the weight of shot fired at different times from each battery, the question of the curved surfaces and angles of the fort's structure, the materials of which it was built and how they were disposed. There was great and prolonged controversy as to how great a part the ships' guns actually played in the affair and whether, as the navy in general sought to claim, they could have taken it by bombardment from the sea, backed up with the landing of a few marines and sailors.

The simple truth was that all this debate was largely academic. Technology was advancing at such a pace that forts of this kind were to be completely obsolete within a few years, just as the great fleet of ships in Lumparn was to be made obsolete within only five years by the experience of this war and by industrial and technical advance. Bomarsund was taken, after a surprisingly long and heroic defence, because the artillery of industrial Britain and relatively industrialized France were superior to that of non-industrialized Russia and because it was unfinished and half-manned and equipped. Had it been finished, although it would have fallen sooner or later, it might well have taken as long as it took to take Sebastopol to bring about its doom. As it was, once the two completed towers on the heights above the main fort had fallen, the main fort could not be held, except as an operation in mass suicide which would have been quite pointless and probably impossible to bring about, given that the fort was manned by anything but crack troops.

From the mass of material available, a reasonably balanced, brief account of what happened can be built up by drawing on a number of limited sources – Keppel's letters, Captain Paget's account, some of Sulivan's letters, some of the official reports, Colonel Furuhjelm's diary, and some accounts as recorded by Isaksson and others.

By 7 August Captain Keppel was exasperated. He wrote to his brother-in-law, Harry Stephenson:

> Our nervous old Chief has put the country to the expense of sending out some 10,000 French troops who are about to invest the Åland Islands and will do in a few days what we *ought to have done* a few months ago, our small ships of the line and steamers have gone up while old Napier is afraid to move the larger ships. The consequence is that we have the mortification of seeing the French ships of the same draught of water as ourselves going up while we are left behind. There will not, however, be anything for the ships to do as the French General Baraguay d'Hilliers, having come all the way from France, naturally does not wish to come for nothing. The consequence is that he proposes landing his troops and making his advance so as to take the fortification in the rear . . . As it is the French will make a grand thing of it while we and our powerful Fleet play a secondary part. The country pays dearly for employing such an imbecile old man to command while we captains in charge of the finest ships are deprived of our birthright because his intellect cannot see the difference between a donkey and a coach horse and the junior captains employed before us. As you may suppose I am well in health but sick at heart. What is to be done with these French troops after this business is over nobody knows. Old Napier is already imagining us frozen in and will make out that there is no time for further operations. He has not an idea beyond his ¼ Galley, while part of the Fleet is at Bomarsund we here, doing nothing, ought to be taking Hangö. . . . We shall, I suppose, return to England in October after having passed (with the exception of the first six weeks when we were full of hope and excitement, having every confidence in our Chief) as unpleasant a six months as I have experienced since I entered the navy. [The landing force] will have no opposition, all the Russian troops having been recalled within their forts. They have burnt down everything outside them that could afford shelter to the allied troops even their hospital . . .
>
> I see by the papers that Sir James Graham and Admiral Berkeley read to the House their private letters in which the opinion of Napier and Chads are given as to the impregnability of Helsingfors and Kronstadt. You would hardly believe that neither of these Ancient Mariners ever went within eight miles of Sveaborg, although they had steamers constantly at their disposal. Old Napier went once within a mile of Kronstadt, their opinions were formed on hearsay evidence. Old Napier has been once since up to Bomarsund – Active and Energetic Chief!!![16]

Not surprisingly Captain Keppel's patience in this situation did not last long. Characteristically, being pretty sure of his ground and his 'interest' at home, he soon disobeyed orders and made his own way to Bomarsund, where he observed most of the action which followed.

> My last to you I think must have mentioned the departure of most of the troops for Bomarsund leaving us, the finest of the Fleet, to look out for an imaginery Russian Fleet, while everybody else that could find a conveyance started off as if they were going to see the great Derby run. For yachts, boats, steamers, hired native boats, all went up, we poor captains alone left behind.

[16]NMM Keppel letters op cit.

Thompson started off with little Harry and they have been living on board the *Esmeralda* yacht, that is grubbing and sleeping there and cruising about on shore in the French and English camps all day . . . On Monday evening, 7th, Harry Seymour [Captain of the *Cumberland*] and I packed up our traps taking with us a tent and all the requisites for camping and embarking in our gigs so 'deserted our posts'. We were in time to witness the opening of the ball by *Amphion* and a French steamer being sent in to quiet a mud fort that had opened fire on the first arrival in Bomarsund of our blockships . . .[17]

This was the mud fort on Grinkarudden built by Captain Tesche. It had provided the main opposition to Captain Hall's raid on Bomarsund in the *Hecla* and it had harassed the blockships when they first arrived in Lumparen. Before the landing *Amphion* was sent in to silence it, but the Russians had already abandoned it and blown up the guns. Lieutenant Theorell's diary at this point provides an interesting sidelight on Keppel's shore exploit.

A small anecdote . . . makes the whole affair more Don Quixote-like: when the captain of the *Amphion* landed to nail the guns and was standing on the breastwork he saw a figure peep up behind the brow and consequently shouted at him, 'Who's there?' He made an imposing figure standing there with a straight arm and a loaded pistol. Then a familiar red and smiling face appeared answering 'Only Keppel, old boy'. However, as Keppel is Commanding Officer at Ledsund they must try to keep this matter secret. But I think they won't manage it – at least it should not be a secret – for it is very funny.[18]

Keppel went on in a letter of 15 August:

We next witnessed at about 4am the landing of the French troops, an interesting sight as they marched off in different directions to encamp so as to invest that portion of the Island on which the Russian fort stood . . . We then started off in our gigs to see our marines and about 2500 French soldiers land to the northward of the Island there to be under the command of our Brigadier-General Jones. We pitched our tent near the General about six miles from the landing place on a rising ground which commanded a view of the whole encampment, our marines forming the left wing of the army. We remained in this position until yesterday and I do not think I have passed so happy a week since Old Napier told us to sharpen our cutlasses, it would fill a book to describe the progress of the advance made by the sandbag batteries,

[17]Ibid.
[18]Theorell, op cit.

the advance sharpshooters, whom we frequently accompanied at night as well as by day . . . The shot from the enemy frequently passed just over our tent and you would have laughed to have seen my servant White throwing himself on the ground to avoid a shell . . . At first I frequently found myself digging my head deeper into my pillow as I heard a shell passing over but latterly did not mind in the least . . . Yesterday the Admiral having heard of our absence from our ships sent an order for us to *rejoin immediately* but weighing the gratification we have had against the reprimand we are likely to get we shall be about quits. Before we left Bomarsund yesterday I went all over a circular fort which had been carried during the night by French troops, it is a fort that so commands all the rest that no-one could hold the others until it was taken . . . When I was up the week before with Old Napier and I mentioned that I thought we could knock this fort down from the *Jean d'Acre*, he laughed and said we might as well throw peas against it . . . I have told you all along that we should do *nothing*. When I say nothing I do not mean that it prevents the Old Donkey being guilty of the most childish follies, for no earthly reason that anyone can make out the *Penelope* was ordered to go in and ascertain whether an embrasure in the large battery which had shutters closed had a gun mounted or not, as if it mattered much when there were 80 other embrasures. The consequence is that the Master of the Fleet whose duty it was to have the place properly surveyed, ran the steamer on shore. . . . The *Penelope* was fortunate in getting off with two men killed, six wounded and the loss of all guns thrown overboard.[19]

General Jones had a particularly difficult assignment. His job was to make a diversion from the main landing to the south and to attack the Bränklint Tower from the north. In fact that tower was reduced by the French very quickly and General Jones reorientated his battery against Notvik and was principally responsible for its reduction and surrender. He was, as usual, led to his landing place near the farms of Hulta on the east side of the Vargatafjärd, north of the fortress, by the *Lightning* with the *Driver*. At the landing place the paddle-box boats of Admiral Plumridge's squadron put the force ashore. It comprised 700 British sailors and marines and 70 sappers together with a covering force of 2000 French marines. This force had 'three short 32-pounders, 4 field guns and the rocket tube' according to Sulivan. The 32-pounders, which weighed over two tons each, were landed from the blockships. Captain Giffard of Admiral Plumridge's squadron,

was appointed beachmaster on the north side, and proceeded to communicate with General Sir Harry Jones [this account is written after he had been knighted in 1855] and at about 7 pm (on 7 August) landed with him to

[19]NMM Keppel letters op cit.

examine the beach and the country. Found a small bay with a good beach and a road leading through the woods . . . The main body of the French troops landed on the south side of the fortress and General Jones's division took up a strong position on the hills to the north.[20]

George Giffard's brief description covers a major achievement by the British sailors and marines in dragging and manhandling the guns and ammunition over rocky and precipitous ground and building a sandbag-protected battery on high rocks within easy range of Notvik Tower. But an even greater achievement by the seamen of the fleet was the landing and dragging on sledges of six 32-pounders from the 24-gun *Belleisle*, used as a hospital ship, to General Jones's battery from the south; that is, over a distance of four and a half miles right round the west side of Bomarsund from the neighbourhood of Grinkarudden to the British position on the encampment due north of it. This feat was performed over ploughed earth, over rocks, and through forest areas by men with bare feet, up to 200 on each sledge, urged on by the ships' bands, in seven hours. It is little wonder that the French cheered them as they went by. The men's feet were bare for the very good reason that the Naval Commissariat Department had supplied shoes for landing parties (on board ship bare feet were still the order of the day) which were too small for use by the average man. The *Edinburgh*, for instance, had thirteen pairs of usable shoes for a crew of 660.

Captain Paget was also fortunate in getting ashore. With fluent French at his command, he offered himself and his services to the French general, who accepted him at once, but he had to overcome considerable objections from Napier before he was allowed to go.

> On Monday, 7 August, away we went in *La Reine Hortense* for Bomarsund! I was indeed glad. The generals and my friend Excelmans (who commands her) congratulated me on having joined the French Army.
>
> In the evening we had all the generals on board, the French admiral, and *Mrs* Chads. It was determined to land at a point four miles from the forts, the ships (one French and one English liner) were to proceed during the night to take up their berths to cover the landing, and at daylight the boats containing the troops were to be within 500 yards of the shore, where the liners were to open fire and clear the thickly wooded hill and beach the enemy . . . There was a tremendous scramble to get ashore, and if the enemy had occupied the thick wood, which I marvel he did not, we should have lost many men. But no enemy appeared. The forest was so thick that it was impossible for the troops to form. There was a vague idea of a road somewhere or another, from

[20]Giffard, op cit.

> the accounts of spies, but we could not find it, and we scrambled over rocks and up a steep hill till we fairly lost ourselves . . . we marched to a village about 3000 yards from the forts, where the general took up his headquarters.
>
> From this village we had a famous view of the forts and it was immediately resolved to invest the western or Tzie Tower. We went forward with the general to reconnoitre, but he, being on horseback, was some yards in advance of us when a shot from the tower tore up the ground close to him, on which he took off his hat and made a bow to the Russians, and leisurely came back to us.
>
> It was a very interesting moment when the generals looked through their spy glasses for the English division, which was to effect a landing to the northward of the forts, and to form a junction at this place. Sure enough one could distinguish, on the far distant hills, little red spots here and there and presently masses of red betokening the presence of my countrymen; at about 5 pm General Jones of the Royal Engineers, who commanded this division, consisting of the French and British marines, and sappers, rode up on a Cossack pony which he had captured on route, and made his bow to the General-in-Chief.
>
> The investment was now complete, and the forces thus distributed – 2000 men under General Jones, to attack the north or Nottich Tower; 8000 men under B d'Hilliers the west or Tzie Tower; and a party of French marines were to land on an island, and attack the East Tower, which was separated from the fort by a narrow channel leading from Bomarsund northwards.[21]

Captain Paget was not the only officer of the fleet who found work ashore. Lieutenant Theorell's diary contains the most interesting entry for 11 August.

> Went ashore at 3 o'clock to inspect the camp, armed with a saddle for General Jones (to insinuate myself with?). I found poor Fanny (Cowell) hurt in her thigh, luckily not seriously. She instructed and encouraged me to offer Jones my services. So I did and was kindly received and accepted, after he had discussed the matter with Chads, and I was told to report myself to the general tomorrow.[22]

There appears to be no other reference to Fanny Cowell in the surviving records. Who she was, and what she was doing in Åland, apparently in the fortress itself, and how it was that she was in a position to give Lieutenant Theorell orders, remains an intriguing mystery. There are hints that things were going on at a level which had no record in the official and private correspondence of serving officers. Lieutenant Theorell was not

[21]Otway, op cit.
[22]Theorell, op cit.

the only officer engaged in clandestine activities while the battle for Bomarsund was going on. The mail route from Stockholm to St Petersburg, as has already been said, went through Bomarsund, across Prästö to Vargata, across the main island of Wårdö Commune to Hulvik and across the Delet to Kumlinge and vice versa. According to Valdemar Nyman,[23] two postmen from Kumlinge were trying to keep the post-route open, between Russia and neutral Sweden, despite the war, in the best tradition of getting the mail through. These men were followed, but realizing this, they made a long detour from Kumlinge to the north, disguised themselves and tried to get through to the local postal station and inn at Vargata by a route across Wårdö, north of the customary one. However, it proved too dangerous with so many British and French about, so they hid the mail bags in the woods. They were ordered to return with the mail to Kumlinge. Because of the danger of interception, a complicated plan was drawn up under which the bags would be taken to the east shore of Wårdö by two villagers from Vargata. Some way in front of them would be the two postmen, but without their bags; between the postmen and the villagers, would be two other men from Kumlinge. The party was to take advantage of fog to cover their movements. If the leading pair saw anything suspicious, they were to signal at once to those following.

Special service leaves few written traces. The British side of the story is even less complete than the Finnish. Lieutenant Bythesea of the *Arrogant* learned from Captain Yelverton that Napier had told him that important dispatches were on their way to Bomarsund across Wårdö. According to John Winton, an historian of the Victoria Cross, Napier had commented that he was surprised that nobody was bold enough to 'stop this kind of thing'. Together with Leading Stoker John Johnstone (typically there is some confusion over his identity but he appears to have been born in Germany and to have spoken Swedish) Lieutenant Bythesea went ashore on 9 August and for three days they awaited the mail on its way back from Vargata towards Hulvik on the east shore of Wårdö. They must have been well-informed, for, according to Nyman, they lay in wait behind the wall of the churchyard of Wårdö. In Nyman's words,

> All went well for the first two men, and for the next two, but when the two carrying the mail reached the church, they found the British lying in wait behind the wall. The British forced the men to carry the mail to Listerbysund [a creek adjacent to the church] where a sloop was lying and this, flying a pennant aloft, took them to the mother ship. The Kumlinge men who had gone ahead noticed nothing and waited a long time by their boat, whereupon they returned to Vargata without being molested and heard of the sad end to their expedition.[24]

[23]Nyman, op cit.

What happened to the two Vargata men and what was in the bags does not appear to have been recorded, but for this little operation Bythesea and Johnstone were each awarded the VC, the first VCs to be awarded after that won by Acting Mate Lucas of the *Hecla*.

The fate of the fort's treasury and documentation is interesting. The treasury was got away by devious routes in late July, after Åland was cut off from the rest of the world. Colonel Furuhjelms' correspondence and records were captured and subsequently used in Swedish studies published in Stockholm in the later 1850s. From this material Martin Isaksson has built up an account of the seige and fall of the fort from the point of view of the defenders.[25] On 10 August 1854 the fort's *War Journal* reported that a steamer was under fire. This was the paddle-frigate *Penelope* (22 guns) to which Keppel referred in his letter already quoted. There are several differing accounts in British sources of the grounding of the *Penelope*, its causes and what happened subsequently. The Russian account underlines the difficulties which faced the fort's defenders. Here at last was a vessel within range, if only just, of the fort's inefficient armament. The range, however, was so great that the weights of powder had to be increased while the elevation of the guns was so high that they had to be fired by eye because the sights became unusable. The large charges they had to use to reach the *Penelope* increased the recoil to the extent that not only the old gun carriages but also the casement stonework was damaged.

According to Colonel Furuhjelm's diary, the first battery the French built to bombard Bränklint was half a kilometre to the north west of the tower. It was destroyed by the guns of Bränklint and of Notvik, but a second battery was built from which mortar bombs were fired which drove the defending Russian riflemen from the roofs. This in turn meant that the French snipers could approach the tower to pick off men serving the guns in the embrasures, which they were forced to do because of the smoke in the tower. The guns became so hot that they could not be fired. Under Bodisco's orders, the greater part of the garrison withdrew to the main fort during the following night, leaving Captain Tesche and a party of artillerymen behind to lay mines to blow up the tower, which, in French

[24]Nyman, op cit.
[25]Isaksson, op cit.

hands, represented a potential menace to the main fort. In one of the extraordinary incidents which characterizes this campaign, during this lull in the fighting, when Captain Tesche was seeking General Bodisco's instructions, Captain Paget, Lord Dufferin and a French captain approached the tower to get a better view of the main fort. Captain Tesche came out and told them in French to withdraw, as fighting was about to begin again. In Paget's words:

> We were obliged for our honour to thank him, and to proceed leisurely until we were hidden by a ledge of rocks from the fortress, when we fairly took to our heels and got to our batteries just as the fire reopened! We should have been in an embarrassing position between the two fires, for our people did not know we were gone to the front; we were also much indebted to the Russian officer, who might have begged us to walk into the tower as prisoners, for our only arms were spy glasses and cigars![26]

Next morning the French made an assault and took the tower. Captain Tesche, who had behaved most gallantly, was slightly wounded in the leg in a hand-to-hand scuffle and taken prisoner. He did not, as a number of British accounts have it, die of his wounds in captivity.

Shortly after the tower's surrender Lieutenant Theorell was a visitor. He recorded in his diary:

> I visited the tower where a bunch of marauders, amateurs, deserters, and all kinds of '—eurs' had been plundering and made a great havoc, bigger than that from the gunfire. The fire from the Chausseurs has taken this tower by hindering the soldiers from serving their guns. There was not a spot big enough to lay your hand on that was not marked by their murdering bullets. There were clothes, weapons, blood, ammunition, dead bodies, household utensils and books thrown around, which formed a chaos of enormous ghastliness – like nothingness.[27]

Some hours later Bränklint tower blew up. Whether this was the result of deliberate mortar fire from the main fort, or because the fire in the burning building reached Captain Tesche's mines, is not clear from the accounts. But whatever the cause it was unexpected. Captain Sulivan was in the act of approaching the tower to see what he could when it went up in front of his eyes and he was extremely lucky not to be killed. The spectacle was enjoyed by a number of the cruising yachtsmen who had followed the

[26]Otway, op cit.
[27]Theorell, op cit.

fleet in the lovely Baltic summer. As Captain Keppel put it, 'We also have with the fleet four or five *yachts*, very complimentary to the Great Tzar'.[28] They included besides Lord Lichfield's *Gondola*, Royal Yacht Squadron (Lord Lichfield was accompanied by his friend Lord Euston), the schooner *Esmeralda*, Royal Western Yacht Club, the yawl *Foam* and the schooner *Mavis*. There was also an iron steam yacht. In Rear-Admiral Byam Martin's words, 'I went on board Lord Newborough's yacht, the *Vesta* – she is about 280 tons – 40 HP and burns 10 tons a day and is not fast. He likes his comforts and carries a female cook and housemaid about with him.[29]

The smallest of these yachts was a cutter called the *Pet*, Royal Thames Yacht Club, belonging to the Reverend Robert Hughes, Fellow of Magdalene College, Cambridge. Robert Hughes was a bloodthirsty young gentleman who emerges as one of the least pleasant characters of the whole campaign. The book he wrote about his cruise[30] gives us a hint as to the nature of identity of some of the unofficial privateers whose depradations caused poor Åland farmers such distress. Off Bomarsund, Hughes records, was the *Sparrowhawk* cutter and 'two or three traders supplying French brandy and Dublin Porter to all thirsty souls'. Later this Reverend gentleman took the lead in a sheep-stealing expedition with some of these camp followers of the fleet,

> The *Sparrowhawk*, ourselves and a pilot schooner, built in imitation of the celebrated *America*, whose master swaggered very heavily about her sailing, were in company, and we all set to work to turn to windward down the narrows in complete regatta fashion. In this cramped navigation, of course, the *Pet* soon took the lead, and was fast leaving her competitors to leeward, when suddenly she hove to and away went her boat for the shore. Soon after up came *Sparrowhawk* and the same mysterious attraction brought her to the wind and sent her boat at top speed on the same errand; nor could the pilot schooner resist the temptation, but in a few minutes all the boat's crews could be seen running, jumping and scrambling over the rocks in chase of some dozen black and piebald sheep, that had been seen peacefully cropping the scanty herbiage.[31]

Thus the Reverend Robert Hughes sought to steal the sheep on which an Åland family were absolutely dependent to survive the winter north of the 60th parallel. Lieutenant Theorell gives an indication of some of the other

[28]HMM Keppel, op cit.
[29]NMM Byam Martin, op cit.
[30]The Rev R E Hughes, *Two Summer Cruises with the Baltic Fleet* (London, 1855).
[31]Hughes, op cit.

services provided by the fleets' tail in an entry in his diary for 30 July 'Three times service, one of these "no go – too much of anything is very bad" '.[32] Rear-Admiral Byam Martin also had something to say about this 'tail' in his journal: '24 June. Danish schooner from London joined with private provisions . . . We have now three bum schooners with us, but laden principally with spirits and wine . . .'[33]

Notvik tower put up a very strong defence, holding out for 15 hours against overwhelming bombardment from the British battery under General Jones. Conditions in the tower became appalling, without water, medical supplies or adequate food. Two shots went through the powder store without exploding. There were 18 dead and 57 wounded out of the tower's small complement and the stone structure began to break up under the incessant bombardment. In the end they surrendered, after having rendered the remaining guns unusable. The prisoners included the wife of the fort's commander.

On 6 August all the troops not in the tower had been withdrawn into the main fort. After the fall of Notvik, the whole of the allies' might was turned against this structure, no longer tenable now that its outer defences had been taken; never tenable anyway with its planned surrounding fortifications not built. The *War Journal* described conditions in the fort. The sand-covered iron roof had been brought down in places, the roof beams and flooring had been set alight. The walls had collapsed, the embrasures crumbled because of the big charges they had to continue to use in an attempt to defend themselves against the ships with their longer-range guns. The structure on the landward side was so badly damaged that the officers' quarters were untenable. In Isaksson's words:

> At dawn on the 16 August the firing increased in strength. Ten vessels were taking part in the bombardment and the batteries which earlier had been directed against the tower at Notvik now turned its guns against the fortress near the shore. The prolonged firing considerably widened the area of damage in the fort. The command there realized that the enemy's intention would be to continue firing until the whole structure was blown apart. Until then it had been possible to maintain a good morale. It had been believed that the allied infantrymen would try to take the fortress by storm and the hope remained of engaging in bayonet defence, man to man. Since even this hope was now diminished, there remained for Bodisco and those who took part in his deliberations at 1 o'clock no other alternative than to ask for a cease-fire.[34]

[32]Theorell, op cit.
[33]NMM, Byam Martin, op cit.
[34]Isaksson, op cit.

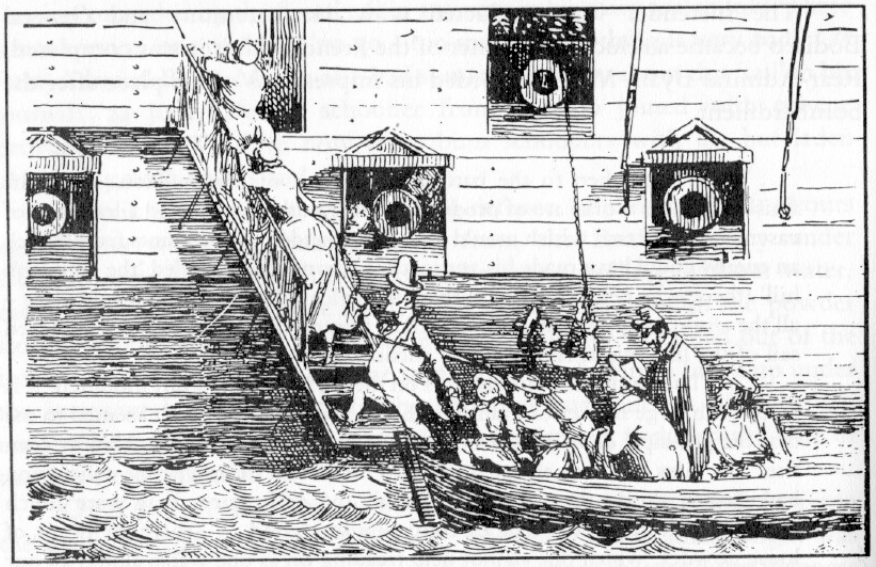
The surrender was conducted with due ceremony and General Bodisco became a reluctant prisoner of the French. After it was completed, Rear-Admiral Byam Martin recorded his impressions of the place after the bombardment.

> . . . We walked then to the batteries in course of construction, and half-finished. These works are of prodigious magnitude, towers and a long line of casemented battery, which would have commanded all the points from which an enemy could have made his approaches. From what is called 'the telegraph hill' (there is no telegraph there) there is a splendid view of the whole place – all the environs of Bomarsund, as well as Lumpar Bay, in which one hundred sail of the line might ride at single anchor.
>
> . . . The large semi-circular fort on the sea has eighty guns mounted. It is faced with large masses of granite, rubbish and brick within. It seemed to me that the principal damage which this building had received was from its own fire. The guns had been elevated so much for distant firing that the concussion had shaken down the upper part of all the embrasures that were much engaged. . . . A pretty scene of confusion we found . . . there are heaps of loose powder, which one cannot help treading on as one walks along; all our shoes were iron-nailed, and some of the French loiterers were smoking their pipes as unconcernedly as could be. Large quantities of straw, which formed the bedding of the Russian soldiers; thousands of live shells, musket cartridges, priming tubes – clothing, accoutrements – books – bottles of medicine – spirits of wine all lying higgledy piggledy . . .[35]

Meanwhile, a strong force had been landed on Prästö and on 16 August the tower there was also bombarded by the ships of Admiral Plumridge's squadron. After the surrender of the main forces, Lieutenant Chatelain had little choice but to surrender himself. He did, however, manage to insist that he and his men became prisoners of the French (he argued that his parents had been French) and he managed to render his guns useless. His sword was formally returned to him and he went into captivity, which may have been a good deal pleasanter for him than it was for many of his colleagues – a surviving diary shows that the prisoners in French hands were not well treated.

The news of the victory was sent to London and Paris by fast paddle-steamer to Gdańsk and from there by the electric telegraph which was already installed. Although King Oscar in Stockholm very wisely refused offers of the Åland Islands for Swedish occupation, the people of Stockholm were delighted at the outcome of the campaign and poured across the Åland

[35]NMM Byam Martin, op cit.



Fru Tuting and her husband, followed by their two boys, embark the Duke of Wellington *in the course of their sightseeing tour from Stockholm to Åland after the fall of Bomarsund. From Fritz von Dardel,* Familien Tutings Lustresa till Bomarsund

Sea in tourist paddle-steamers to join the yachtsmen and the soldiers and sailors in what became a great spree, immortalized in the contemporary drawings of Fritz von Dardel, who made the trip himself and pictured the adventures and hardships of the Tutings, a middle-class Stockholm family making the expedition to Bomarsund.[36] They are seasick in the Åland Sea, find the steamer has no food and drink and are reduced to buying from one of the Rev Robert Hughes' friends, the followers of the fleet. They are welcomed on board a British steamship of the line by 'Captain Grog and Lieutenant Mac-Catsch' and shown around. The gallant Mac-Catsch endeavours to seduce a not too reluctant Fru Tuting in the engine room. They land and are arrested by the French, given a safe conduct and collect souvenirs on the battlefield. They miss their steamer back to Stockholm and have to take passage in an Åland *jakt* laden with firewood.

For the people of the neighbouring districts of Åland, there was the opportunity to loot what they could from the fortress – an opportunity which they shared, as Lieutenant Theorell's diary has already hinted, with some of the camp followers. But there were less dangerous and more

[36]Fritz von Dardel, *Familien Tutings Lustresa till Bomarsund* (Stockholm, 1854).

legitimate short-term benefits. The fort contained vast stores of flour and salt fish and, after much squabbling between the French and British authorities, these were taken, over several days, in carts to the old Swedish administrative headquarters at Kastelholm from where they were distributed – or were supposed to be distributed – to the poor and to farmers whose crops had been ruined by the troops. In the words of Byam Martin's journal:

> The roads crowded with carts taking the meal from the fort – it is quite a godsend to these poor people whose trade and means of subsistence has been cut off by the war . . . The natives continue searching among the smouldering ruins of the fort, for what'ere they can find. The most attractive plunder after the sheet iron with which the fort was roofed, seems to be any article of iron or copper. The shot they decline.[37]

Meanwhile the prisoners were distributed between the British and the French. After more squabbing (according to Theorell's diary) some of the 'Russian women' were dispatched in a Russian paddle-steamer which came in under a flag of truce. This gunboat was commanded by Lieutenant Kostjenko and his job was not merely to collect the families, but also to find out what he could as to what was going on. He noted:

> The Ålanders are not at all well disposed towards us Russians. Sometimes they insult the Russian families which remain – and it becomes worse as one moves away from the old fortification.[38]

Lieutenant Theorell described the Russian steamer's visit in his diary. 'An impudent little Russian steamboat, bearing a flag of truce, came to a stop among the fleet in the roadstead, under the pretext of collecting the ladies'.[39]

In the general confusion following the fall of the fort, who became a prisoner and who was regarded as a member of the local population, apart from those in uniform, seems to have been to some degree a matter of chance. Despite the activities of Lieutenant Kostjenko, many families of prisoners were left behind and the destitute women and children in the vicinity of the fortress received no help from the local population. Of the prisoners who fell into the hands of the British, some 358 were sent to a

[37]NMM Byam Martin, op cit.
[38]Borodkin, op cit.
[39]Theorell, op cit.

specially reconstructed jail at Lewes in Sussex. Here the 15 officers were allowed to live in the town on parole while the prisoners, who may have included a few women, were kept three to a cell but in what seems from contemporary accounts to have been generally in very good conditions. They made wooden toys which they sold to the local people who were allowed to visit them. Of the prisoners, 28 died in the two years they were captive, it is thought mostly from pneumonia. The burial registers have been researched by the late John Handsaker and from the 28 names the victims appear to have been all Ålanders or mainland Finns. There were no Russians amongst them. Their senior officer was Lieutenant Colonel Gustav Grahn who described himself with his colleagues as 'officers of the Russian Service'. On the memorial they erected to their dead comrades they described themselves as 'Finlanders, Russian prisoners of war'.

The French continued their initiatives with King Oscar I. On 19 August General Baraguay d'Hillier's personal adjutant, Captain Melain, and the French Ambassador to Sweden attended upon the king. On behalf of the emperor, it was proposed that Sweden should take over Bomarsund, and thus, effectively, the Åland Islands. The king's reaction was predictable. Though anxious to enter the war, he wished to enter it under terms which could be reasonably beneficial to Sweden. For Sweden to take an army to occupy Russian territory while the French withdrew, leaving no adequate guarantees, and with Russia not guilty of any violation of Swedish neutrality, would be to place Sweden in danger of finding herself alone at war with Russia. The French Ambassador in the following days argued that Bomarsund would be of great value as a base in 1855 if Sweden would hold it while the French troops, not acclimatized to winter on the 60th parallel, were billeted in Stockholm, ready for the next year's campaign. The prospect of defending Bomarsund in the winter against a Russian army coming over the ice was scarcely what was required to make a declaration of war advantageous to Sweden and King Oscar declined, reiterating his strong disapproval of allied withdrawal from the Islands. In fact, neither the French or the British had the slightest intention of leaving a force to winter in Åland.

As the Swedes would not take them, the Bomarsund fortifications, to deny them to the Russians, were systematically destroyed. This did not prove easy. The towers of Prästö and Notvik were blown up with powder charges in the casements and in the centre. The structure of the main fort was first weakened by lighting large bonfires along the walls. A complicated pattern of powder charges was then laid which were fired on 2 September 1854 at 7 o'clock in the evening, and there followed a massive

and spectacular firework display which left the place in total ruin. One small section was left to be used as a target in trial shooting from ship's guns. In the long and already entirely academic controversy about guns versus stone walls, even these trials were inconclusive. But, however much those involved in this campaign disagreed and quarrelled about the conduct and timing of the attack, everybody who saw Bomarsund at close quarters was in agreement about one thing. This was no minor fortress outpost. It was the beginnings of the great Russian naval base which, had it been completed, would have become a formidable threat to Western Europe. Rear-Admiral Byam Martin summed up in his journal:

> . . . And next comes the question. What was the motive of these vast works, completed and in progress, at such a place as Bomarsund, in the midst of the Åland group.
>
> I think there can be no doubt that the Emperor intended to have made this his great naval station instead of Sveaborg – it is 150 miles in advance, his fleet could sail a month earlier in the season than from Sveaborg, and remain out a month later. The works now in course of construction added to the difficulties of the navigation would have made Bomarsund quite impregnable. I for one, never heard of the Åland Islands until this war broke out, and very few people appear to have been aware of the vast scale on which the works had been planned.[40]

As it was, events were to take a turn which led the Russian autocracy in different directions and the base was never to be re-occupied.

It is easy to write of the refusal of Sweden to take over the Åland Islands and of the departure of the fleet as if that closed the affair. But what sort of confusion did the navy leave behind it? As has been made clear, the Ålanders were peasant farmers and seafarers, remotely of Swedish origin and with strong Swedish cultural roots, who for more than a thousand years had peopled their little islands, steadily increasing in area and number with the marked land rise of this part of the earth's surface. They had developed a sub-culture of their own, different from Sweden, different from the culture even of the Swedish-speaking minorities who lived on mainland Finland's coastal fringe. They were a reasonably prosperous, relatively well-educated, egalitarian, very individualistic and above all a highly pragmatic people. They had a reasonably efficient system of local government. They had never been subject to feudalism. They were intent on minding their own business, on making their own livings from their

[40]NMM Byam Martin, op cit.

land, their woods, and from the transport of small cargoes by sea, and there were already the first signs that in a developing world they were going to prove very good at this. On to these people, only some 15,000 in number, the building of the naval base had imposed a greater degree of direct contact with the Russian military and the Russian administration than was experienced by the majority of the inhabitants of Finland, a Grand Duchy so little Russianized. Pragmatic, they accepted the situation and made what they could of it.

On to these people, Western European in orientation, coping quite well with the problems of life on the 60th parallel, was imposed the presence of a different culture. But on the whole, except in the immediate vicinity of the fortress, they suffered little from this presence. Then, for the two months of the early summer of 1854, came first a vast British and French fleet followed by a landing force of some 10,000 Frenchmen. The officers of this fleet needed food, water, pilotage, and information as to the true nature of the future naval base. They for the most part appeared to have been unable to distinguish between Ålanders, Swedish-speaking Finns, Finnish-speaking Finns and Russians and to have been completely ignorant of the subtleties, or even the obvious stresses in the local situation.

Finding themselves regarded as Russians and enemies by some, by others as potential collaborators, the individual Ålanders had, in Valdemar Nyman's words 'to make the best of every situation'.[41] They were extremely cautious because they did not know the intentions of the allies, and they feared the punishment they could expect as traitors if they gave help or information to the enemies of their Grand Duke. Moreover, the Ålanders saw their most precious asset, the means of survival and improvement of their conditions in their rigorous climate, taken from them, their little vessels mindlessly destroyed by 'the Plumbrigg' and his captains, or taken by the unofficial privateers in the fleet's tail, their sheep and cattle stolen. Though some of them did quite well out of their contacts with the allies and others may have had thoughts of reunion with Sweden, on the whole their caution was reinforced by a degree of alienation.

Needless to say, the fall of the fort and the subsequent withdrawal of the fleet left a very complex situation. Once again the Ålanders had to wait to see what would happen. Locally, there was chaos. A Russian spy, Lieutenant Gadelli, who despite his name, was an Ålander by birth, was already in the fortress area in early September when the fleet was still present in Ledsund. He reported a scene of devastation. In the main

[41]Nyman, op cit.

fortifications fragments of the iron roof fluttered in the wind. In the collapsed casements there still smouldered hundreds of sacks of flour. At the site of the former French camp at Finby the stench was loathsome. 'The French had evidently not concerned themselves much with sanitation'.[42] Wherever the farmers had delivered their cattle for slaughter the beasts had been killed on the spot. Intestines and blood lay on the ground where they had fallen. Those killed in battle, and the victims of the outbreak of what was described as 'cholera' had been buried anywhere, in the fields and the meadows, and sometimes a hand or a foot could be seen sticking up above the soil of the fields. The local people guessed that about 800 French soldiers had died, but as they had buried their dead at night-time and often several in the same grave it was impossible to do more than guess. About 150 Ålanders had died in the epidemic.

The local administration broke down. Under his instructions, Colonel Furuhjelm should have been responsible for the civil administration of Åland during the summer of the war. But he retreated behind the walls of the fortress, leaving the Sheriff of Åland, Carl Oscar Lignell, to deal with the almost impossible situation created by the combined presence of the *de jure* Russian authority, the *de facto* pressure of the Allied Forces and their commanders-in-chief and, in Isaksson's words, 'the occasionally uncertain but always intractable peasantry'.[43] When law and order virtually broke down after the fall of Bomarsund, the navy in no way improved the situation by arresting Lignell on the complaint of some of the 'intractable peasantry' and imprisoning him on board first the *Leopard* and then in the commander-in-chief's flagship at Ledsund. The result was the complete collapse of any kind of administration and a petition to Napier to release him. This was done and the Ålanders, realizing that the Allies were going to abandon them and that the Russians were coming back, made no more complaints about the sheriff's attempts to impose some kind of government. In the event, the Russian policy of liberality in its relations with the Grand Duchy of Finland was maintained in Åland and there was little or no victimization, but a general amnesty for the few finally accused of active collaboration.

The fall of Bomarsund left its legacies. Bells looted from Skarpans Church are still to be found in the Royal Armouries in the Tower of London. The Finnish language marching song 'Ooolannin Sota' – the Åland War – was to echo down the years with its stirring verses, one of which may be freely translated as follows:

[42]Borodkin, op cit.
[43]Isaksson, op cit.

But a stately sight, so it was to be sure
Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah,
When the English Fleet sailed up so fine
In front of Åland Fortress' verdant shore
Sing fara, sing fara,
Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah.

On lonely Fjälskär – the mountain skerry – in the great inland sea of Lumparn are three graves, now newly and properly marked. They are the graves of three of the few British casualties at Bomarsund,[44] Lieutenant the Honourable Cameron Wrottesley, Royal Engineers, fifth son of Baron Wrottesley, who was killed during the bombardment of Notvik; Captain of the Main Top (perhaps a Chief Petty Officer in later nomenclature) George Privett, born Portsmouth, aged 26, a continuous service rating 5ft 5in tall, of swarthy complexion with hazel eyes and brown hair and a crucifix tatooed on his left arm, unmarried, with a character 'exceedingly good'; and Thomas Barber, Ordinary Seaman, aged 24, born at Chichester, nearly 6ft tall with blue eyes and fair complexion, also unmarried and with a character 'very good'. These were the two victims killed by the guns of the fort, stretched to unprecedented ranges while the *Penelope* was aground.

But the greatest legacies of the fortress – the neutralization of Åland and the beginnings of the capital generation which laid the foundations of a prosperous community – were totally unforeseen in the year after its fall. In the long run, for the Ålanders, the consequences of this event were to prove momentous.

[44]Edwin Galt in *The Camp and the Cutter* (London, 1856) gives the British losses at Bomarsund as 16 killed and wounded and the French casualties of battle as 38 killed and wounded.

15

The Fleet Withdraws

The news of the fall of Bomarsund was given full publicity in London. Admiral Napier's dispatches were published in *The Times*, but for full accounts in military terms the public drew from General Jones' dispatches, published in *The London Gazette* in the beginning of September, and from French reports. From these latter reports they learned also that *La Reine Hortense* was lying in Calais 'waiting to take out the baton of a Marshal of France to the successful soldier who had added another leaf to the military laurels of *La Belle France*', General Baraguay d'Hilliers, and that Vice-Admiral Parseval-Deschenes had been awarded the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour. In *The Times* of 1 September 1854, it was announced that the French steam frigate *Souffleur* had passed Elsinore with General Bodisco on board and the next day that the *Benbow* was being prepared for the reception of 'Russian prisoners' and that a special mess for the officers was to be set up on board the *Formidable*. On 4 September a correspondent quoted from the *Almanac of the St Petersburg Academy of Sciences for 1854* to show that the average date of the closing of the Neva by ice was 13 November, Kronstadt becoming inaccessible some 10–14 days later.

On 4 September the Admiralty authorities received a shower of reports from the commander-in-chief. From these, and from a private letter to Sir James Graham, they learned that the new Marshal of France and Vice-Admiral Parseval-Deschenes had reconnoitred Revel and Sveaborg and that they agreed with Admiral Napier that neither of these places could be attacked with the forces presently at their disposal (though Napier himself had never been to Revel). They also learned that Brigadier-General Harry Jones had been in the party as well and that he did not entirely agree with his senior colleagues. He did agree that Revel should not be attacked in 1854. It was too well fortified and manned.

> Revel is a fortified town requiring regular siege operations for its reduction, with strong advanced works, and that the shores of the bay are studded with

powerful batteries, and moreover that there is a large force independent of the garrison and forts, and as there are not any ships in the mole the destruction of which would be desirable, I cannot feel myself justified in advising that an attack by sea should be made upon it.[1]

Suomenlinna (Sveaborg) was, General Harry Jones thought, another matter. He pointed out that it appeared, 'to have been constructed with a view to resisting an attack on the town and harbour fronts, evidently not anticipating or considering that an attack would ever be made from the sea'.[2] It could be attacked, he went on, by heavy bombardment from both land and sea. He suggested that 5000 men should be landed on one of the islands south of the fortress complex and heavy batteries of guns and mortars be constructed there. He recommended in particular the use of rocket projectiles. The purpose of the attack would be purely to damage the forts and destroy the arsenal, thereby hampering the Russian war effort. It was not proposed to land and occupy or destroy the fort as Bomarsund had been destroyed, nor was it proposed to attack Helsinki itself. The attack, therefore, would be largely a propaganda demonstration, but a very spectacular one. It would provide evidence of the ability of the British forces to impose positive large-scale destruction on a Russian military stronghold.

This report of Brigadier Harry Jones put the fat in the fire in no uncertain way. Things were going slowly down in the Black Sea and the rapid conquest of Sebastopol was not happening. Indeed, the disembarkation on the coast of the Crimea of the first British soldiers from the army at Varna did not take place until 14 September 1854 and the battle of Alma was still to be fought a day or two later. Not surprisingly, the atmosphere in London was changing. The Baltic Fleet had achieved all it was equipped and went out to achieve. It had effectively immobilized the Russian Baltic Fleet. It had imposed as efficient a blockade as it was within the power of a fleet to impose at that time and in the circumstances which prevailed. It had held down Russian forces of such magnitude that their presence in the south might have prevented the allied forces from landing. It had destroyed completely what was to have been the Gibraltar of the North, the nascent Russian naval base in the Åland Islands, which had been 20 years abuilding. But Bomarsund had been only one-third complete and it was indefensible. It had been taken with remarkably few casualties on either side. There had been no fleet action, no spectacular victory of arms wrested with spectacular

[1]NRS, 1854 op cit.
[2]NRS, 1854 op cit.

loss of life and suffering from the enemy, no mass destruction of life and property (except for the destruction of Finnish and British property by Admiral Plumridge's bully boys in the Gulf of Bothnia). The position of Lord Aberdeen's Government was weak, while the press and the public were beginning to thirst for action.

Two days before the British army landed in the Crimea, on 12 September 1854, a letter issued to Sir Charles Napier from the Admiralty which marked something of a turning point in official correspondence. The admirals, French and British, were agreed that no attack on Sveaborg was practical. General Jones had not agreed. In forwarding General Jones' report, Sir Charles Napier as British Commander-in-Chief had rashly said that he agreed with it, except that he thought that 5000 men landed would inevitably be overwhelmed by the garrison. Although General Baraguay d'Hilliers and Admiral Deschenes shared Napier's view the French General Neil, like Brigadier Jones, an engineer, expressed the view that if the fleet were anchored within three or four cable lengths of Sveaborg, on the sea front of the works, where there was both space and deep water, and where the defences were weakest, in less than two hours the place would not be tenable. He went on to say that so bold an operation had not to his knowledge yet been attempted by ships against forts and this was a naval matter and not within his province to advise.

In the Admiralty letter of 12 September Napier was instructed to consult his French naval colleagues to find out if they were willing to join in a naval attack on Sveaborg. The Secretary to the Admiralty's letter went on to direct Admiral Napier that if it was agreed that an attempt of the kind proposed by General Neil was too rash to be undertaken, the joint opinion was to be recorded in writing and that if there was disagreement between him and the French on this matter a council of admirals present was to be called and their advice and opinion taken. The letter ended 'it must be remembered that the destruction of Sveaborg has always been regarded as an object of great importance from the first commencement of the war'.[3]

This conference never took place because the French general and his forces had already sailed for home by the time the instruction arrived and the French admiral refused to discuss the ideas of the French military engineer. Napier was now intent on heading for home, maintaining in a private letter to his wife as early as 5 September – a very good time to take a holiday in this part of the Baltic and to enjoy the autumn colours and the warm days, though the evenings would be chilly – 'the weather is getting

[3]NRS, 1854 op cit.

very unsettled, and we shall soon be going to the south. Kiel will be our first halting place. I suppose we shall be home by the beginning of November. Nothing more will be done this winter; all the French troops have gone home, and the fleet will follow'.[4]

But the opinion that there was nothing more to be done was not shared in the fleet. Lord Clarence Paget, banished in his screw-line-of-battle ship *Princess Royal* to join the blockading fleet at Nargen off Tallinn (Revel) because he had criticized the handling of the *Penelope* affair, recorded the rumours current . . . 'He [Napier] had persuaded Baraguay d'Hilliers and the other chiefs to sign a document, declaring that nothing further could be attempted in the Baltic, in spite of the remonstrances of Generals Neil and Jones, the engineers of the two countries'.[5] Keppel wrote to Harry Stephenson:

> There is not a captain who is not ready and willing to do his duty, unpleasant as it is made, but I do not think there is one in the whole fleet that would not rather go on shore than serve again under Sir Charles Napier. Of course, he has a few toadies as all men in power are sure to have. The old General Baraguay d'Hilliers talks that France will not be satisfied without the capture this year of Hango and Helsingfors while our old lady is wondering already how she shall possibly escape with her ships from being frozen in. Some of us would wish no better fun. What a novel thing it would be to have our ship charged by a regiment of Cossacks.

Then,

> You mentioned that we are to go to the Mediterranean. That I should much like after the war is over or now should Sir Charles Napier be allowed to retain the command in the Baltic, but this is the place to be under any other chief. There is much to be done, in fact all that has been left undone – I would wager my beard that I would take Helsingfors and Kronstadt at all events sufficient to destroy those places and the ships inside them if I only had the tools to work with that have been placed at the disposal of the redoubtable Sir Charles Napier![6]

Captain Codrington was even more forthright. On 17 October at Nargen he wrote:

> We have no business to leave the Gulf of Finland till the ice has sealed up the Russian Fleet and closed their harbours to neutral vessels that might try to convey supplies. We hear of some expressions of the fast-waning popularity of Sir Charles Napier in the English newspapers and with the English public. I do not wonder at this . . . for . . . the manner in which I have been treated I need not have much feeling for the man who did it, when time and facts are placing him in his true light; but I do feel sorry for my profession; I do feel sorry for our country, that reposed such a generous hasty confidence in that man, and whose warm partiality not only confirmed the selection of him by the Admiralty but even went beyond it . . . This year in the Baltic has indeed been like a bad professional dream.[7]

[4]Williams, op cit.
[5]Otway, op cit.
[6]NMM Keppel papers, op cit.

The Press had indeed begun to turn against Sir Charles Napier. The situation was by no means improved when a false report was received in London, and given great prominence in *The Times* and elsewhere, that Sebastopol had fallen only ten days after the British army had landed in the Crimea. This report led to a very critical leading article in *The Times* published in the absence in the Crimea of its editor, J T Delane, who had been something of a friend and an admirer of Napier, in which it was asserted that the capture of Bomarsund had shown that granite forts were no match for ships' artillery and that the superior range of British guns meant that Kronstadt could easily be attacked and its defences destroyed without much damage to the attacking vessels. The article drew highly unfavourable comparisons between the reported great achievements in the Black Sea and the limited achievements in the Baltic (which were, in fact greater than anything that was to be achieved in the Black Sea for some time). On 22 September Greville, the diarist, noted:

> great indignation is expressed at the prospect of Napier's returning from the Baltic without making any attempt on Kronstadt, or to perform any exploit beyond the Bomarsund affair. He is detested by his officers, and they one and all complain that he has been so little adventurous, and maintained that more might have been done. The justness and correctness of this, time will show.[8]

There was a further flurry of correspondence between Napier and the Admiralty. Under the stimulus of the mounting criticism, Napier at last reconnoitred Suomenlinna (Sveaborg) himself; he had not been close in before. The French Fleet sailed for home and units of the British Fleet followed them. The rest lay in the roads at Nargen and maintained the blockade. The *Wrangler*, a vessel carrying two 68 pound Lancaster guns, representing an unsuccessful first attempt to produce a combined gunboat

[7]NMM Codrington papers, op cit.
[8]P W Wilson (ed) *The Greville Diary* (London, 1927).

and dispatch vessel, was sent to join the fleet in the Baltic. Delane, on his return to London, wrote personally to Napier to warn him that in the light of the report of the fall of Sebastopol 'your conduct in the Baltic has caused extreme dissatisfaction to the Government and to the public, and has already gone far, very far, to tarnish your well-earned reputation'. He went on to urge Napier to, 'Strike a blow which should be worthy of your once great reputation, and of the country, and eclipse, if you can, the glory of the capture of Sebastopol by the destruction of Kronstadt. Unless you do something of the kind you are a lost man . . .'[9]

In the same atmosphere engendered by the belief that Sebastopol had proved an easy conquest and on the same day, 4 October, as the editor of *The Times* wrote to Napier, the Admiralty issued an order to him to stay where he was and to attack Sveaborg in the period between the freezing up of Kronstadt and the general freezing of the Gulf of Finland about a fortnight later. The coincidence of the date of composition of Delane's letter and of the Admiralty's orders to Napier – they both arrived together by the same steamer – is perhaps too great to be accidental. Slowly mounting exasperation with Napier, created by the absence of spectacular action which would have bolstered a weak government, and exacerbated by his personality and the flow of critical comment from his officers, exploded when the false news of success in the Black Sea was circulated and the Government, fearing the effects of the attack in *The Times*, fell into line in demanding action. It was also believed that the moment was ripe for an offensive in the Baltic because the Russians, reeling under the loss of Sebastopol, would be in no position to put up a strong resistance. When, after five days, the news reached London that Sebastopol had not fallen (it was not to fall for another year and after great loss of life on both sides) there was a rapid reversal of opinion and the Baltic campaign of 1854 came to an end in a flurry of cancelled orders and rapidly changed instructions and in prolonged squalid public controversy between the two chief characters in this drama, Sir James Graham and Sir Charles Napier. In the end, it was not until 7 December, a reasonable time for a blockading force to have withdrawn from the 60th parallel in those days, that the *Duke of Wellington* anchored at Spithead.

Napier was singularly unfortunate in the timing of the end of his campaign. The allied armies in the Crimea had won an initial victory at the Alma, but they had not followed it up and taken Sebastopol. They had had their opportunity of mounting an assault at once from the north; had they

[9]Williams, op cit.

done so, they might have captured Sebastopol immediately while the Russian army was demoralized and disorganized by a defeat which had cost them some 5700 casualties against the British casualties of 2000 with only 362 deaths, and even smaller French casualties. Debate has gone on among historians ever since as to the wisdom of the decision to move to the south and mount a siege rather than to assault Sebastopol at once. The siege was slowly and methodically prepared and the first assault took the form of a bombardment from land and sea in mid-October. It is possible that the decision to bombard the forts guarding the entrance to Sebastopol from the sea by a combined British and French force may have been influenced in part by the apparent success of the naval contribution to the bombardment of Bomarsund. Lord Aberdeen had written to Argyle about the invasion of the Crimea: 'I am very sanguine of success; after the execution of our guns at Bomarsund, I fully expect the same result at Sebastopol. We shall, then, indeed make a great step towards peace'.[10] But the result was just another contribution to the long controvery about ships' guns versus stone forts. Though much damage was probably done to the Russian positions, they were by no means silenced or overcome, or indeed, notably weakened in the fire they returned, while the British ships suffered extensive damage with 44 killed and 266 wounded. The French contingent's experience was similar. Sir James Graham commented that the action showed that an attack by ships on stone forts at a range of 500 yards achieved nothing.

Then, on 25 October, there had been the drawn battle of Balaclava and later the unqualified victory at Inkerman. These two battles showed clearly that the situation at Sebastopol was one of stalemate. The allies held a tiny strip of the coastal plain in one corner of the Crimea. They had better communications than the Russians by sea, but they could not prevent the Russians from reinforcing Sebastopol whenever they wished. On the other hand, the Russians could not dislodge them. The allied armies were faced with a winter in the Crimea for which they were neither equipped nor prepared and it turned out to be a particularly hard winter. The growing influential public opinion in Britain, fed by the reports in the papers, was becoming increasingly impatient, despite the successes of Alma and Inkerman. In neither north nor south had there been a spectacular victory against one of the declared objectives of the campaign, objectives which had entered deep into public consciousness – the great naval bases at Kronstadt and Sebastopol. As Admiral Berkeley, the First Sea Lord, put it in a letter to Napier on 5 September: 'John Bull is getting uproarious because nobody is

[10]Lucille Iremonger, *Lord Aberdeen* (London, 1978).

killed and wounded. Meetings are being called to condemn the Government, because Kronstadt and Sebastopol have not been captured'. Then, three weeks later: 'We shall have blue books and Parliamentary questions without end. The attacks failing against you, will be levelled at the Board, or failing against the Board, will be levelled at you'.[11] And, as J B Conacher has put it, 'As the situation at the front deteriorated, the fortunes of the Coalition waned'.[12]

It was becoming increasingly apparent that the army in the Crimea was not prepared for the winter and that it was beyond the powers of the existing administration to remedy the situation. The system was not aided by the famous gale of 14 November 1854 which wrecked 20 odd ships at Balaclava and did extensive damage ashore. Balaclava harbour had been chosen by the British as a suitable base for a short campaign. It was not suited as the long-term base of a large army wintering in the Crimea. By November and December the true horror of the situation was becoming apparent in Britain, from the letters of officers to their families and from the famous reports of W H Russell, printed in *The Times*.

It was at this time that Napier returned to Britain. His fleet had achieved all it set out to achieve; but the effective destruction of the Russian Baltic Fleet without battles was not what anybody wanted at this stage and Sir Charles, bombastic, indecisive, now suspect of being a self-made hero, and heartily unpopular with all his officers, was caught in a position he could have foreseen and perhaps at least in part avoided, had he been a different man. As it was, his reception was blandly negative. He hauled down his flag without thanks and without honours in an atmosphere of largely unspoken official criticism which did nothing to defend him from articulate public criticism. The situation was not improved as far as he was concerned by the promotion of Brigadier-General Harry Jones to Major-General. Harry Jones went on to play a valuable part in the eventual fall of Sebastopol and to be knighted. Napier conducted a long campaign of self-justification in the press, in public speeches, in Parliament, to which he was re-elected for Southwark in October 1855. As late as March and April 1856 acrimonious debates took place in the House of Commons on his motion for the appointment of a Select Committee to inquire into the operations of the Baltic Fleets of 1854 and 1855 during which the true nature of his conduct in Syria was again brought into question. He continued stridently to fight his battles against shadows until his death in 1860, but long before this he had become a tedious old bore.

[11]Williams, op cit.
[12]Conacher, op cit.

Napier did not hesitate publicly to criticize and blame his subordinates. In a speech at a banquet at the Mansion House on 6 February 1855, Napier described his fleet as, 'Magnificent, certainly to a degree. It was very badly manned, and worse disciplined: but, however, we managed to take it to the Baltic without pilots, without charts – all the officers being perfectly unacquainted with the Baltic and the difficulties of navigation – '. He went on to issue a challenge to Sir James Graham, never again to take his seat at the Admiralty until the matter of his conduct of the campaign was publicly cleared up – in fact, Lord Aberdeen's Coalition Government had resigned a week earlier and Sir James Graham, though he presented the naval estimates for the new Government, resigned on 22 February.

A month later, Captain Henry Codrington received a private and confidential letter from the First Sea Lord, Admiral Berkeley, who wrote:

> I am informed – I should hardly believe it except that Sir Charles Napier is the individual – that he is writing to the captains of the Fleet late under his command to gather their opinions as to what he terms the ill-usage he has received at the hands of the Admiralty.
>
> If he is not quiet I shall be obliged to speak out more plainly than I have hitherto done.
>
> It is my intention (only if forced in self-defence) to state what I have gathered from many of his captains.
>
> That he had lost the confidence of his captains – shall I be going too far if I stated – I appeal to you as the senior – I would not willingly say one word that I cannot completely bear out by fact in stating and I write in strict confidence – believing from the communications I have had with yourself and others that such is the feeling generally amongst those that were in the Baltic last year – I shall never give up my authority but if he perseveres I must speak what I believe.[13]

Captain Codrington replied on the following day from Spithead where his crank old *Royal George* was lying after undergoing considerable modifications at Sheerness.

> I will not play on words, or seem to trifle with such a subject, by saying that as far as my own opinion goes there was very little confidence to lose. But in answer to your direct question as to whether Sir Charles Napier had or had not lost the confidence of the captains of the Squadron he commanded in the Baltic? I at once say that he decidedly had lost it. With most of them this took place at a very early period, as soon as the personal observations of a few

[13]NMM Codrington papers, op cit.

weeks had dispelled the unfounded estimate which they had naturally been led to form of him from mere popular opinion. Those who like myself have studied his history and had more than once known him on service in former years, had not expected much, and were consequently not so surprised.[14]

Napier refused the honour of the Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath and demanded a court martial. There had been no specific censure of his conduct in the Baltic campaign. Indeed there could not be. Though he may have missed great opportunities, he had achieved what his orders had told him to achieve and his offence was really one of presentation and personality, not of neglect of duty. In April and May, from the anchorage at Älvsnabben, south of Stockholm, where the fleet lingered far too long, Henry Codrington, despite his experience with Napier in Syria and despite the frequent snubs and reprimands he had received from his commander-in-chief during the campaign, had written two letters which might well be taken as the appropriate obituary of the whole affair.

> 29 April 1854. I suppose the warlike public of England, and, of course, its mouthpiece the warlike press, are expecting to hear that the Squadron has taken Kronstadt, burnt or sunk the Russian Squadron, and is dictating a peace at St Petersburg!!! . . . Ah! I wish they would come here to the Baltic themselves, and see the circumstances and difficulties, and then try their own hands at them. The very least of our difficulties would be the finding of the Russian Fleet coming out to meet us. I would willingly bargain for *that*. But I should be very sorry indeed, if, urged on by public clamour, our squadron, either here or in the Black Sea were engaged in a struggle with batteries . . . Meanwhile, our presence at their doors has stopped their trade and is detaining at the northern end of their Empire an immense body of men which would otherwise have been disposable for overwhelming Turkey . . . A battle lost to us in the Black Sea or in Turkey would be bad enough but it will not be a tenth part of the disaster that a battle lost here would be to England. If this squadron is crippled by storms, or by the enemy, it will be a sad mess for England.[15]
>
> 3 May 1854. Still at Elgsnabben . . . I am wondering what our Chief will decide on doing. No doubt he is feeling the difficulties of his position. I wonder if he ever thinks in his conscience of the difficulties and responsibilities which weighed heavily on the commander-in-chief on the Syrian coast in 1840. You see he is urged on, on the one hand, by the state of excitement and high-wrought expectations which England has worked herself up about this Baltic Squadron, and what great things it is to do; and especially about him,

[14]NMM Codrington papers, op cit.
[15]Ibid.

> Sir C Napier, personally, and what deeds of successful daring he is to accomplish, and, by the by, no opportunity has been lost of heightening the public expectation as regards him personally. On the other hand, he now finds himself here brought face to face with difficulties which no one in England (not even the Ministry) have any idea of, and which they, not knowing the circumstances, or seeing the place with their own eyes, cannot imagine. He now sees his own character and the honour of our Flag at stake, not to say the safety of the squadron and the protection of the English coast, if we risked an attack without certainty of crushing resistance with so little loss to ourselves as to leave all our ships efficient. And, if the English Flag, after all this fearful excitement at home, does suffer a reverse, then will come the question, 'who's to be hanged for it?' For such a case it will be considered necessary to hang or shoot or morally extinguish somebody, to appease the indignation of that righteous, ill-used British public, who at their tea and toast, reading *The Times* or *Herald* by the warmth of their comfortable firesides, are sure that it must all be the fault of the Admiral, Captains or officers; and not at all due to the continual disregard of the earnest warnings given for many years past by our best officers and cleverest heads of the increasing extent and efficiency of Russia's military and naval preparations, and the sad deficiency of ours. . . .[16]

It all has a strangely modern ring.

[16]NMM Codrington papers, op cit.

Part III

16

Steam and Sail

The spectacular engravings of the bombardment of Bomarsund sacrifice strict accuracy in the cause of good effect. They show the tower of Bränklint blowing up in circumstances which suggest that the explosion was the consequence of the bombardment from the ships, rather than an accident or an act of defensive destruction, one way or another, by the defenders of the main fort. They show the units of the British fleet engaged and the yachts present, but do not show any of the fleet's tail of small vessels selling stores, liquor and women, nor any of the pirates, the unofficial privateers. More important, they do not show the engineering support vessels, the floating workshops referred to in contemporary correspondence as 'floating forges' which were in attendance to deal with machinery defects beyond the powers of the ships' engineers to correct.

It is somewhat unlikely also that all the ships of war were fully rigged at the time of the bombardment. Certainly a contemporary sketch shows that the *Penelope* was rigged down to lower masts with topmasts housed while she was aground under the guns of the main fort. It seems almost incredible to us now, but it was normal practice in those days of wooden masts and spars and natural fibre rigging (though there had been earlier experiments the navy was rightly slow to adopt iron wire which had been used on a large scale for the first time as late as 1845 in the highly sophisticated 'sail assist' rig of *The Great Britain* and the early product had not been entirely successful) to strip down the upper spars and the complex gear of a square-rigged vessel at sea in bad weather in order to reduce windage, and to reduce the damage done by the shocks transmitted from the violently moving weights up aloft to both hemp rigging and the structure of the vessel.

This process would have been spoken of by contemporary seamen as 'sending down royals and topgallants and housing the masts'. It is clearly illustrated in the Brierly engraving reproduced in this book of units of the fleet at anchor in a gale at Ledsund. The degree of skill and experience

needed to rig down a vessel in a seaway and handle the huge weights of her masts, spars and gear under those conditions completely separates the professional seamen of the days when the wooden sailing vessel was ascendant from the seaman of later years. It was a degree of skill which could be acquired only by total immersion in the technology involved from early youth. It also required an attitude to work under what would now be considered extremely hazardous conditions which could be developed only in a society which looked on such hazards as normal, not as high adventure. Today, the employment of men in such work would probably be illegal under the legislation of many European countries.

An able seaman was required not merely to be able to play his full part in the handling and maintenance of a vessel at sea, he was also expected to be able to play an active part, if necessary, in major re-rigging operations after a vessel had been damaged or dismasted at sea. Between them, the crew of a vessel were expected to be competent if necessary completely to re-rig a dismasted vessel, shaping their own masts and spars from timber, making up their rigging, stepping the masts and sending all aloft. The seamanship books of the period are full of detailed instruction as to how this kind of job was to be done. Dana's *Seaman's Manual* of 1855 has pages of material on sending down and sending aloft masts and spars. In 1848 Captain George Biddlecombe, the pompous, over-conservative and, if Sulivan is to be believed, incompetent Master of the Fleet in the campaign of 1854, wrote *The Art of Rigging*, which covers some of the same ground in more detail. As late as 1873 *The Boys Manual of Seamanship and Gunnery Compiled for the use of Training Ships of the Royal Navy* devotes 138 of its 287 pages entirely to the minutaie of rigging and sails. At this time, in the era of the steam-driven ironclad warship armed with breach-loading guns firing exploding shells, driven by compound engines and theoretically capable of steaming anywhere in the world between coaling stations, to occupy half an aspirant seaman's time with the mastering of abstruse and largely obsolete technology seems to have been an indication of a wasteful and, for the boys, irrelevant obsession with the past, made necessary only because the performance under steam of the warships of the period was inadequate. It is for this hanging on to sail and this obsession with the world of the wooden warships even into the present century that the navy can perhaps properly be criticized, rather than for caution in the middle of the century in introducing steam propulsion, which was, in fact, taken up much more quickly than similar major developments are brought into service today.

In the merchant shipping industry old attitudes of mind and old skills justifiably survived because for a long time they served an economic

purpose. The development after 1870 of the big iron or steel merchant sailing vessel, with iron or steel masts and spars and wire rigging, largely eliminated the sort of seaman's work described above. If a steel four-masted barque of 4000 tons – the sort of sailing vessel which was still carrying grain cargoes from Australia to Britain in the middle of this century, owned, by a strange turn of history, in the Åland Islands – was dismasted there was very little the crew could do about it except lash up a jury rig to get her as close to a shipyard as possible. But the small wooden sailing vessel in the form of the merchant schooner and the wooden barque or barquentine also survived as an economically viable unit until the middle of the present century. In the 1920s and even the 1930s, much of the rigging work in such vessels was being done by their own crews in North Devon, in Denmark and Finland, in Italy, in Spain, and Greece, in the small ports of India and Ceylon, in the West Indies, in Maine and Nova Scotia.

At the time of writing, in the middle 1980s, various successive scares about the likely future price and availability of bunker oil have given rise to intermittent serious interest in the problem of 'sail assist', that is, in the possible use of windpower converted in various ways into propulsive power to back up a vessel's diesels. The various forms of sail assist proposed can be divided into two groups. The first covers the use of semi-rigid surfaces of various kinds, the setting of which is mechanized and the trim computer controlled. The second group comprises the use of fabric sails designed in the light of current knowledge of aerodynamics and set from the deck on masts and stays. In the middle of the nineteenth century, at the time of the assault on Finland, the merchant shipping industry was already experimenting with the second kind of sail assist, (made possible by the iron wire then commercially available) for the short-haul steam vessels at that time in service. It is to be remembered that the steam vessel, because of the enormous fuel consumption of the simple engine, was limited in range for successful commercial operations at the maximum to the North Atlantic and the Mediterranean and then only with light cargoes at high freights. The sail plan and rigging of the pioneering *The Great Britain*, about which a great deal is now known as a result of the research work which necessarily preceded her restoration, was, in fact, as sophisticated as some of the 'soft' solutions to the problems of sail assist proposed by naval architects today and, like today's solutions, it was designed to be handled with the minimum of work, and almost no work aloft, by a very small crew.

The problems of the navy were, however, quite different. In the mid-nineteenth century naval steam vessels of any size were already liable to be called upon to go anywhere in the world, far beyond the range of their

bunkers, and it was very necessary for them to retain full sailing capability. It is arguable that new, far more efficient rigs could rapidly have been developed for naval steamships following the ideas demonstrated in the rigging of *The Great Britain* and some of her contemporary merchant steamships. But the men who were taking the initiative in developing the new rigs were not seamen, they were engineers. Given that naval vessels had huge crews of potential fighting men who had to be found work for 99 per cent of their time at sea, and that it was essential, as long as ships had only coal-gobbling simple engines, for naval vessels to retain a full sailing rig, it is not surprising that there were few influences at work against the retention of the old square-rigs with wooden masts and spars and natural fibre rigging.

The era of steam-and-sail, of steam sail assist, for merchant ships was to be short-lived. It began with the general introduction of the screw-steamship in the early 1850s, following the pioneering of *The Great Britain* in the mid 1840s, and it ended with the development of the efficient and commercially viable marine compound engines powered from high pressure boilers only fifteen years later. The great steam-screw battle fleet of wooden ships was also to be very short-lived. It came into existence in the early 1850s and it began to come to its end with the stopping of the construction of wooden ships after 1861. After that came the era of the ironclad, the huge rigged 'black battle fleet' with its five-masters with over 30,000 sq ft of sail. Little has been written about this era of maritime development and very little has been recorded about the way in which the vessels were handled, how much time was spent under steam alone, how much under sail alone, and most interesting of all, under both forms of power; and how the vessels were handled under both forms of power together. This is a subject which would merit research.

Some light can perhaps be cast on this question from the remarks of the captains of the Baltic Fleet of 1854 on whose records we have been drawing. On the whole they were still feeling their way. Generally speaking, as those responsible for developing merchant steamships seem soon to have recognized, square-rig and power do not mix. The windage presented by conventional square-rigs is formidable and renders ship handling under low power very difficult. Moreover, square-rigs are by no means weatherly and square-rigged vessels could not effectively take advantage of one of the great gifts conferred by power to vessels with fore and aft rigs – the ability to sail closer to windward under sail and power than is possible under sail alone. Merchant steamships, because of the short ranges involved at this period, could be operated as full-powered vessels –

that is, steaming all the time – with the regular use of canvas in sail assist. For this purpose gaff and staysail rigs were by far the best, and their potential effectiveness was brilliantly demonstrated in the highly sophisticated rigging of *The Great Britain*. But as has already been said, these rigs were developed by engineers and depended on iron wire and moreover they drove slim, relatively low displacement hulls. The navy with its requirements for long range operation, its deep burdensome hulls, and its enormously powerful professional traditions, was bound to square-rig. Generally speaking, the evidence is that the captains soon realized that the best way to get to windward under power was to take in all square canvas and operate under gaffsails, staysails, and engine. This was to be the technique still adopted by the square-rigged Newfoundland steam sealers – very similar vessels to the small ships of the Baltic Fleet – as late as the 1930s.

There are some hints as to the handling of vessels under steam and sail scattered through the logs, notes, journals, and letters of officers of the fleet. Captain Codrington noted, on Monday 11 December 1854 on the occasion of the fleet's dispersal:

> At first, the Flagship, being like the *Royal George* under fore and aft sails, kept nearest, I presume under diminished power, but on putting forth her strength away she went. *Royal George* kept a steady luff under full steam and fore and aft sails; the rest mostly under square sails and steam: the paddle-steamers nearly head to wind and sea. We were all soon dispersed and lost sight of each other in the thick haze.[1]

And in Keppel's *St Jean D'Acre*, topgallant masts were sent up and down,

> 16 October 2pm. Arrived *Bulldog* with mail – up topgallant masts . . . 19th 3pm. Permission having been given to proceed to rendezvous independently parted company with the Flagship and proceeded under steam and canvas on the port tack, sent topgallant masts on deck – 7.30 furled sails and steamed for Gotska Sando.[2]

The interest in steam of many of the captains of the fleet is demonstrated by the active steps they took to acquire knowledge of it. Keppel studied steam at Penn's Engineering Works at Greenwich. Codrington's interest in appointment to a steam vessel has already been

[1] NMM Codrington Papers.
[2] NMM Keppel Papers.

mentioned, as has Hall's career, so much helped by his deliberately acquired experience of steam. Codrington's knowledge of steam and the considerable mechanical complexities involved in its use was extensive and very detailed. Writing of the steam trials in the *Royal George*, built in 1823 and converted to steam-screw propulsion 30 years later, he reported in great technical detail. He showed much interest in the welfare of stokers and junior engineers, arguing that they should be provided with hot-water baths at the end of each watch, an unheard of luxury at the period. By the end of 1854 he showed technical knowledge appropriate almost to a later generation engineer officer in the detail in which he reported on trouble with worn propeller shaft bearings,

> Just then we ascertained that we had a hot bearing and a very serious one. It was the after trunk (next to the ship's side) and its gland. It had been visited five minutes before without anything wrong being detected, but it had become so hot that at that particular part of the circle (aft and below) not only was the gasket packing quite burnt and falling out alight, but the brass ring on that side was melted away and destroyed almost right across by the heat and the remaining edge that was left at that point was broken. It took a long time to cool this down though the engines had only been about a quarter of an hour in motion. It is not yet accounted for. It seems an extreme supposition to think it was from the brass ring that may have got loose and shifted round so as to prevent the supply of grease or oil from reaching the bearing at all. It was 3.45pm before we could raise steam again. The old ring being spoiled, the new metallic ring was tried but would not fit, the trunk now proving to be slightly oval, I fear from the effects of the heating, particularly as it was only heating at one place. Consequently the gland (alone) was replaced with a complete fresh gasket packing and with this and the use of the expansion to that engine we got a good result. The leakage of steam was comparatively little; the engine is working well, and the revolutions were only reduced from 57 to 56.
>
> During the night the engineers shipped and filed the old metallic broken ring slightly oval to get it to fit against the trunk: then they placed it in position with another gasket etc making a good job of it.[3]

Then on Friday, 15 December he wrote to his sister,

> In the first watch the funnel having for some time had flame burning out of its top to great extent got red hot, and presented a beautiful but rather startling sight in the darkness of the night. It was one bright pillar of red-hot fire. This was really dangerous and I had to keep the boats and booms wet to save their

[3]NMM Codrington Papers.

> catching fire. The evil was partly owing to the fuel being second-rate, and partly I think to the stoking being very injudicious and not calculated to such light-flying and bituminous coal. All this time also they were in want of steam and by throwing too much coal on at once, the fire comparatively overloaded and deadened below in the furnace and flues where it was most wanted burst into bright flame in the more open parts at the uptake and up the funnel: thus wasting coal, losing steam, and much endangering the ship. It was cooled down gradually without water, for fear of hurting the iron, and then by not forcing or loading the fires, and by sprinkling the coal lightly and thin, we had no further difficulty.
>
> One fire was then put out in turn and thus during the night the flues were swept of all four boilers, but the uptake probably still wants it.[4]

The Baltic Fleets of 1854 and 1855 required vast quantities of coal. The chartering of merchant vessels to supply them, together with the demand for ships for trooping to the Black Sea and for supplying the armies there, and for tonnage for the more ordinary activities which accompanied enhanced industrial activity, all contributed to make a major shipping boom. The principal coaling base for the Baltic Fleets was in the sound between Gotland and the little island of Fårö (Sheep Island) which lies north of Gotland. Here there was deep and reasonably sheltered water, outside the area of likely hostilities but within easy reach of the blockading squadrons. Buildings were put up on either side of Fårö Sound and the place became a centre for colliers and supply ships. The period was one of great prosperity for the local inhabitants who could sell all their surplus produce at inflated prices and find as much work at high wages as anyone wanted. For two summers the little town of Fårösund on the mainland of Gotland became a kind of Klondyke. Some idea of the scale of the operation may be gained from Swedish statistics of the number of vessels visiting this normally remote and lonely anchorage in 1854. They included 44 British warships (no doubt repeat visits by the same vessels were included) no less than 97 colliers and 19 supply ships. In addition, 19 prizes of war were processed through on their way with prize crews back to Britain. There was constant movement of the colliers, usually in tow of one of the smaller paddle-frigates, up into the Gulf of Finland, to Hångö or Barösund or Ledsund, to coal units of the fleet, and there were frequent references to their presence in senior officers' correspondence with Sir Charles Napier. Byam Martin recorded in his journal on 5 June:

> Ordered by signal at 3am to go off Faro Sound to coal – not to anchor . . . a

[4]NMM Codrington Papers.

collier (the *Indus* of Newcastle)[5] came out . . . so I had to *steam about the roads all day*, with a brig alongside, to her injury and one's, at a considerable cost of coal . . . The master of the *Indus* told me there were 15 colliers in Faro Sound containing 6000 tons of coal . . .[6]

Inevitably, with such a concourse of vessels and their crews, there were fatalities, and the number of dead appears to have been inflated by an epidemic which followed the summer in the Gulf of Finland. This caused some panic in the local community, but, in fact, despite the contemporary references to an epidemic of cholera, the total number of cases reported, according to the *Medical Statistical Returns of the Baltic and Black Sea Fleets, 1854 and 1855*, was 310, and only 108 of these proved fatal. There is still a little graveyard in a beautiful grove among the pines of Ryssnäs (the translation may be Cape Russia but is more likely to refer to a specific kind of fish trap) not far from the site of the film studios where, a century later, the great Swedish film director Ingmar Bergman was to do much of his best work, which is known today as the English cholera cemetery and which, according to local tradition, contains the graves of 27 unknown British officers. It probably contains the remains principally of merchant seamen who were victims of the condition, whatever it was, or who died from other causes. The only identified grave of a British naval officer is that of the master of the *Archer*, a screw-frigate of 14 guns. His name was John Thomas and he came from East Looe in Cornwall. He died, according to Swedish sources, from cholera on 21 October 1854, and is buried in the churchyard at Bunge, on the mainland of Gotland, west of Fårösund.

The bodies of seamen were not the only things the British Fleet left in the remote anchorage at Fårö. Big anchors have been found there in recent years and Captain (by then Rear-Admiral) Byam Martin recorded in his journal on 19 September 1854:

> *Hecla* and *Driver* arrived with colliers from Faro. Milne has overdone the coal – but that is better than that there should be too little. There are many thousands of tons of coal at Faro more than the fleet will require – and the difficulty will be what to do with them – If the Swedes allow us to land them . . . the Russians may easily send to burn them, and if they are sold at Memel or Stockholm they will probably find their way to Cronstadt before the year is out.[7]

[5]This vessel was almost certainly the snow *Indus*, Captain Gibson, 265 tons, built at Sunderland in 1839, owned in Newcastle and recorded in Lloyd's Register for 1855 as employed in the Baltic.
[6]NMM Byam Martin.
[7]NMM Byam Martin.

It is already clear from what has been quoted in this book that, far from being opposed to the introduction of steam, as some naval historians have asserted, many officers likely to move into positions of seniority and influence were already acutely aware of its potential and the overwhelming importance it was to have in the future. The cause of their frustrations in 1854 and 1855 was, after all, steam. They were having a very vivid demonstration of its power every day. Simply by being there with steamships they had completely immobilized and neutralized the largest battlefleet in Europe other than their own. The power of steam was overwhelmingly demonstrated the first time it was ever used. Without the necessity for a fleet action and the loss of men and ships the enemy's fleet was rendered completely useless and it could never again present any threat. It was destroyed by the very existence of the steam-screw fleet as effectively as the Turkish squadron had been destroyed at Sinope. The Russian Fleet was never under any circumstances going to make the sort of sally to sea in search of a decisive battle that the French and Spanish Fleets made before Trafalgar.

The trouble was that such a situation had not occurred before. The object of the navy was to protect merchant shipping and trade and to keep the seas open for the movement of British vessels. To do this, it was necessary to render the enemy's naval forces ineffective. The traditional way of rendering the enemy's naval forces ineffective was by seeking out their ships and destroying them. The training of naval officers and the social climate of the period, both legacies of the eighteenth century, led to the objective being lost behind the means; the means, in the minds of the authors of much of the source material for this history, becoming the end. But the physical destruction of the Russian Fleet was no longer necessary. All the British had to do to achieve all their purposes was simply to be there, in the Gulf of Finland, with the steam-screw battlefleet. The demonstration of power was more overwhelming, more convincing, and, above all, more permanent, than any grisly battle at sea.

The trouble was, and it has come out clearly in the quoted sources, that the senior officers simply could not see this fact which was daily before their eyes. Keppel's letters provide paricularly clear evidence, and it must be admitted that the failure of his seniors to recognize the power of steam in the day-to-day handling of ships gave him great provocation. On 28 June 1854 he wrote to his brother-in-law, showing an acute awareness of the economics of warfare under steam:

> Our movements have been dilatory in the extreme. Our steam power with unlimited supply of coal has not been made use of, we have anchored the same

enormous distance off each port as if we were in daily expectation of being driven by a gale of wind on a lee shore. The superior power given us by steam has never been used. In fact, as I said before, it is thrown away in the hands it is now in. So little use has been made of the liberal supply of coal sent by the Government that it is cheaper for us to burn than to save fuel, inasmuch as we are paying higher for the demurrage of the vessels that have the coal on board than the actual cost of the coal. The 'scarcity of fuel' is no excuse for our slow movements – .[8]

Then on 9 June he wrote: 'You hardly calculate the immense force, our weight of metal and long range – the power too that steam gives us of choosing or changing a berth without letting go an anchor – '. On 30 July chagrined and frustrated when he learned that his *St Jean D'Acre* was to remain at Ledsund and would not be sent through the Ängösund to Bomarsund, he wrote:

> Whatever is now done will be done by the French. The dirty work of coaling transports and ballasting colliers as well as watering and provisioning will be done by the *Acre* and the most efficient ships in the Fleet . . . The Old Man's ideas cannot take in ships of this class. He does not understand them. They are ahead of his intellect. He considers them too large and unwieldy and is afraid to move them. The consequence is that we have done little more than perform the drudgery and dirty work that in Portsmouth Harbour would have been done by a convict hulk . . .[9]

The senior officers did not understand the power of the instrument of war they now controlled. And who can blame them? They were men of the eighteenth century, not merely on the wrong side of a particular technical revolution and unable to appreciate its significance, but men formed in the era before great technical change had begun fundamentally to affect the whole structure of the society in which they lived. They had no means by which they could measure the significance of what was happening around them and steadily undermining the very basis of their society. They had been programmed from earliest youth in the techniques of sailing ship handling and the life at sea which went with them.[10] At the same time, the middle-grade and junior officers, who very well understood the power of

[8]NMM Keppel Papers.

[9]Ibid.

[10]It is of interest that the commander of the 24-gun *Belleisle* at Bomarsund was the James Hosken who, as master of *The Great Britain* had changed her sophisticated sail-assist to something nearer to a traditional rig, and then put her ashore on the coast of Ireland.

the new instrument of war at sea which they now had at their disposal, had also been programmed from early youth to consider the purpose of the fleet – to render the enemy ineffective – as achievable only by bloody battle and destruction. To achieve their purpose without battle, to annihilate the enemy's fleet forever and beyond all further possibility of threat without firing a gun, was simply not what they had been conditioned for. Moreover, individual credit and prize money were not to be gained in this way. These men were almost without experience of large-scale action at sea and they were living through a period of rapid development in gunnery and intense controversy as to the effect of improved armaments on traditional stone fortifications. The fact that their victory was total and that it was achieved simply by being there, rather than in a welter of broken ships and men, was something Codrington, Hall, the aristocrats Paget and Keppel, Giffard, the bumbling Biddlecome, and even the comparatively open-minded Sulivan, despite their awareness of the importance of steam and their deep interest in it, found difficulty in accepting.

The trouble was that the British public, now becoming a significant force in politics, could not accept it either.

17

1855 – Preparations

Captain Henry Codrington's *Royal George*, which was a poor performer under sail, was extensively refitted at Sheerness over the winter of 1854–55. Codrington himself had received an expression of official commendation, being made an ADC to the Queen in October. He arrived in the *Royal George* off Sheerness on Monday, 18 December and on 23 December moved to a mooring off the dockyard. He recorded in his log:

> from this time to the 8 March 1855, the ship remained at Sheerness refitting. The dockyard cut her poop off, her upper deck battery was entirely removed and replaced by two long 68 pounder guns to carry solid 68lb shot; the guns weighing 95cwt each besides the long pivot slide and its fittings. The deck was strengthened with carlins and shored up by fresh midship stanchions and timbering and this and the continual leaking of the deck under such an unexpected weight ruined the comfort of my cabin.[1]

The *Royal George* sailed on Thursday, 3 May 1855. Codrington recorded:

> Westerly breeze in the early morning, sailing and then coming to north. Squadron under sail and steam. The Admiral signalled the squadron several times to use or not to use steam and to raise or refix the propeller; this is a botheration. He does not yet know the work and the station – difficulty it entails in the individual ships. In the forenoon, by signals squadron exercised at general quarters firing four rounds of blank cartridges. This seems to me not to be of use, particularly if the ship's company is not raw. There is no beat of the drum for it; and as an exercise for the magazines it is better to hand up the cartridges and count them at each gun without any firing.[2]

[1]NMM Codrington Papers, op cit.
[2]Ibid.

On Monday, 9 May, with the squadron at Fårö he recorded:

> Pm at 3 hauled a collier alongside and commenced coaling. Steamer had towed her to us from the *James Watt* and completed coal, having got in 50 tons. North country coal. Tuesday, 9 May. *Hogue* parted company going back to Faro having got something preventing the raising of her screws, which she could not amend at sea. Thursday, 10 May. 3am. Got steam up with squadron and proceeded in to the anchorage at Nargen where we anchored at 5.15am *Caesar*'s piston rod being defective and requiring time for repair, she was sent away to cruise off Hangö under sail and to tell ships seeking us where we were now. This ship's bearing not being quite correct, I shifted berth, by permission, to make it so.[3]

Thus began the Baltic campaign of 1855. Harry Codrington was not the only survivor of the preceding year. Harry Keppel and George Giffard had gone to the Black Sea, as had Lord Clarence Paget with his beautiful *Princess Royal*, but the *Arrogant* was in the Baltic with Captain Hastings Yelverton and the *Hogue* with Captain William Ramsey as well as the *Driver*. Captain Sulivan was in the fleet as well, now captain of a larger vessel than the historic *Lightning*, the 300hp side lever-engined *Merlin* with six guns. The vital role he had played in the campaign of 1854 was now recognized and he was to play an even greater part in 1855.

The hard core of the criticism of Napier was concentrated on his failure to attack Sveaborg. He had no adequate equipment to do so, but he made the worst of the situation and rendered himself vulnerable by his failure to reconnoitre the area personally until a very late stage in the campaign, by his poor reporting and by the fact that his lack of firm leadership and the disrespect in which he came to be held by his subordinates and by the army led to conflicting reports and advice being received in London as to what could really be done. In fact, when he called for gunboats early in the campaign, he was told to hire Swedish steamboats. He was up against a government, and especially a First Lord in the person of Sir James Graham, who were not inclined to spend money on weapons which could be used only against the Russians. Their preoccupation was always with the coming war with their French allies, seen as inevitable.

In 1854 and 1855 ships were being repaired and new ships laid down at great expense which had no possible relevance to the Russian conflict then going on. They were to maintain parity with French new construction. It was not until October 1854 that a substantial programme of new

[3]NMM Codrington Papers, op cit.

construction of vessels suitable for the circumstances of the Baltic was started. According to Sulivan's biography eight floating batteries, 30 mortar boats, 30 gunboats and four additional steam frigates were planned of which two floating batteries, 15 mortar boats, 15 gunboats and one steam-frigate were actually forthcoming. Sulivan's figures are wrong. According to Lambert,[4] the October 1854 programme, jointly with the French, involved the conversion of five blockships and the construction of five floating batteries, 20 gunboats and 20 mortar vessels. This meant spending more than half a million pounds. It also meant that there would be great problems in the Royal dockyards, which were not only involved with the new construction of steam-battleships for the expected future war with France but also faced with a potential mass of work of repairing and refitting the vessels which had returned from the summer campaign in the Baltic, many of which needed dry docking and extensive work on hulls after grounding on the granite rocks and skerries of the Finnish archipelagos.

Writing some years later, Captain Sulivan described what had happened to some of the vessels of the Baltic Fleet in 1854:

> Most of the ships and smaller vessels employed inshore among the rocks of Finland were so often on shore that their bottoms were terribly damaged, and in my own small surveying-steamer the bottom was torn in places deep into the timber. In a large paddle-steamer – the *Leopard* – the flagship of an inshore squadron, the whole bottom was so torn to pieces that in dock at Woolwich she was visited as a curiosity.[5]

The problem was solved by placing the construction of the new gunboats and floating batteries out to private yards, though they were to be equipped and fitted out in the government establishments. Work on the returning units of the Baltic Fleet was, as far as possible, carried out by their own crews.

Despite the construction of gunboats and mortar boats after October 1854, the shifting political emphasis following the fall of the Aberdeen coalition, the disasters of the Crimean winter of 1854–55, and the prolonged delay in the capture of Sebastopol had put the principal emphasis of the war effort into the Black Sea. To this sea an all-steam fleet was sent including some of the finest screw-battleships afloat. Only four big, first-class screw-steamships went to the Baltic together with the *Royal George*, two 90-gun ships and three 80-gun ships, with nine blockships. This was all that was

[4]Lambert, op cit.
[5]Sulivan, op cit.

considered necessary to keep the Russian sailing battle fleet in harbour and to cover the attack the gunboats and mortar boats were to make on Sveaborg. The Baltic campaign of 1855 was to be a diversion to keep Russian land forces away from the Crimea. It was not sent out in the expectation of great achievement. It was as well that it was not, but, in fact, it was to set the scene for the end of the Crimean War and the potential threat to which it pointed, rather than the fall of Sebastopol, brought the Russian Government, a year later to accept the Allies' terms for peace.

This force was placed under the command of Rear-Admiral the Honourable Richard Saunders Dundas, CB, Second Sea Lord (as he would now be called). He was the son of Lord Melville, for long First Lord of the Admiralty. His 'interest' was therefore enormously strong. He entered the navy in 1815 and was a post-captain nine years later – no long service waiting as a lieutenant for him. He was the first post-Napoleonic War entrant to achieve post rank. This meant, inevitably, that he was the first officer without experience of any kind in the Napoleonic Wars to reach flag rank, which he did in 1853. In between he had been almost constantly employed, when most of his contemporaries with less 'interest' had spent most of their time on the beach. Much of his employment had been of a non-maritime character, he had been his father's private secretary and private secretary to another First Lord. As soon as he obtained his flag by the natural and inevitable process of seniority he himself was appointed to

The wardroom of the Duke of Wellington *as seen by an* Illustrated London News *artist during a dinner for Rear Admiral the Hon Richard Dundas in 1855.*

the Board of Admiralty and two years later, no doubt at his own request, given the opportunity of distinguishing himself in the Fleet Command. It is interesting to speculate as to which came first, the appointment of Dundas, or the provision of the minimum equipment necessary to carry out the spectacular, and in the long term politically significant, bombardment of Suomenlinna (Sveaborg).

As it was, he achieved rather less than Napier had done. The presence of his fleet kept the Russians totally immobilized – (the Russian authorities did not even bother to prepare the fleet for sea in 1855); it held down considerable land forces which otherwise would have been in the south; he blockaded the coast and to a degree hampered trade but once more, probably, to the loss of the Finns rather than the Russians; and his ships destroyed Finnish shipping, to the great loss of poor people who had no part in the war and the destruction of whose hard won property could have no effect on the course of events. In addition Suomenlinna (Sveaborg) was bombarded, the high spot of the campaign season. Not a great deal of damage was done. The bombardment was by no means so significant an achievement as the reduction of Bomarsund, but it gave the world, and especially the Russian autocracy, a hint that the long dispute, stone walls versus wooden ships, was at last on its way to being resolved. Later in the year the Russians were to have an even more powerful demonstration in the Black Sea of this particular writing on the wall. Kronstadt was not going to remain invulnerable.

But in 1855 it decidedly was. Captain Sulivan had been asked in the winter of 1854–55 by Sir James Graham to record what he thought could be achieved in the Baltic in 1855. He was asked to produce a written report answering three questions. The first was, what naval forces were necessary to maintain a close blockade of the coasts and naval ports without attempting any other operation? The second, what naval forces alone would be necessary to damage and if possible to destroy Sveaborg and Kronstadt (and if possible attack the Russian Fleet afterwards). The third was to ask what might be achieved by a combined operation with the army after the style of the attack on Bomarsund.

Sulivan's answers were given in the form of a paper which was printed, but given very limited circulation at the time. The paper appears to be available only in incomplete form as a supplement to the *Correspondence between the Admiralty and Rear-Admiral the Honourable R S Dundas* printed for the use of the Cabinet in January 1856, and reprinted, with a very inadequate introduction, by the Navy Records Society in 1944. Sulivan's report is of considerable interest. It was the first appreciation

ever to have been produced of the problems of operating a steam fleet on specific duties. It was written by an unusually intelligent and broadminded officer and based directly on his experience the year before of the first campaign ever to be carried out by a predominantly steam fleet. It revealed a lot about the operations of the navy at this very important transitional period.

With regard to the first question, Sulivan proposed that the blockading force should comprise two distinct classes of vessel, large warships to discourage the Russian Fleet coming out and to deal with it if it did; small fast steamers to interrupt the coastal traffic and to capture merchant ships. Four of the slowest of the blockships, based at Barösund and at Nargen, would be sufficient to watch Sveaborg but 16 sail of the line, all screw-driven steamships, would be needed to invest Kronstadt. In addition, the Kronstadt squadron should have six screw and paddle-frigates to serve as an inshore squadron, plus small, fast steamers as dispatch boats. He went on to say that the coasts of what were later to become Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania could be blockaded by four small screw-sloops, together with the vessel of the senior officers. The Åland Islands should have two small paddle-steamers, which should always remain in sight of each other (no doubt because of the dangers of running aground in that labyrinth) and the blockade of the Gulf of Bothnia could be carried out by five small screw and paddle vessels which should be economical in coal consumption because of the difficulty of bunkering them in those waters. Four other vessels would be needed to blockade the outer waters of the Gulf of Finland and three more to blockade the upper part of the Gulf, and three or four more shallow draught vessels to move along the islands of the Gulf of Finland. The total force needed to maintain the blockade on this basis would be of the order of 60 ships, including 18 sail of the line, 10 frigates and 13 paddle-sloops – the shallow draught vessels.

Sulivan considered the ethics of blockading the coasting trade in a characteristic passage.

> It may be thought wrong to interfere with this trade, but it is very desirable to make all parties feel the evils of war as much as possible. The entire stoppage of the wood trade alone would be much felt, particularly in the capital and large towns, which receive their chief supplies from the islands of Finland. I should be sorry to see the coasting vessels destroyed, as they are the property of the poorest class of islanders, but they should be compelled to lay them up, and should be given clearly to understand that any found even with sails bent would be destroyed. The stacks of wood found in the island should be used in our steamers. I found it to answer very well when

used with a little coal; even if we paid the poor people for it, it would be much cheaper than coal.[6]

He went on to deal with the problems of coal and coaling, basing his recommendations on the experiences of 1854.

> The coaling station for the Riga Squadron should be Fårösund, where it would be advisable to have one, if not two, large coaling hulks stationed, to prevent the expense of vessels laying there waiting to be discharged. I think it might be attended with less expense than last year if screw-colliers were employed, instead of the small sailing vessel; but this is of course a question of relative expense which can be calculated. If sailing vessels take the coals to Fårösund, a good screw-collier should be employed in supplying the ships in the gulf, and especially the in-shore squadron off Cronstadt. The large ships at Nargen or Barösund might be sent in turn to complete at Fårösund.
>
> The coaling depot for the Bothnia Squadron should be in a Swedish port, probably Oregrund would be the best place. The charter parties of all colliers should bind the masters to deliver the coals, in order that they might discharge into the hulks, if necessary, before their lay days were up. They should also be bound to deliver coals at any time required, working their men by watches at night when necessary. Small steamers with few men were often delayed in coaling by the masters refusing to let their men work after 6pm.
>
> It is the utmost importance that Welsh coal should alone be sent out. When large screw-ships are going in or out of a narrow channel, with the wind aft or ahead, it is quite impossible to see marks or buoys when other coal is used. The smoke would add greatly to the danger of taking the ships through an intricate channel, or into position under fire. The saving in the consumption of Welsh coal would quite make up the extra cost of freight, and the saving in the sails would be very great, besides saving men on the yards from being nearly smothered with smoke.[7]

For timing, Sulivan recommended that the smaller ships should be at Fårösund by 1 April to watch the retreat of the ice. The main fleet need not be in the Gulf of Finland until the end of April. It should cruise under sail until the roadstead of Nargen was free of ice, which would probably be at the beginning of May.

In answer to the second question, how should a purely naval force best set about the destruction of Sveaborg and Kronstadt, Sulivan provided a detailed analysis which largely justified the failure of Napier to attack either. In two short paragraphs he disposed of the idea of attacking either place with line-of-battle ships:

[6]NRS 1855.
[7]Ibid.

> I should advise any plan for this purpose to be based on the conviction that nothing would justify our attempting a direct attack by our large ships on either of these places. Such an attempt would only end in our defeat, and the destruction of many of our ships.
>
> We are thus confined to one mode of attack, which is, by bombarding at long range with every mortar and long gun that can be brought to bear. This can only succeed against towns, or where forts are open, and so thickly placed that a large proportion of the projectiles thrown must do some damage. Against casemated forts covered by bomb proofs, such as Bomarsund and the principal forts at Cronstadt, such a mode of attack would be useless.[8]

He then went on to examine at length and in detail the prospects of attacking Sveaborg, with or without the support of ground troops. His analysis shows intimate knowledge of the local geography based on his own examination of the fortress during his reconnaissances of 1854. In several pages of argument he comes to the conclusion that Sveaborg could be substantially damaged without the use of land forces if the attack was mounted in two stages. The first stage would involve the use of 13 inch mortars, mounted in as many mortar vessels as could possibly be got together with batteries of mortars on as many of the islands and skerries to the south of Sveaborg as possible, which would give 14 or 16 mortars in pairs on land covering many of the separate parts of the fortress, which occupies a considerable area. These mortars Sulivan saw as backed up by 14 or so ships of the line firing Lancaster guns, 68 pounders, and 10 inch guns of long range, backed up by paddle-steamers in the shallower waters, and finally by gunboats. Sulivan calculated that the initial bombardment might in this way bring as many as 100 ships' guns to bear on the fortress to back up the mortars.

The second stage would then follow if the first bombardment had so damaged the fortress that it was safe for the big ships to go in further and finish off the work of destruction. In this way, 'the whole sea defences might perhaps be destroyed'. Quite probably the ten or so line-of-battle ships taking part in the final bombardment might be put out of action for the time being, even though, 'they should land all their spare spars, boats' gear, etc and all their lighter guns, and should have topmast struck, yards down, etc.' To guard against attack by the Russian Fleet from Kronstadt, 14 or so sail of the line would lie further out, roughly where the Russian squadron probably lay unmolested at the ice edge in the spring of 1854. Sulivan did not see that much more could be achieved. 'Without troops the

[8]NRS 1855, op cit.

attack would probably close with the destruction of the buildings and sea front, and great damage to the other portions.'

He went on to consider the dangers – fog, a southerly gale, whether the Russians might have acquired better artillery with longer range by the summer; and the cost, which he saw as £30,000 to £40,000 (very roughly of the order of £1,500,000 to £2,000,000 in 1986 prices) a day. He also suggested an alternative and less expensive scheme, based on General Harry Jones' proposal of 1854, which would require fewer ships and guns.

Sulivan estimated the expenditure of ammunition for the full-scale bombardment lasting two days as 50,000 shells; as an equal amount of ammunition would have to be kept in reserve, 5000 tons of it would be required. Sea transport on this scale would therefore have to be provided. In addition, rockets should be available in large numbers. Because the bottom off Helsinki is rocky and it would be dangerous to break an anchor during the bombardment, Sulivan recommended that each vessel engaged be provided with one or two Rodgers anchors which, even in their early form, were, 'far superior to the usual anchors in store at the different yards'. Lieutenant Rodgers had then been experimenting with improvements to the anchor for some 25 years and had produced a design with improved palms and stock and other refinements which was stronger than the then standard Admiralty pattern but had the same holding surface.[9]

Captain Sulivan went on to examine the possibilities of a combined operation, landing a force of troops to follow up after the bombardment. He concluded that a force of 40,000 men would be needed at the minimum and that:

> Taking into consideration all the difficulties to contend with, together with the expense of such an expedition, and particularly the serious blow to our cause that the failure of such an expedition would be, my own opinion is against it being attempted on such a scale.[10]

The incomplete copy of Captain Sulivan's report which has survived contains no recommendations for the reduction of Kronstadt, but a summary appears in the *Life and Letters*.[11] Kronstadt had been made almost impregnable as regards the approach by the ordinary deep-water channels from the west. But the Russians had neglected the defences on the north side. They judged the shallows there provided a complete natural protection

[9]Cotsell, *Treatise on Ships Anchors* (London, 1856).
[10]NRS, 1855, op cit.
[11]Sulivan, op cit.

as they had judged the Ängö channel shallow enough to prevent access to Bomarsund from the south. There was one channel through the northern shallows which led nearly to the walls of Kronstadt. Sulivan's proposals for surveying this read more like an exploit in the Second World War than in the Crimean conflict. He and his brother, George L Sulivan, later to become an admiral and a noted swimmer, particularly under water, were to survey the channel in a two-man canoe. When they got close to the fort they were to swim the rest of the way, partly under water. They were to be equipped with oilskin dresses lined with wool – an early form of dry suit – with pockets for holding sounding lines and small leads.

Sulivan proposed an attack from the north, in the form of a bombardment from mortar vessels and armoured floating batteries, in their turn protected from attack by the quite formidable force of gunboats the Russians had at Kronstadt by an even larger force of gunboats. In this way, attacking on the soft, unfortified side, he thought it possible that the dockyard and fleet might be destroyed. What was needed were the weapons, the gunboats, and, above all, the floating batteries.

The floating batteries were a French invention. The long dispute over the stone walls versus wooden ships had at last found an answer. Wooden ships could not stand up to the explosive shells or the heavy armament of land forts at close range; but they themselves could not do damage with their smooth bore guns unless they closed the range. Rapid as industrial development in Britain was, the iron available was still not up to withstanding bombardment by heavy solid shot, much less explosive shells. It was not a quality-controlled product, although it soon would be, and light iron shattered on impact, particularly in low temperatures, in a way wood did not. The answer was to combine the two materials and produce the armoured floating battery, a steam vessel of limited sea-going range but with heavy armament, without masts and spars, built of wood protected by 4in thick wrought-iron plates. The first of these vessels to be completed were built in France. They were supposed to be used in the attack on Kronstadt. They never were, and Kronstadt was never to be attacked, but, like other things in this war, they achieved the purpose for which they were designed by the very fact that they existed. As with the steam-screw battle fleet, the threat they presented was so great it was never necessary to bring them into action. Because of their influence and importance they must be described at some length.

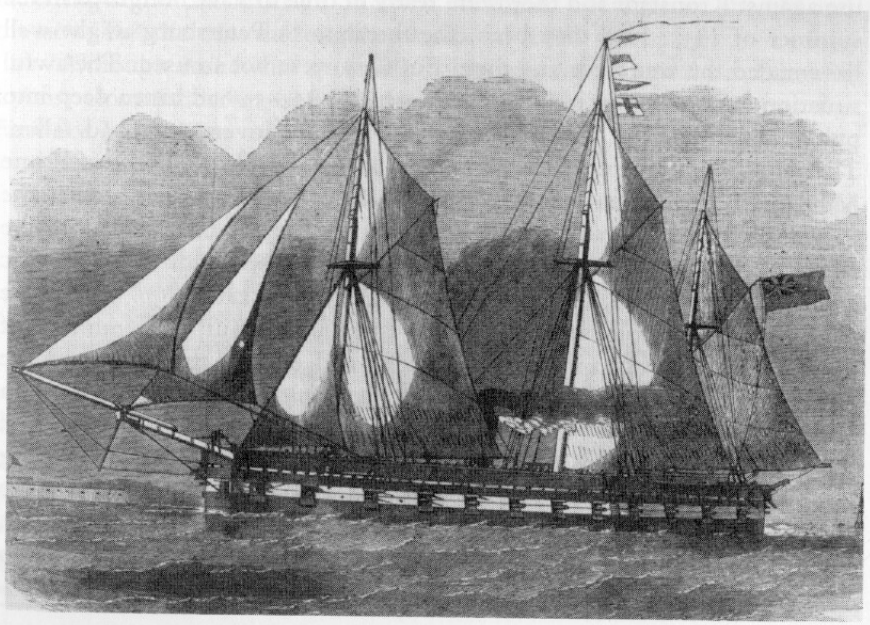
They had a long history. The French, as the manufacturers of the Paixhans gun were, perhaps, more conscious than any other nation of the necessity of developing some defence against exploding shells. In the

United States and Britain great interest was shown in this problem in the 1840s, in the crucial period immediately before the Russian war. Numerous experiments in both countries, however, failed to demonstrate a form of armour-plating which could stand up to solid shot or shell at close range. The trouble resulted from the sorts of iron which were available. As with the iron wire used in rigging, iron was still not a quality-controlled product with uniform and predictable characteristics, nor was it readily available in the form of thick plates of uniform quality. Laminated plates were used in most armour-plating experiments and they broke up readily. So complete was the failure that, although the Admiralty was submitted to a barrage of proposals from private individuals and others for armour-plating in the early 1840s, the experiments were abandoned in Britain and the failure of the iron available at the period created a typical but understandable prejudice against all forms of armour at the time of the outbreak of the war.

In France, a very significant series of experiments was conducted in the early 1840s which established that 14.5cm of laminated iron sheet would stop practically anything available at the period, although it was so damaged in the process as to be rendered useless. It was these experiments which gave rise to the revolutionary proposal for a fully-powered steamship with 'sail assist', armoured with iron plates riveted together to a thickness of 9cm right round the water line and amidships abreast the engine room. No such ship was ever built but the thinking behind the idea was to prove of great importance. After the battle of Sinope, Napoleon III himself realized, before the outbreak of general war, that wooden ships of the line were not going to be able to attack land fortifications equipped with Paixhans guns without incurring very serious damage and that therefore Kronstadt was invulnerable against existing naval forces.

The Emperor personally therefore demanded the development of shallow-draught heavily-armed armoured vessels, each carrying a few pieces of really big artillery. The vessels were to be used to attack Kronstadt, probably across the shoals from the north. They were to be armoured sufficiently to protect them against the shells of the fortress's Paixhans guns. In the course of the summer of 1854 a series of experiments showed that although laminated sheet iron was too much damaged by solid shot to be of use, solid iron plate 10–14cm thick, backed by a massive wall of wood, would stop anything. It is of considerable interest that the revolutionary and vitally important idea of using solid iron plate came from Britain, where the industrial base was much greater than that of France and the technology more advanced, but where this idea, which was to revolutionize sea warfare and warship building, was not given practical trials.

The result was that in July 1854 the French considered that the great problem of ships versus forts had been solved and five 'steam floating batteries' were ordered from French yards. They were eventually to be over 50m long, 13m in the beam and to draw only 2.36m; that is, their depth under water. They were to be covered with iron plate 10cm thick all over their upper works and to carry 16 30 pounder guns and be driven by screws at six miles per hour. In August 1854, at about the time Bomarsund was falling, the French proposed that the British Government should build similar vessels in time for the 1855 Baltic campaign. Sir James Graham acted with a speed which today would seem quite remarkable. To cover himself against criticism in view of the unsatisfactory trials with armour-plating in Britain in the 1840s, he insisted on independent trials. They were carried out the following month and showed that iron plate 4½in thick would resist all shot except from a 68 pounder fired with a big charge at a range of 400yd or less. Thereupon began a period of quite remarkable co-operation between the British and the French naval authorities in which information was exchanged in detail. The French gave the British the information necessary to build five floating batteries to their design and in exchange agreed to build ten mortar vessels and 20 steam-gunboats, these to be of British design.



An Illustrated London News *artist's impression of the British armoured floating battery* Thunder.

Sir James Graham obtained from the Treasury the very considerable funds necessary to build the floating batteries and both construction programmes were started. The vessels, except one of the British-built ones which was destroyed by fire, were all launched by the beginning of June 1855. The British vessels proved faster and less difficult to handle than the French, which, given Britain's much greater industrial base and longer experience in fabricating iron and the manufacture of machinery, is not surprising. The batteries – shallow, unhandy and low-powered – were not meant to steam long distances themselves. They were to be towed to the vicinity of the action in which they were to take part, being equipped with removable masts and sails against emergency. Most of their ammunition and some of their men was to be carried by transports on passage and transferred to the battery on arrival. The batteries were then to steam into action and anchor for the bombardment which was their sole reason for existence.

These revolutionary warships, whose development, construction and introduction into service was completed in the incredibly short time of eighteen months, were destined to end for ever the old controversy of wooden ships versus stonewalled forts. They were conceived and built for use against Kronstadt and they were ready in time to have been used in the summer of 1855. Had they been, the threat to St Petersburg might well have ended the war there and then. But they were not so used. The awful situation in the Crimea itself in the winter of 1854–55 had bitten deep into public consciousness. Lord Aberdeen's coalition government had fallen. The pressure to capture Sebastopol was irresistible. The new Prime Minister, Lord Palmerston, explained to Queen Victoria that neither the French nor the British Government, 'could well spare or transport to the Baltic troops enough to accomplish any important operation'.[12] The Baltic campaign of 1855 had, therefore, to be a purely naval campaign. Even if the new floating batteries were to be sent there with a sufficient number of supporting gunboats and mortar vessels, and even if they achieved the destruction of the defences of Kronstadt, it would all be useless without a large landing force to occupy the place once the walls had been knocked down, and no land force could be spared. Both French and British floating batteries, originally ordered to the Baltic, were therefore redirected to the Black Sea. Two of the British vessels were not ready and were laid up in anticipation of the Baltic campaign of 1856, as were two of the French. In

[12]A C Benson & Viscount Esher, eds, *The Letters of Queen Victoria* 3 vols, (London, 1907).

the end, five floating batteries, three French and two British, the *Glatton* and the *Meteor*, arrived in the Black Sea too late to take part in the attack on Sebastopol, the southern half of which had already fallen.

The Russian's military position, despite the fall of Sebastopol, was now a strong one on high ground above Sebastopol where the Russian armies re-armed and regrouped. The Allies were now faced with the classic problem of all those who sought to invade Russia. Where were they to go, bearing in mind that every step forward lengthened their own communications and rendered them more vulnerable, while for the Russians the very reverse held true?

There was a third-class fortress at Kinburn, on the coast due east of Odessa, where the Bug and the Dneiper flow out through a gulf to the sea. The capture of this fort would impose something of a threat to the Russian rear in the Crimea. A fleet, including the three French floating batteries, was therefore assembled and the floating batteries led the fleet into action. In the subsequent bombardment the fort was forced to surrender and, though they had been opposed by only relatively light armament, the armoured vessels proved themselves completely, creating such havoc ashore that the wooden line-of-battleships were able to move up and destroy the fort without incurring significant damage. It was a combined operation of the old and the new, but the new thoroughly vindicated itself.

Although somewhat qualified in his opinion, Admiral Sir Edmund Lyons, Commander-in-Chief of the British Black Sea Fleet, wrote to the First Sea Lord:

> Still you may take it for granted that floating batteries have become elements in amphibious warfare, so the sooner you set about having as many good ones as the French the better it will be for you. I am told that the shells broke into pieces on striking the vessels before they had time to explode. The French no doubt go to great lengths in their praises of this favourite weapon of their emperor; but make all the allowance you please for that, and there will still remain too much in favour of it to admit of it being disregarded without fair trial.[13]

His flag-captain privately wrote that, 'shells broke against them like glass'. In the not very long term a complete revolution in warship design and construction had begun, as decisive as the general revolution at sea brought about by the introduction of the compound marine engine was to be ten years later. The Admiralty promptly ordered four more floating

[13]Eardley-Wilmot, op cit.

batteries, vessels over 180ft long and nearly 50ft wide, to be completed in four months. In the very short term the Russians were as quick as the Allies to get the message. The fall of the southern half of Sebastopol may not have ended the war, but Kronstadt and Sveaborg appeared quite likely to be doomed.

18

1855 – The Campaign

But Sveaborg and Kronstadt were not to fall. Sulivan in a letter of 5 May 1855 to his wife gave his account of the passage from Kiel to Nargen:

> We sailed, or rather steamed, with the fleet from Kiel on the morning of the 3rd, and we have been under steam nearly ever since, the wind either foul or a calm; but there is nothing to interest except the comparative merits of the different ships, which are chiefly shown by the daily consumption of fuel. The old *Royal George* does wonders – never drops – always close to the *Duke*; while the blockships half her size, but the same power, cannot keep up, and her consumption of coal is less than many of the others. Among similar ships, the *James Watt*, built especially for screw, has expended 45 tons to keep her station during the last twenty-four hours; whereas the old lump of a three-decker has only expended 33 tons, though under sail a slower ship. We have done much the best of the paddles, having with 312hp, used only 12 tons . . .[1]

They reconnoitred Tallinn (Revel), where they found the defences strengthened. Dr William Don wrote a good description of what they saw.

> Revel lay due south, and with a glass was plainly visible; for the atmosphere in the Baltic in the summer months is remarkably transparent. Every fort and prominent object could be clearly identified, of which the most conspicuous was the Domberg, or Cathedral, on a precipitous height; and on another height the High Church. Between these heights is the seaward approach to the town, which then contained about 30,000 inhabitants. The batteries commanding the roadstead were partly earth and partly granite; and of the latter one was a huge casemated fort of 300 guns. From it the smoke of furnaces for heating red-hot shot was constantly visible. At our standpoint Revel was singularly pretty.[2]

In the *Driver*, with the *Euryalus* and *Cossack* as escorts, Sulivan and Admiral Dundas examined Suomenlinna (Sveaborg). In Sulivan's words:

[1]Sulivan, op cit.
[2]Don, op cit.

> We had a beautiful day; ran up the passage among the rocks close to the spot where I so nearly ran the *Driver* on shore with all the admirals and generals last year. There I anchored the two frigates, and leaving *Merlin* under way, I took the admirals, etc, in two boats to a rocky islet, just out of gunshot, that I thought would give us a very good view of everything. We remained there a long time, evidently affording amusement to thousands of both sexes at Helsingfors, and the soldiers in the fortresses, – every hill and rise were crowded with people. We saw about seven new batteries in different parts, in addition to those of last year, mounting between them about 60 guns. They were all in the very best positions, and are entirely of earth, with apparently heavy guns.[3]

They then looked at various points in the Gulf on the way to Kronstadt. On Hogland, Sulivan wrote:

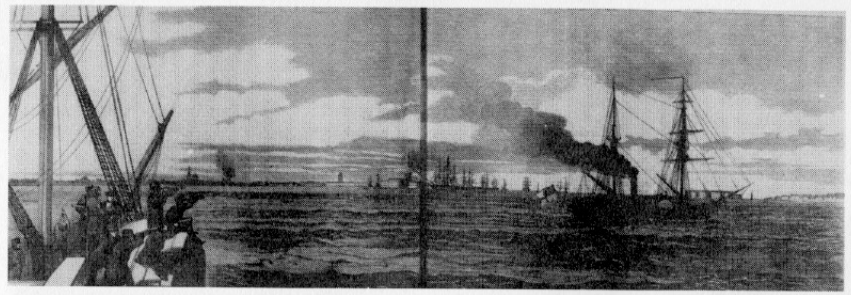
> Again there were plenty of women, boys, and children looking at us (the old women told us that every man had been taken away from the island); and on the opposite side of the cove to the village, where there is a pretty country house in the trees close to the point, and within about 300 yards of *Merlin*, a young lady, nicely dressed in a pink skirt and black jacket, with a shawl over her head, came out close to the shore, and watched us till we were going out, when she tripped away towards the house. Fancy the ladies of any of the villages on the eastward of England or Scotland coming down to watch three Russian frigates standing into the cove! I wish we had had time to land there, where also I am anxious to establish friendly intercourse with the poor people, because I think it may be very desirable to have our hospitals in that island . . .[4]

Near Viipuri (Viborg) they captured a number of small Finnish vessels, for once loaded with supplies for the Russian coastal garrisons, and two vessels laden with,

> fine square blocks of granite, of good size for Cronstadt . . . If I get £150 prize money I shall be lucky, but they may give us something for the two government vessels full of granite. This was in blocks six feet cube, numbered ready for placing, evidently for forts at Cronstadt, and we ought to be paid as for government property destroyed.[5]

It is of interest that at least one huge shaped granite block still lies on an island in the archipelago south of Porvoo (Borgå) from which it was never moved because of the British blockade of 1855.

[3]Sulivan, op cit.
[4]Ibid.
[5]Sulivan, op cit.



Reconnoitering Kronstadt in 1855. The Russian Baltic Fleet can be seen at anchor between the forts in the distance. HMS Merlin, *Captain B J Sulivan, a brigantine-rigged paddler, is on the right.* Illustrated London News

Admiral Dundas then examined Kronstadt at close quarters. In Sulivan's words:

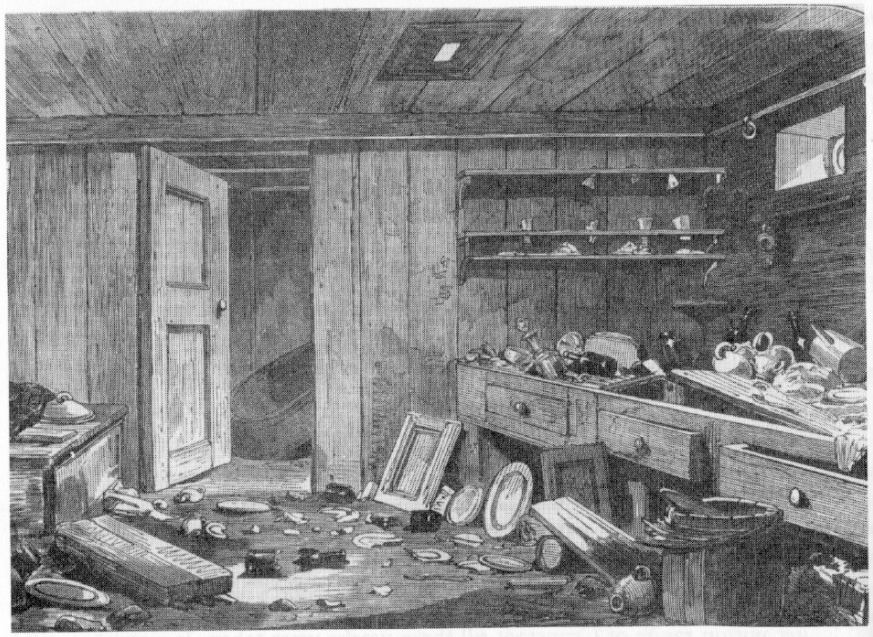
> On Cronstadt Island, two miles from the town, a series of large earthen batteries has been built, extending right across the island, and adding greatly to the strength of the place, as no ships can get near them, and no army could get within range of Cronstadt till these works were taken. It was a beautiful evening, and the sun lit up the gilded steeples of Cronstadt, St Petersburg (very distant, just seen), and the Palace at Peterhoff most beautifully.[6]

Subsequently Sulivan reconnoitred the north side of Kronstadt with his customary thoroughness and found the defences in this previously weak area had been greatly strengthened. A few days later, on 9 June, when taking a party of French and English officers to view the defences, Sulivan's *Merlin* had the distinction of being the first ship of war in history to suffer damage from the explosion of a mine, or rather three of the mines which had been laid as part of the complex of defences. There had developed a tendency in the fleet to treat the threat of mines as a joke, but Sulivan was clearly much shaken by the experience which resulted in extensive, but not vital, damage to the vessel.

The media were much the same then as now. Sulivan had on board an artist (J W Carmichael) from *The Illustrated London News* who was greatly alarmed by his experience, but delighted to have some destruction to depict.

> His great delight seemed to be in the engineers' mess-place, with all the smashed crockery and mess-things; and I expect you'll see a sketch of it in all

[6]Sulivan, op cit.



Captain Sulivan wrote of J W Carmichael, the artist he had on board Merlin *at the time she hit mines off Kronstadt, 'His great delight seemed to be in the engineers' mess-place, with all the smashed crockery and mess things, I expect you'll see a sketch of it in all its glory . . . I think you may see a wonderful sketch of broken tea-cups'. This is J W Carmichael's drawing as reproduced in the* Illustrated London News.

its glory. He is going to show me the drawings. I want to prevent any exaggeration. The smash in the store-room, where the real damage was done, and the heavy tank thrown away, he could not, he said *make a point of* – , that is, I suppose, it was not *picturesque* enough; but the smashed crockery seemed to have a great charm for him. He kept some fragments of cups and glasses as relics of it, and I think you may see a wonderful sketch of broken teacups.[7]

Despite this experience, the attitude in the fleet to this new weapon remained distinctly casual. After the *Vulture*, the paddle-frigate which had lost her boat at Kokkola (Gamla Karleby) the preceding year, had touched off a mine, boats were sent out to try to dredge them up. Admiral Seymour and Captain Hall themselves got one up in a gig. It did not explode and with incredible irresponsibility this crude device, containing 8½lb of powder, was taken to the commander-in-chief and, in Sulivan's words:

[7]Sulivan, op cit.

> They all played with it; and Admiral Seymour took it to his ship, and on the poop had the officers round it examining it. . . . Some of the officers remarked of the danger of it going off, and Admiral Seymour said, 'O no. This is the way it would go off,' and shoved the slide in with his finger . . . It instantly exploded, knocking down everyone around it.[8]

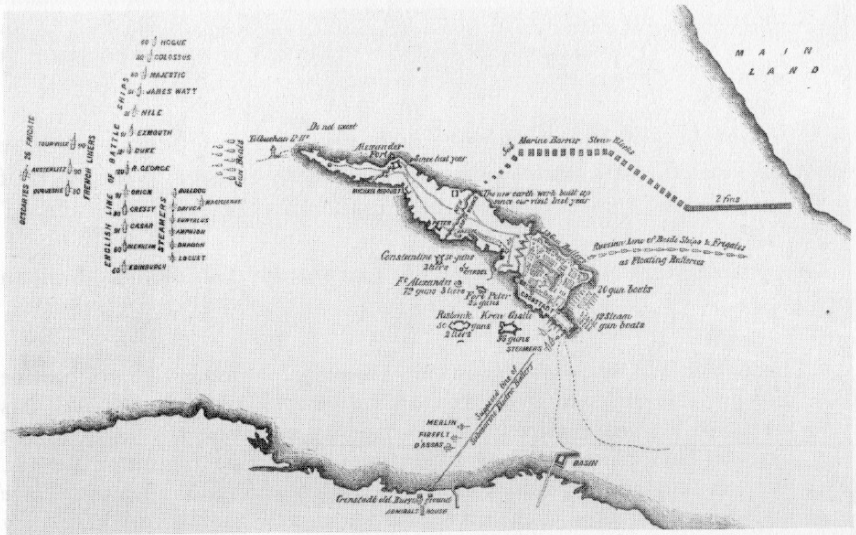
A number of those present, including Admiral Seymour, were seriously injured, the admiral suffering permanent damage to the sight of one eye. After this incident and another less serious the 'infernal machines' were treated with greater respect.

The verdict went against any attack on Kronstadt. On 10 June, Sulivan wrote:

> Though it will by-and-by disappoint the public at home, you will not be unhappy at knowing now that the more we see of this place, the less likely it is we can do or even attempt anything. Had they sent out here everything first intended, and concentrated all their efforts on Cronstadt, it must, I think, have been destroyed; but a portion of the force will not do. The enemy have not been idle, and out of the thirty-four steam-crew gunboats we heard they were preparing, fifteen showed yesterday, all ready and manned, and they have a much heavier flotilla than we can bring against them. Besides, all their steamers were able to act inside, whilst ours cannot get near to help our gunboats. I can see the admiral is very doubtful, and I dare not urge him on to try it, unless with a force sufficient to give every probability of success. We may perhaps have a chance of a distant bombardment of Sveaborg; and if managed well with the necessary means sent out, we may do great injury to the enemy without the loss of a man to us: that we can do even with the smaller force said to be coming out.[9]

A great deal of consideration had been given by the Russian and Finnish authorities during the winter of 1854–5 to the problem of the defence of Finland during the summer of 1855 and a committee was established to make proposals. It was pointed out that for the defence of the coast, 80,000 troops at least would be required for each 500 *versts*, that is 530km, or roughly 330 miles. This gave a total of at least 400,000 men plus the local garrison. About 25,000 men defended Sebastopol on the last day of the assault, and, great though the Russian resources of manpower were, it was clearly out of the question to muster and arm men to defend the Baltic coast on the scale indicated by the Finnish committee. Moreover, steam-

[8]Sulivan, op cit.
[9]Ibid.



Kronstadt and the positions of allied vessels as seen by an Illustrated London News *artist in 1855.*

screw ships had rendered the old system of using many small fortifications out of date. It was therefore recommended that the available forces should be concentrated at points suited for protracted defence, namely, Helsinki, Soumenlinna (Sveaborg), Viipuri (Viborg) and Turku (Åbo). The capital, Helsinki, had to be defended at all costs and the bulk of the forces assigned to the defence of Finland was therefore placed there. It was recommended that extensive work should be undertaken to strengthen Sveaborg for defence from attack both by land and sea. The other coastal towns were not to be provided with strong defensive forces but with units equipped to oppose casual attack by enemy cruisers, as had been done at Kokkola (Gamla Karleby). For this work, it was recommended, Finnish National Defence Battalions, supported by small detachments of light cavalry, should be used. The committee went on to recommend that, as the Russian sailing fleet was useless against steam vessels, naval operations should be limited to the use of the three ships of the line and one frigate allocated to the defence of the narrow entrance to Helsinki through Sveaborg.

According to Borodkin,[10] there were about 43,500 men and a hundred guns posted to the defence of Finland in mid-1855 and a considerable

[10]Borodkin, op cit.

additional number defending the coasts of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. In December 1854 the Tzar called for the formation of a mobile imperial militia. One unit of this force was sent to help in the defence of Viipuri (Viborg), where a great deal of work had to be done to restore the fortifications which had been allowed to fall into an advanced state of decay. The smaller coastal fortresses, consistently with the abandonment and the blowing up of the forts at Hangö the previous summer, were also abandoned, notably the fort called Ruotsinsalmi (Svensksund) east of Kotka. There were 38 new gunboats fitted out and 42 of the old sailing and rowing gunboats of the *skärgårdsflotta* were sent to Sveaborg, 30 to Åbo and eight to Viipuri (Viborg). During the first half of 1855, Siemens and Halske ran a telegraph line from St Petersburg to Helsinki along the side of the main road.

The Emperor Alexander II described his impressions of the British Fleet's arrival at Nargen, and the reconnoitering of Kronstadt, in letters to Prince Gorchakov in the Crimea. He wrote, as quoted by Borodkin:

> The British Fleet has approached us and anchored off Krasnaya Gorka presumably to await the arrival of the French vessels. In Kronstadt, where I was a few days ago, everything is ready for their reception; both land and marine troops are burning with a desire to show themselves worthy of their comrades of Sebastopol. . . . With the exception of isolated minor bombardments of coastal telegraph stations, the enemy fleet has still not done anything and lies sometimes in view of Kronstadt, sometimes in sight of Tallin.[11]

The local population remained calm. Reactions to the presence of the hovering fleet off Kronstadt were described in the diaries of society women, quoted by Borodkin.

> The allies have honoured us with a visit but, because of an inexplicable infatuation the St Petersburgers do not think about them at all. At the French theatre, the entertainments continue, the Italians are expected next winter, and yet the fleet remains in sight.[12]

Another woman recorded:

> Fear of the Allies' squadron was so insignificant that one of the naval commanders at Kronstadt decided to hold a ball aboard his ship of the line. The ball was particularly striking; the proximity of the enemy, who one could

[11]Borodkin, op cit.
[12]Ibid.

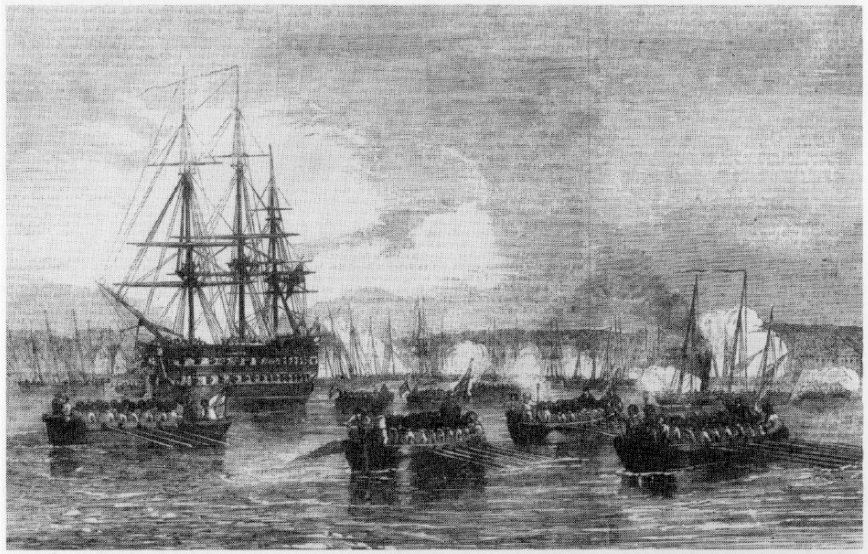
observe through a telescope, lent a strange flavour to the festivities. During the intervals between the dances, people went forward to the bow of the vessel to watch the enemy ships. An alarm signal interrupted the dance, however; one of the enemy's steamers had begun to fire up. In a few moments, the guns were run out, the officers and crew went to their stations and the guests were told not to leave the tent which had been set up on the quarterdeck. We now saw one enemy vessel was approaching at speed but soon stopped out of range. Our commander then ordered the dance should continue. The enemy had apparently seen sloops and a boat taking guests out from the town to our ship and thought mistakenly that some expedition was in the offing and therefore had sent the vessel in question to observe us. The ball music played up again. The ladies in their fine dresses went forward to the bow and through telescopes could clearly distinguish both officers and seamen on the enemy steamer.[13]

Codrington and Sulivan agree in their letters that all was not well in the fleet and that captains were seeking to draw attention to themselves by raiding the coastal villages, bullying the local people and inflating minor and often disreputable escapades into significant actions in their reports, though none of this was taking place on the scale of the raids of Admiral Plumridge the year before. There appear to have been a number of cases in which the Finnish National Defence Battalions and the local people succeeded in driving off their assailants and saving their shipping and other property from destruction. Sulivan wrote:

> I hear that one captain has made himself the laughing-stock of his brother captains at Seskar by writing such a long, flaming letter about taking out some dismantled little coasters from the cove at the village where we took our prizes this year and where last year I had that sham attack, thinking there was a battery; but there were no guns in it . . . Well, this celebrated battle consisted, I hear, of two muskets being fired by militiamen on shore, for which fire was opened on village, houses, church and all. The magistrates of the district were assembled in the clergyman's house, when the shots began to come into it, and they all had to fly; and for this a dispatch longer than would be necessary for a general action has, I am told, been written and sent home, and more names mentioned than in many serious dispatches. Is it not enough to lower us in the estimation of our enemies, when they, knowing the truth, read such letters?[14]

Some cases involved the misuse of flags of truce. The most serious of these took place at Hangö, where a carelessly arranged landing from the

[13]Ibid.
[14]Sulivan, op cit.



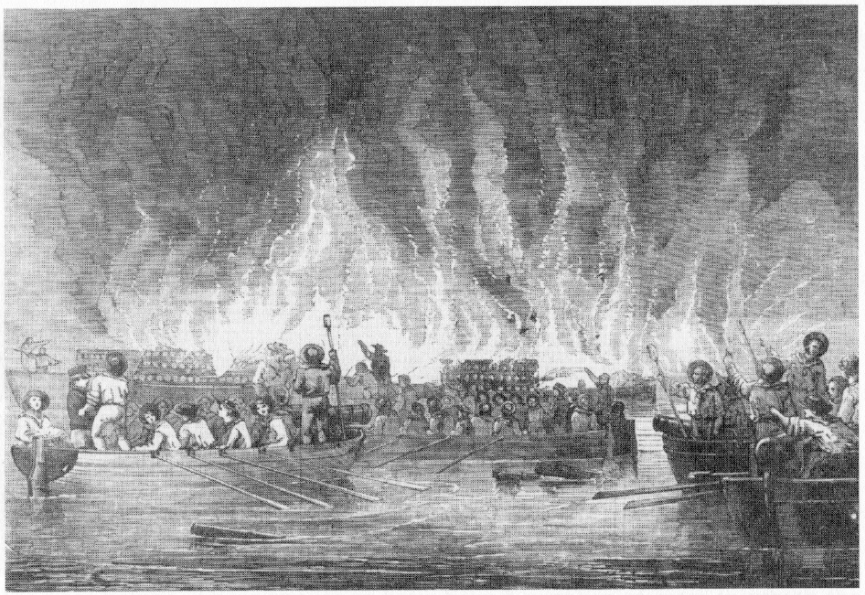
This drawing is titled, Cutting-out Expedition in the Bay of Kovitska, Finland, Sketched by an Officer of the Nile. *The* Illustrated London News *text reads, 'This sketch shows the boat, under the command of Commander Price, of HMS* Nile *cutting-out vessels in the Bay, amounting altogether to the number of 19. Our brave seamen are repelling the fire of the enemies' riflemen, who are said to have been present under cover of the woods to the number of 3,000'. This may be the incident referred to so disparagingly by Captain Sulivan when he wrote, 'Well, this celebrated battle consisted, I hear, of two muskets being fired by militia men on shore, for which fire was opened on village, houses, church and all'.*

Cossack with flags of truce not properly displayed and the landing party armed, led to a brush with the Finns – a party of 50, with four Cossacks under the command of Ensign Sverchkov – in which a number of the *Cossack*'s men were killed as was at least one Finnish merchant seaman who was with the party. There seems to have been some justification for the Russian complaint of the misuse of flags of truce as a means of enabling boats to approach the shore unopposed. As Borodkin puts it:

> They would approach the town under a flag of truce, put forward various demands and, when these were refused, take down the truce flag and open the bombardment from ships and boats.[15]

In the town of Pietarsaari (Jacobstad) the local people had escaped the attention of the British Fleet in 1854. In 1855, however, they were subjected

[15]Borodkin, op cit.



This drawing is titled Destruction of Russian Vessels at Old Salis. *It illustrates an incident on 24 September 1855, in which a raiding party from the 8-gun screw frigate HMS* Conflict, *having landed, according to the* Illustrated London News *report, under a flag of truce, burned nine vessels laden with timber in a river flowing into the Gulf of Riga in Estonia, probably in the vicinity of Pärnu.*

to intermittent harassment, though as they had troops stationed in the town they felt somewhat safer. Something of the feeling at the time from the point of view of a prosperous shipowner's wife may be gained from the letters of Fru Malm to her son Otto, quoted in an article published locally. On 1 July 1855, Fru Malm wrote:

> I have made only one visit to the summer villa on Stockholmen. The girls have been there only a few times since all our furniture is here [in the town] for billeting purposes and we have not dared to take any bedclothes out there. Just now we do not know when the enemy may drop in to pay us a visit; up to now they have been only as far northwards as Kasko where they dropped anchor for seven days. We've now managed to obtain one company of Sharpshooters of our Militia, and if necessary we get a cannon and more people from nearby villages. A number of batteries have been constructed on Kitholmen, both by the soldiers and by our working men, farm labourers etc and we hope that they would be able to put up a strong defence should the enemy dare to come here.[16]

[16]Al Ahlström, *I Kulturens och Krimkrigets tecken* (Jacobstad, 1948). The Malm family for five generations, from 1749 to 1898, operated a trading house in Jacobstad, owning 112 merchant vessels in 150 years. The barque *Hercules*, the first Finnish ship to sail around the world in the years 1844–47, belonged to the Malms. They were closely linked with trading houses in Liverpool, London and Hull.

Then on 3 August 1855 Fru Malm wrote:

> Since I last wrote to you we have had a visit from the enemy. Two English men-of-war, a frigate and a corvette, made their way in, sounding all the way, some 14 days ago this Monday [25 July], and after having stayed for the whole day put out five boats from Ådö Fell where they had anchored. Two of these boats were large and had cannon on board. The Town's Mayor and some sea captains went out in a sloop to meet them, flying a flag of truce, to enquire what it was they wanted. To this they replied that they required the surrender of all vessels. Our answer was that there were none such to be found here, but they said that they were better informed than that, and that there were in fact 11 large vessels here and that they must be surrendered or the town would be bombarded. . . . Around 3 o'clock in the morning the boats all came in to Korsgrundet but they probably observed that the military were on Kitholmen or maybe they really knew it before, but believed they could frighten us with threats anyhow. And whilst they were strutting up and down the gangplanks on to the shoal ground, peeping and gazing into the Port, a small group proceeded to little Stockholm, smashed the shutters to the kitchen [in the Malm's villa], broke out the lower panes of glass and took from the sideboard a carafe of cognac and some glasses and then left the place, subsequently setting fire to the landing jetty. . . . Certainly we were somewhat scared so that we removed all the silver and the linen clothes down into the cellar store, but since our soldiers have arrived we now feel much safer. They consist of one company of Russians, and artillerymen with two cannons, plus one company of our Militia, who are fine marksmen. So we escaped lightly that time and subsequently have not seen them again. We are hoping now to live in peace. The reason, as they also know, is that the soldiers are here, and the Town is so situate that it cannot easily be seen.[17]

There is a note that one of the English vessels was the *Firefly*. On 11 November Fru Malm wrote:

> Melberg's boys had jointly built themselves a large carvel-built boat. It was loaded in Westerbotten with tar – I do not know who chartered it – when some days ago it came home with 150 barrels of salt on their own account, and 100 for the family, but luck went so against them that they were taken off Messkäret by the English. These, having put down some armed boats, aimed pistols at their heads and urged them to surrender. What else could they do? They were escorted to the *Tartar* which was lying off Ådö and after being on

[17]Ahlström, op cit.

board for about half an hour, they got leave to take their little 'jolle' and go ashore. They had pleaded to be allowed their boat, but in vain. On the following day the salt was thrown into the sea and their boat was set on fire. Uncle Alexander also lost two boats which they burned before his very eyes. May God help us against these cruel Corsairs! . . . Six manned boats had been sent out from the *Tartar* to the lesser Stockholm to bombard the Russian artillery on Alholmen, but hardly had they disembarked before the Russians greeted them so powerfully with their cannon that immediately and with the greatest haste they withdrew out of range and, so it is said, they had one boat badly damaged and also probably several men killed.[18]

According to Ahlström, the result of this successful defence was that the *Dragon* bombarded the town 'for two hours on each of two days . . . but without achieving any serious damage.'

But despite their very unpleasant position, the inhabitants of Jacobstad found time for other kinds of activity. Fru Malm wrote of a wedding:

Amelie was a very sweet bride, well-dressed and even elegant with a white costume of silk tulle in several layers having white designs of charming blooms and a lining of white silk, a pretty garland of pale orange blossom with a head veil and beautiful golden jewellery consisting of a bracelet, brooch, and earrings. This bracelet she had been given by her fiancé. For her going-away dress she had a light blue, floral moirée, exceptionally pretty. All her costume was from Stockholm and it had cost a pretty sum, but everyone considered they had never seen a more tastefully dressed bride.[19]

In some cases farmers and their womenfolk were fired on as they worked in the fields. Sulivan was incensed particularly by an attack by the *Magicienne* (which, despite her name, was a British paddle-frigate of 16 guns) on a party of men and women dining in a beachside summer house of a country estate in Estonia. As Sulivan summed it up:

The fact is, there is a kind of unfeeling, senseless anxiety to fire at anything that gives a chance, for the sake of firing, and some, I fear, for the sake of notoriety, or the chance of bragging about the pretence of a fight, so that they may write a letter . . . I am afraid there are few of our men that can really be trusted in command, or are fit to decide on what should or should not be done.[20]

[18]Ahlström, op cit.
[19]Ibid.
[20]Sulivan, op cit.

There are a number of despatches in the officially printed *Correspondence between the Admiralty and Rear-Admiral the Hon R F Dundas* which, reading between the lines, would appear to be puffed up accounts of 'actions' of this sort. One of the most interesting of these comprises the claim for 'pecuniary consideration in return for their exertions and sacrifices as regards prize money' on behalf of the officers and men of HMS *Harrier*, Commander Henry Story. This vessel had sent a raiding party in boats into the *viks* and *fjärds* north and south of Uusikaupunki (Nystad) which, it was claimed:

had totally destroyed no less than 55 good and useful ships, several of them apparently new, in which the trade not only of the town of Nystad . . . but also to a large extent of the adjacent coast, was carried on, I hope Their Lordships will admit that this is as severe a blow as had yet been inflicted on the enemy by any single ship on this part of the Russian coast, a service of great risk and danger, etc.[21]

Accompanying the claim is a list naming 26 of the vessels allegedly destroyed with their imagined tonnages. In forwarding the claim to the Secretary to the Admiralty, Admiral Dundas commented that, 'I apprehend that the request is one to which it will not be possible to accede.'

Which perhaps was just as well. A raid which resulted in the destruction of privately-owned merchant shipping on this scale would indeed have been a major disaster for the Finns, greater than the destruction of property at Oulu (Uleåborg) and Raahe (Brahestad) in 1854. But the facts were rather different from the claim. *Finland's Skeppskalender* for 1856 shows that only eight vessels including four on Commander Story's list, were 'totally destroyed' in the raid on the Uusikaupunki (Nystad) area. Of the rest of the vessels on the list, seven cannot easily be identified from the names Commander Story gives and of the remaining 15, four are reported as having been laid up at home and not damaged at all, five as a little damaged but repaired and seven as having been one-quarter or more destroyed but repaired or, as in the case of the barque *Ocean*, built in 1842, three-quarters damaged but rebuilt. Of one other vessel, the barque *Victoria*, both Finnish and British records agree to her having been captured intact. In addition to the vessels named by Commander Story, six other vessels are listed as a little damaged but repaired. This raid was a bad blow for the Finnish merchant shipping industry, but nothing like the blow the

[21]NRS, 1855 op cit.

total loss of 55 large vessels would have been. The great majority of the vessels, other than the eight totally destroyed, were repaired and sailing again when the ice broke up in the spring of 1856, and already four large new vessels were being built to replace some of the eight.

While the towns of Kotka and Lovisa were burned, on at least one occasion a bargain was struck under which a defenceless town and its shipping and timber sheds were left intact in return for a fat prize delivered to the captain and crew of the British vessel concerned. Our old friend the *Driver*, Captain Henry Otter, she who had first circumnavigated the earth with steam and had served so well with Captain Sulivan in 1854, came with the *Firefly* into Kristiinankaupunki (Kristinestad) in July 1855 to find the town without any means of defence, the Russian soldiers having been withdrawn with the guns and rifles which had been laboriously collected by the local people. Five big vessels were under construction at the local shipyard, the *Ulrica*, and *Antaja*, *Allotar*, *Carl* and *Fides*, barques and brigs. There were also great stocks of timber. Two schooners were found sunk, one of them evidently very recently, in the waters of Pjelaxfjärden. Captain Otter appears to have struck a bargain under which the town was left unharmed in return for the raising of one of these sunken schooners, a new vessel, the *Pallas*, built in Kristinestad in 1853, and her surrender to him fully laden with goods from the owner's warehouse. Surviving documents give some indication of what went on. The records of the local *sjömanhus* show that the *Pallas* was handed over to Captain Otter at the request of the burgers of Kristiinankaupunki (Kristinestad). It is probable that they were influenced by one of the most prosperous and powerful figures in the town, S A Wendelin, who claimed after the war to have lost 54,687 roubles as a result of the conflict and who, as a big merchant and owner of the new barque *Ulrica* lying in the shipyard, had much to lose had the town been treated as Oulu (Uleaborg) and Raahe (Brahestadt) had been treated the year before. *Pallas* was owned by Holmudd and Sundman and they claimed to have lost between them some 14,500 roubles during the war. The *Pallas* was duly sold and registered as the property of owners in Scotland.

Captain Sulivan established what seems to late twentieth century eyes to have been astonishing relations with some Estonian landowners, going ashore, travelling openly in the countryside, dining and meeting an English governess, Miss Cooper, who had been twenty years in what he calls Russian service. It must be remembered, however, that the situation in Estonia was completely different from that in Finland. The landlords with whom Sulivan fraternized were German-speaking Balts. In the words of J Hampden Jackson, writing in 1940:

> We can see the nobility and the *literatan* of a century ago through their own eyes, but not the peasants. Hardly ever could the Estonian read, never could he write. All our evidence must come from people who saw him from outside – saw him in his ankle-length coat of undyed black wool, in his leather frogs, his sandals and his long fair hair . . . Every man's hand was against the Estonian – [22]

Bearing all this in mind, Sulivan's observations are often amusing and always interesting.

> After coming round to the cove where we burnt the cutter, we saw the baron's carriage down again, and on landing he introduced me to the baroness, a young, nice-looking, delicate lady of about 22 years of age, who spoke very good English. They repeated the invitation to go to their castle; so I got in alongside the lady, the baron mounting the box alongside a great Russian coachman in a long blue robe, a funny hat, and a splendid beard, and with two very fine horses we started, going first to the farm near, to provide a conveyance for Creyke, Hewett, and Cecil. They got a little hay waggon with one pony, in which, after two breakdowns, they reached the castle about twenty minutes after we did. This is a splendid house, shaded over the entrance by fine horse chestnuts, beautiful grounds round, and inside like a handsome English country house, but there are polished oak floors, except in the drawing room, which is thoroughly English, and inside it a perfect bijou of a boudoir, which the lady took me into through the drawing room; I almost thought myself in fairyland so beautifully was it fitted up with green velvet, etc but nothing gaudy. Inside this was the lady's dressing room, which I cannot report so particularly on, except that the glimpse I got of it showed it to be in keeping with the boudoir. It was a very hot day, but a nice little breeze, though the thermometer was higher than they have ever had it before. Outside that front was the garden; the flowers, just the same kind as in our gardens, were rather poor, but the roses numerous and beautiful, and we got fine bunches of them. The stables were very good, and full of fine horses and stout island ponies about 13 hands high. Her favourite English mare, which she showed me, was a great beauty, and I should think thoroughbred; she also had a very nice island pony for rough work and for hunting. There was a very fine English riding horse of the baron's, a pair of English carriage-horses, and the handsome Russian ones we drove out with. It really all seemed like a dream: three miles inland in an enemy's country, and going over all these quite English-like scenes, with a nice young lady speaking as good English as I did, except with a slightly foreign accent. She was born in St Petersburg, and only spoke Russian as a child, but had been entirely educated by an English lady, a Miss Meara, who seems to have remained with her until her own

[22] J Hampden Jackson, *Estonia* (London, 1941).

marriage, about two years since. The family consists of one pretty little girl about 14 months old, who was at first rather frightened of me . . . We had a splendid dinner, but more plain meats, game, etc than I expected. Coffee and tea were carried out under a tree, and we left about ten, just at dusk, the baron driving me at a rattling pace in a light phaeton with the English horses and a thorough English-dressed groom, leather belt, boots, and all. The others came in a Russian carriage with the big coachman driving four large ponies abreast, with three reins in each hand. I asked them to come on board *Merlin* if she came close in, and I promised them to come near the east shore on our way back, where the water is deeper and the road from the castle runs to a jetty where the boats from Hapsal land.[23]

As always, Sulivan was concerned for the well-being of the poorer people of the coastal regions. Of the seafarer farmers of the Estonian island of Dago he wrote:

I wish the poor fisherman at Dago and other places could be allowed salt for their own use to cure fish for this winter, or their sufferings will be terrible, and this will have no effect on the war either way. I fear they will all try to cross in the boats before the ice forms, and the severe weather has forced our ships away, and then numbers will be lost, while some will get a little salt over. I hope many escaped this Spring when others were taken.[24]

There is, however, quite another side to this story. The recent research of Dr David Papp[25] has shown that the seafarers of the Estonian coast were not driven only by necessity to seek to break the blockade on trade with Sweden. Barter trading links between the Estonian Islands and Sweden, especially Gotland, had existed for centuries. They were conducted chiefly in open boats and the Estonians would barter products from their own farms for salt, iron, ropes and yarns, and other necessaries. On occasions in history Estonian grain may well have saved the Gotlanders from famine following harvest failure. The effect of the blockade was to make this barter trade enormously profitable and actually greatly to increase the number of boats in the business. Between May and July 1854 nearly 50 big open boats arrived at Visby, capital of Gotland, often in small convoys. In 1855 the Visby newspaper reported that the boats began to arrive as soon as the sea was open, two of them as early as 10 April in eastern Gotland, and these brought the first news of the death of Tzar Nicholas I. They had had

[23]Sulivan, op cit.
[24]Ibid.
[25]David Papp, *Öislar, Om estänningarnas byteshandel pa Gotland* (Stockholm, 1985).

to lie for 12 days in the ice waiting for open water to approach the coast; these were men who lived in open boats in sub-zero temperatures in the way the Scandinavians did in Viking times. By mid-May 1855, there were 24 Estonian boats in Visby. The price of grain in Visby was very high and such was the shortage of salt in Estonia that the boatmen made 300 per cent, even 500 per cent profit on their voyages. An ordinary seafarer farmer could with one successful trading voyage of four or five days in each direction achieve an enormous increase in his working capital. At least one farmer did so well in the shortage years immediately following the war that he was able to join with relatives in a typical shareholding group to build a *galeas* and set up in the coasting trade of the Gulf of Finland. With their farm, his family became prosperous and were able to live at a different standard from anything they had dreamed of before. As was to happen in Åland and on the Finnish coast the war actually, in the long term, led to a revival of Estonian Baltic sailing.

As for Åland, the islanders were in some ways in a privileged position. On 19 May Captain Cooper Key of HMS *Amphion* reported to Admiral Dundas that, in obedience to orders, he had anchored off Bomarsund the preceding day. The ruins were in the same state they had been in when they were left the September before. The Russian authorities had sold stores of building materials to the islanders. Contrary to expectation they had not reoccupied the islands during the winter. The civil administration, conducted by Ålanders, had resumed control. Probably because of the arrests under Russian orders of some Ålanders, the islanders were very reluctant to have much to do with the British.

As the people were anxious to ascertain whether their trading vessels would be detained by our cruisers, I informed them that they might continue their trade with Sweden, which consists in exporting, in sloops and a few small schooners, wood, tar, and pitch, but that all communication with Finland was strictly forbidden.

On our return I anchored off Degerby, and on communicating found that the information given above was confirmed, and that several arrests had taken place there. Two of the natives who served as pilots to Her Majesty's ships last year, and had been concealing themselves for fear of arrest, having come on board for protection, I have sent them to the *Firefly*, for your disposal.

The ice broke up so as to render the navigation free on 8 May.[26]

[26]NRS 1855, op cit.

According to the Crown Bailiffs' accounts, quoted by Georg Kåhre,[27] for the Ålanders generally the second year of the war, despite the freedom to trade with Sweden, was worse than the first.

A few years ago there were still fragmentary oral traditions of these days amongst some of the oldest people. They told how the Russians dug a well on a farm on Lemland and took the water in big oak barrels across the Lumparn to Bomarsund. The well is still called the Ryssbrunn, the Russian well. There is still a barn in Lemland which was used as a kind of shop by the men from the British Fleet to buy food from the farmers. Jacob Westerlund, born in 1823, from the farm Johans in Lumparland, was sailing in a boat when the Englishmen came and captured them and tried to force them to be pilots. They were taken to Bomarsund and the tradition does not say what happened afterwards, except that Jacob lived to be 77.

The Ålanders wished above all to return to normal innocent farming and trading. Though they managed to keep vessels concealed throughout the war, and even to build new ones,the presence of the hovering enemy kept everyone's nerves on edge. They never knew what was going to happen next, whether a vessel spared last year would be taken and burned this year.

[27]Kåhre, op cit.

19

Sveaborg

There is a place half-way from Hanko (Hangö) to Viipuri (Viborg), on the north shore of the Gulf of Finland, where several small rivers run down to make a large natural harbour protected by a maze of islands off shore. This area was the scene of a number of false starts at town building from the middle 1500s. It is now almost entirely covered by the capital of modern Finland, Helsinki. The site of the town was changed more than once, as were the sites of the inevitable protecting fortifications, but in 1747 the Diet in Stockholm formally decided to build a central fortress to be the base for the armed forces stationed in the whole of Finland. This was to be in the neighbourhood of what is now Helsinki.

The great fortress which was slowly to rise on the group of islands lying off Helsinki was to prove to be the biggest and most far-reaching building enterprise to which the Swedish Kingdom had ever committed itself. The fortress was to be named Sveaborg, the Swedish military castle literally the 'Fortress of Sweden', and it is still known by that name to Finns whose first language is Swedish. In Finnish it was called Viapori, and it is still so called in contemporary colloquial Finnish, but when Finland because an independent country in 1918, the official name was changed to Suomenlinna, the 'Finnish castle', and as such it is known today.

There were good reasons for the decision to build a new fortress on the Finnish shore of the Gulf in 1747. The first and most important was that the Russians under Peter the Great had created Kronstadt, both to be the western outlying defence of the new town of St Petersburg and to be the base of a new navy which challenged Swedish domination of one of the two great inland seas, the Gulf of Finland. Thus Kronstadt came first and was the occasion for Suomenlinna; a challenge and a response to the challenge. The Swedes had also learned in the course of their long and too often disastrous wars with Russia that control of the complex of archipelagos between Viipuri (Viborg) and the Åland Sea was a key factor. But this labyrinth of water and granite could not be controlled by an army, nor by

an orthodox navy. It was no place, as the British Navy well knew by 1855, for big sailing ships. To control the archipelagos a new kind of force was needed, the *skärgårdsflotta*, the archipelago fleet. This comprised rowing and sailing boats, long, narrow, of shallow-draught, and equipped with one or two guns and capable of carrying soldiers as might be required. This fleet needed a base, a dockyard for its construction and maintenance, the equivalent of the Arsenale at Venice, or the historic Swedish naval base at Karlskrona. Suomenlinna could provide that base.

A further reason for building a new fortress followed from the military thinking of the times. In the recent wars the Swedes had lost all their main fortifications to the east of the country to the Russians. To conduct warfare without bases to which armies could retreat for defence, from which they could sally forth for offence, was unthinkable at the time. The control of a country followed from the possession and occupation of fortresses. Sveaborg was to be a base for the control of all Finland. Its building has been seen as having signified, 'a politically far reaching, almost desperate effort to try to prevent the division of the kingdom'[1] – that is, the loss of Finland to Russia. As it was, only 63 years after the decision to build it was taken, the fortress was to fall to Russia. Today Suomenlinna faces Finland with a problem familiar in Britain with the changing purposes of the great naval dockyards: what to do with a huge historic monument of international importance which costs vast sums to restore and maintain, but which was built for purposes totally irrelevant to the contemporary scene in the late twentieth century?

The design of the new fortress was given to Augustin Ehrensvärd, an artillery officer in his middle thirties. The original plan, on an even vaster scale than the completed fortress, was for a fortification scheme which would embrace both the offshore islands immediately guarding the area of the modern Helsinki harbour, the Susilvodot islands, and Helsinki itself. But the plan to fortify Helsinki was dropped and what Ehrensvärd had produced by the time of his death in 1772 were very substantial works, inevitably incomplete, which involved the building of a series of separate linked fortresses on the main islands of the chain across the mouth of the harbour. These forts comprised a city in their own right with its own life and identity and a larger population than Helsinki itself. Indeed, it was the second largest town in Finland after the then capital, Turku (Åbo). By the end of the century the fortress as finally conceived was virtually complete.

One of its most important features was the dockyard and base for the

[1] A W Rancken, *Sveaborg: Its Genesis and Destiny* (Helsinki, 1933).

skärgårdsflotta. This was largely the creation of collaboration between Ehrensvärd and the Swedish naval architect and shipbuilder Fredrik Henrik af Chapman, whose great work of eighteenth century European naval architecture, *Architectura Navalis Mercatoria*, is still well known and readily available in modern editions. Chapman was in Suomenlinna for four very important years, 1760 to 1764, and his collaboration with Ehrensvärd left its mark on the fortress as it is to be seen today. In 1756 the *skärgårdsflotta* was taken from the control of the Swedish Navy to become an army responsibility and Ehrensvärd himself became its commander-in-chief. The sailing and rowing vessels which af Chapman built in Suomenlinna were of a new type, much more heavily-armed than their predecessors, at the cost of being less manoeuvrable. These large vessels were given 'sail assist' as pole-masted barques and full-rigged ships, others as brigantines and luggers. There was the usual competition between the Swedes and the Russians to build improved vessels for the archipelago service for the rest of the eighteenth century. But by 1854–5 the development of the steamship had rendered the old *skärgårdsflotta* obsolete.

The Suomenlinna which faced Sulivan and his contemporaries in 1855 was not much changed from the fortress which had been surrendered to the Russians so ignominously in 1809. It was, indeed, not only outdated, but it had been grossly neglected in the intervening years. In 1854 and early 1855 various improvements were made. Additional new batteries were set up. A system of bridges linked some of the outlying islands with their defensive works. But there was chaos in the administration and the preparations for war revealed the extent of corruption and incompetence in the Russian Civil Service. A W Rancken has a story, which Borodkin also quotes.

> On the ice a supply column is spotted. 'Whither bound?' an officer shouted and the reply came 'We're hauling siege guns from Sveaborg to Riga!' Soon a column appeared from the opposite direction. 'Whither bound?' asked the same officer, and got the reply, 'We're hauling siege guns from Riga to Sveaborg!'[2]

The truth is that Sveaborg was in a very poor state and it is quite probable that had Admiral Napier in the end attacked it in 1854 he might then, even with the equipment he had available, have carried the day in the sense of doing damage without suffering like damage in return. Borodkin quotes the memoirs of an inspecting officer sent by the Tzar to find out the condition of the fortress in the early summer of 1854.

[2] Rancken, op cit.

> Everywhere, we were astonished at the unserviceability and poor condition of the defences. Some of the newly-built batteries were so wrongly positioned that one could only wonder that anyone had been willing to waste such enormous expense on arming and equipping them. There were, moreover, no batteries at the places where they were most necessary. The most important sections of the fortification on Gustafsvärd [now Susisaari] were unserviceable to the extent that it was not even possible to fire artillery from them. Bakholm [now Vallisaari, the island on which Brigadier H Jones proposed landing 5000 troops . . .] which blocks the eastern side of the roadsteads, was in fact uninhabited and turned out to be so easy to capture and fortify for the purposes of bombarding the roadsteads the city and the fortifications that . . . (we) . . . ordered that work should begin without delay on the construction of batteries at the points selected by us.[3]

Late in 1854 Rear-Admiral Matyushkin submitted a report on the condition of Sveaborg. He came to the conclusion that the fortress could easily be taken and that it would take a very long time to put its defences into order.

> It is difficult in the course of a few winter months to put a fortress still incomplete and neglected for 40 years into such a condition that our fleet would be out of reach of an enemy squadron when sheltered behind its walls. And the fortifications themselves are not strong enough and not designed to withstand modern guns and shells.[4]

His opinions were confirmed when test firing of the Sveaborg guns in the late summer of 1854 brought down considerable lengths of the fortress wall. Borodkin quotes a private letter from the senior military engineer at Sveaborg in 1855, Colonel Pasypkin, to the defender of Sebastopol, General Totleben, listing six grave weaknesses in the design and construction of the fort and its condition at the time. Admiral Matyushkin wrote to the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Fleet,

> Materially and in the art of using our artillery we belong to the last century . . . if the enemy knew that we have at our disposal only nine guns firing shell and how few other guns we have and the weakness of the wall they would be able to destroy everything this autumn [of 1854] . . . But Sveaborg's undeserved reputation has led the enemy to postpone their attack until they receive more reliable information . . . Very few of our projectiles will reach the enemy, but on our side a good deal will be burned and destroyed.[5]

[3]Borodkin, op cit.
[4]Borodkin, op cit.
[5]Ibid.

Time was to prove the Admiral's assessment to be highly accurate.

Substantial work was done to strengthen Sveaborg's defences in 1854 and in the summer of 1855, notably in the building of batteries on the outer islands, in the defensive disposition of units of the Russian navy, and especially of the *skärgårdsflotta*, and in the bringing in of more guns and ammunition and the strengthening of the garrison. However, the Russian and Finnish accounts give the impression that the task in the circumstances was really a hopeless one and that the best that could be done was to ensure that a landing by the Allies, if one were to be attempted, would meet with massive resistance. To discourage Allied vessels from coming too close 44 electrical mines and 950 of Nobel's mines were laid in the immediate approaches.

Despite these Sulivan and his little flotilla of vessels spent three days and nights in intensive surveying work to determine the true location of the rocks and skerries. In the words of Sulivan's *Life and Letters*, they were

> finding places for the vessels clear of the numerous rocks, making an accurate plan of the positions, ranges, etc, and at night creeping with grapnels as close as possible in front of the fortress for the reported electric wires of the infernal machines, but without finding any.[6]

Borodkin's account is closely similar.

> A few days later, more enemy steamers arrived and a small flotilla of eight vessels gathered in sight of the fortress but at a distance of at least 5½km from it. These vessels were mainly occupied with sounding and charting the waters, for which purpose they approached the fortress on three nights in succession immediately before the bombardment.[7]

Such was the success of this hydrographic work that when the Allied Fleet took up its positions Governor-General Berg refused to believe the report. Borodkin reports, quoting the governor-general's secretary, that this was because 'the place was marked on the secret Russian charts as being an area full of dangerous shoals'. Once again the Russian navy's inadequate hydrographic work had disastrously betrayed her major fortifications.

The bombardment of Sveaborg which followed was a political gesture and a military threat. Sebastopol had still not fallen and the British forces were increasingly playing second fiddle to the French in the Crimea.

[6]Sulivan, op cit.
[7]Borodkin, op cit.

Although the equipment with which they were provided was limited, and there were no floating batteries, there was enough for the British Fleet to carry out an extensive and prolonged bombardment. This was a gesture of offence for home consumption and a demonstration to the Russians that a situation had been reached in which, next year, with the floating batteries which were soon to be seen in action at Kinburn, though the action might be bloody and prolonged Kronstadt was in real danger, with all that implied for the safety of St Petersburg.

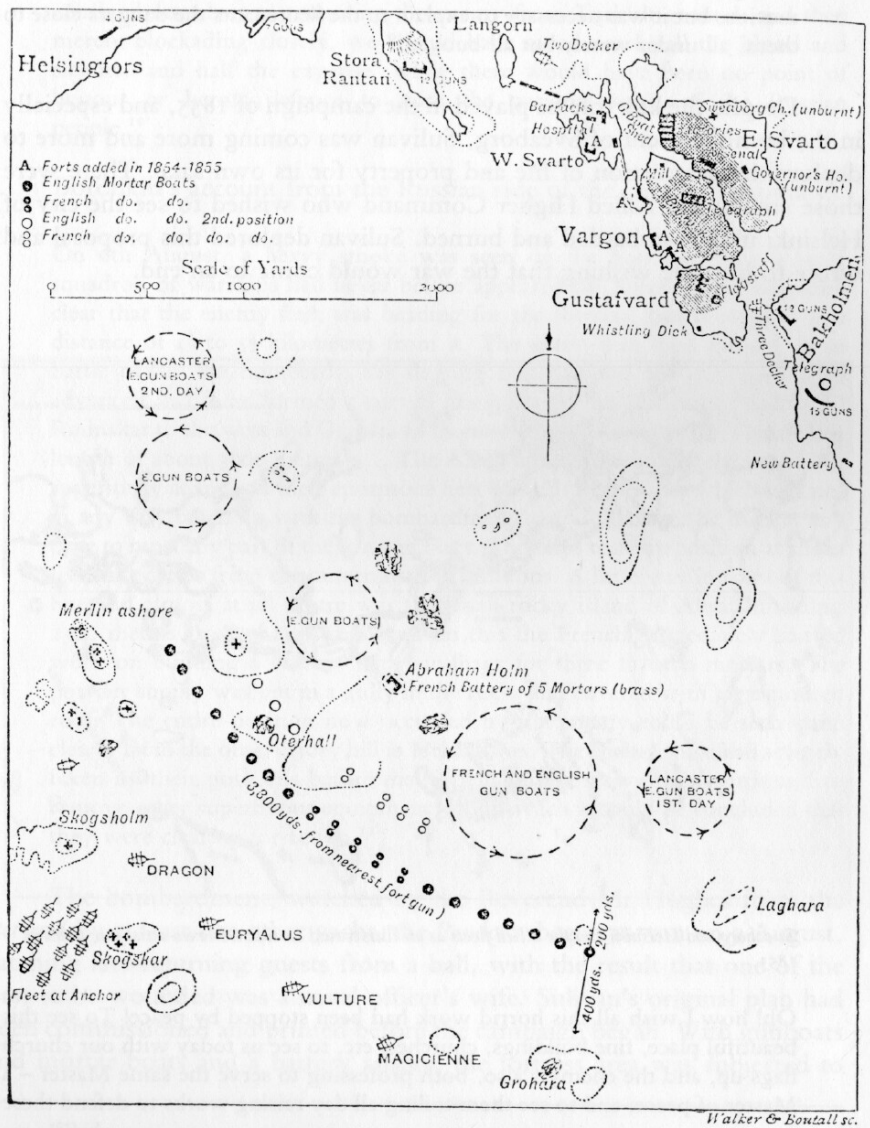
As Dr Don wrote in his journal with perhaps pardonable exaggeration:

> But, as afterwards came out, the great material loss was nothing to the moral effect. The ruin wrought at Sveaborg by our mortar fire brought home to the Tzar and his advisers the certainty, that, if the war went on, Cronstadt would next year meet with a similar fate. If that happened, and St Petersburg was menaced, not all the official lying in the world could conceal it from the Russian public. There is the best ground for inferring that the bombardment of Sveaborg was a more important factor in ending the war than even the fall of Sebastopol itself.[8]

The bombardment followed closely the plans drawn up by Captain Sulivan, though he was not formally himself in command of the operation. He appears to have regarded it very much as an exercise in the placing and control of vessels, and in gunnery in circumstances made difficult by the defences, natural and man-made, of the fortress area. As he wrote:

> On Tuesday and Wednesday I was hard at work night and day, either sounding or creeping for 'infernals' at night, and making the plan complete, discussing it with the admiral, and placing vessels by day. In the evening the captains having control of each portion of the gun – and mortar boats, and all the lieutenants, etc, commanding, were called in in batches by the admiral, who gave them their orders, which I explained on the plan as carefully as possible, till they had got their lessons perfect . . . Being anxious about all going right, I went down the line at 1.30am, and to my horror found only one or two moving in, and the others with their crews all asleep: they said they had no orders to haul in; *yet the day was actually breaking*. By the time I had gone to everyone, roused them into activity, and got the officers who were sent from the frigates to hurry their parties (I actually found that no order had been given clearly how far they were to haul in), and explained to all how much of the hawsers they must haul in to get to their stations, it was quite

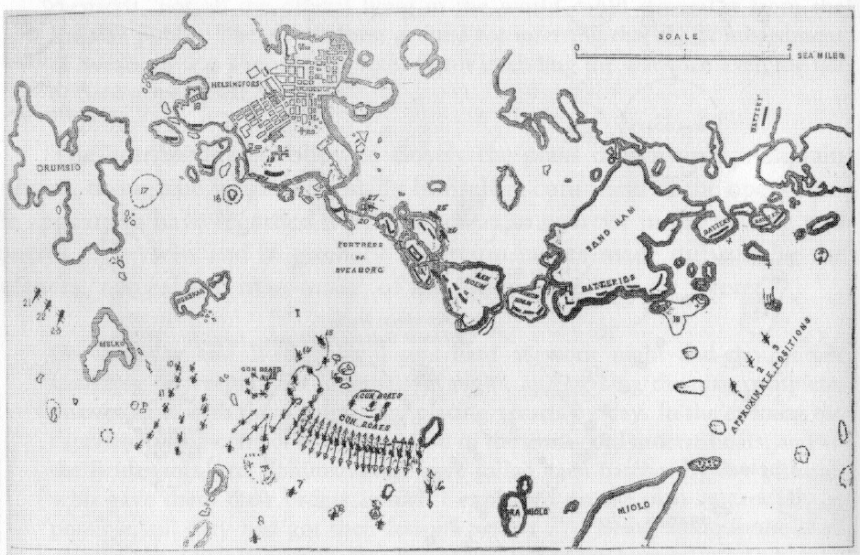
[8]Don, op cit.



Sulivans plan of the bombardment of Sveaborg. From the Life and Letters.

daylight; but the enemy did not seem to notice our change of position, and we could not commence firing, because the French mortar vessels were not ready; so in the meantime I went back and explained all to the admiral, and he and the Captain of the Fleet came in *Merlin* and we ran down the whole line. The gunboats were to circle round inside the mortar vessels, always in motion; but it was necessary to explain to the lieutenants the dangers close to them, all under water, but all buoyed.[9]

Despite the key role he played in the campaign of 1855, and especially in the bombardment of Sveaborg, Sulivan was coming more and more to deplore the destruction of life and property for its own sake. There were those among the Allied Higher Command who wished to see the city of Helsinki itself bombarded and burned. Sulivan deplored this proposal and wrote to his wife wishing that the war would come to an end.



Sveaborg and Helsinki and the allied fleets as an Illustrated London News *artist saw them in 1855.*

Oh! how I wish all this horrid work had been stopped by peace! To see this beautiful place, fine buildings, churches, etc, to see us today with our church flags up, and the enemy's also, both professing to serve the same Master – a Master of peace; and to see them toiling all day raising works to defend these

[9]Sulivan, op cit.

buildings, and we striving to reduce them to a heap of ruins! It is very sad; and though never had a nation greater cause for war, a fearful responsibility will rest on any who prolong that war a moment longer than is necessary to accomplish the objects for which we entered into it. Had we never sent that expedition to Sebastopol, we should have had peace now; and had we confined ourselves to removing the enemy from Turkish ground, and then merely blockading closely, we should have saved nearly all the blood and sickness and half the expense, while there would have been no point of honour or heroic defence to raise the national spirit of the Russian people.[10]

Borodkin's account from the Russian side of the conflict continues:

On 6th August, a heavy smoke was seen on the horizon. Such a large squadron of warships had never before appeared off Sveaborg. It was soon clear that the enemy fleet was heading for the fortress, but it stopped at a distance of $4\frac{1}{2}$ to $5\frac{1}{2}$ kilometres from it. The entire fleet then formed up in battle order; the bombards, the floating batteries and the gunboats were advanced and these formed a curved line between the Holms of Melko and Ronnskar to the west and Grahara to the east, giving the squadron's battle line length of about 3000 metres . . . The Allies were thus completely assured of superiority at sea and their enormous fleet of ships of the line, which was not in any way taken up with the bombardment, could therefore be used at any time to repel any part of the Russian Fleet. The ships took up position at about five kilometres from the outermost fortifications. A little way in front of this line and almost at its centre was the small rocky island of Abrahamsholm, 2300 metres from the fortress, and on this the French immediately started work on building a battery with sandbags for three 11 inch mortars. The powder supply was put in a gully in the rocks and covered with an armoured roof. The entire position now occupied by the enemy could be seen quite clearly from the observatory hill in Helsingfors. The enemy ships had scarcely taken up their positions before they began to take down their yards and to remove other superfluous equipment, from which it could be concluded that they were clearing for action.[11]

The bombardment, watched by the Reverend Mr Hughes from the *Pet* and by at least one other yacht, the *Pandora*, began at 7am on 9 August, catching late-returning guests from a ball, with the result that one of the first to be wounded was a naval officer's wife. Sulivan's original plan had been commissioned and printed before the campaign began. With gunboats and mortar boats and a battery ashore, the fortress area was subjected to

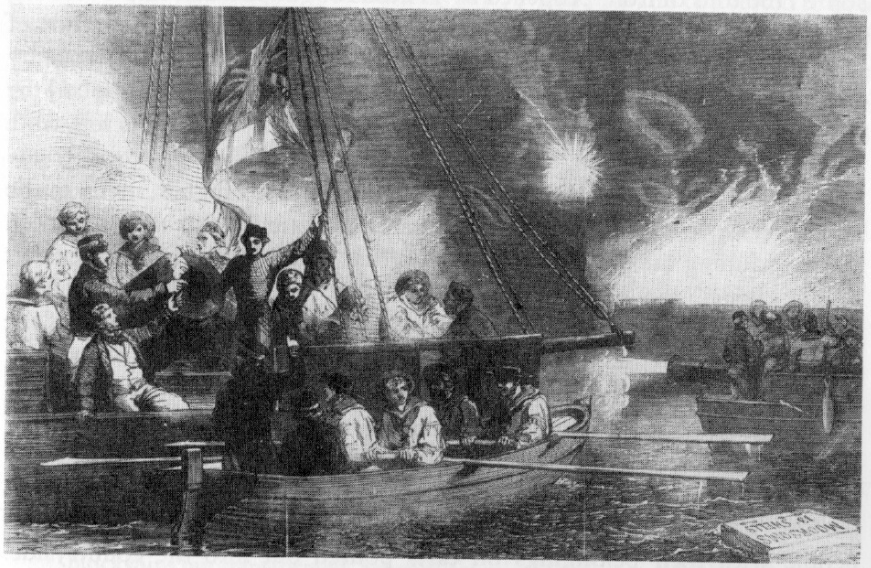
[10]Ibid.
[11]Borodkin, op cit.

J W Carmichael's impression of the bombardment of Sveaborg. Illustrated London News

continuous bombardment throughout 9 and 10 August. Considerable precautions had been taken in the city of Helsinki. The university's most valuable books and manuscripts and other property had either been sent into the country or stored in cellars and vaults under St Nicholas Church. Bullion from the Bank of Finland had also been sent into the country. During the actual bombardment the citizens remained remarkably calm. Only a few shells fell in the city area and the only fatality was a girl of nine who was later to be buried with full military honours. The Observatory hill in the south of the town provided a grandstand for hundreds of people to watch a vast panorama of land and sea. At night it turned into a great firework display. Not only could the Allied Fleet be seen, but the actual paths of the shells could be followed as they flew through the air. As far as the fortress itself was concerned, in Borodkin's words:

> As for the firing from the fortress, Elmgren, (an eye witness) remarks in his notes that it was clearly kept up only for the sake of sustaining the moral of the garrison and showing the enemy that its means of defence were not yet exhausted. The Russian powder, the same eyewitness adds, was very poor and Sveaborg therefore destined to play the part of martyr; a battle between the fortress and the fleet, in the form in which it was now being fought, was unequal, since it was easy for the fleet to inflict damage on the fortress without exposing itself to the fortress's fire.[12]

[12]Borodkin, op cit.



This drawing by J W Carmichael is titled, 'Captain Glasse and his Chief Engineer, HMS *Vulture* Superintending the Repairs of the Mortars During the Bombardment of Sveaborg'. Illustrated London News.

The bombardment eventually ceased largely because of the failure of the mortars to stand up to the stresses imposed by prolonged and continuous firing. In Sulivan's words:

> It is a disgrace to our ironfounders that one old mortar of the last war stood 350 rounds, while all the others, quite new, were unfit for use, at best after 200 to 250. I hope the Government will have a good row with the contractors. The iron is said to be bad.[13]

The Allied Fleet suffered no fatal casualties during the bombardment and only a few men were wounded, some of them as a result of carelessness in handling ammunition. In the fortress, the crew of the line-of-battleship *Rossiya*, which was moored across the narrow channel which is the only deep-water access to the harbour of Helsinki from the south, endured very heavy fire for 17 hours and lost 11 dead and 89 wounded. Elsewhere in the fortress, according to Borodkin, 62 had been killed and 199 wounded. A W Rancken gives 55 killed and 204 wounded. The attackers, having poured

[13]Sulivan, op cit.

some 1100 tons of iron, propelled by 111 tons of gunpowder, into Sveaborg believed the casualties to be much bigger. Reports spoke of thousands of dead. Reconnaissance also revealed that there had been extensive damage by fire. In Sulivan's words: 'Within the limits I have shown dark [on a plan] the destruction is so complete that not even a portion of a house is left, all a blackened, shattered ruin.'[14]

In fact, although, according to the Reverend Mr Hughes, many of the Allied shells had fallen short of the target, very extensive damage had been done, including the destruction of part of the square which forms the heart of the citadel, the main guardhouse, one of the officers' messes, large warehouses with ships' gear, provisions, and equipment, a number of the grander private houses and very many of the wooden houses of the poorer people. It was the burning of these which comprised the greater part of the fire. A series of magazines had also blown up, but fortunately with very little loss of life.

When the guns fell silent the people of Helsinki were convinced that a landing was to be made and it was then that panic spread. Long lines of people with their belongings on carts poured out into the countryside. Enterprising retailers followed the carts with food and other goods. The weather was good and after a few days when nothing had happened, the panic subsided and the people gradually returned home.

The mass of warships steamed to the south on Monday, 13 August, and no more was seen of them. There were no more substantial actions in 1855, though the blockade was maintained until the ice drove the blockading steamers out very late in the season. Captain Sulivan was mentioned twice in Admiral Dundas's dispatch formally reporting the action and in the most favourable terms, but he was not, on grounds of seniority, given any award for the campaigns which he had virtually made possible. He did, however, receive a wry compliment. Count N P Ignatieff, later to be the architect of Russia's great post-Crimean expansion into Turkestan and into China (but best known to British readers today, perhaps, as the villain of two of George McDonald Fraser's novels about the anti-hero, Flashman of Rugby) who was then serving at the Russian Embassy in London, after the peace formally sought Sulivan's advice over the matter of re-instatement of navigational marks in Finnish waters.[15]

Hospital Dresser Don returned home not in the *Duke of Wellington* in which he had served through the campaign, but in the old blockship

[14]Sulivan, op cit.
[15]Ibid.

Cornwallis, built at Bombay in 1812–13 as a 74-gun ship and converted to be a screw-steamer at Devonport in the winter of 1854–5 by the simple process of removing her poop and installing an engine by Penn of Greenwich. The newer ships of the steam battle fleet of the 1850s may have looked like Nelson's men of war, but the differences were considerable, as Don's journal made clear. He wrote:

> Our first thoughts on board the *Cornwallis* were: what a change is here! We had fallen back half a century, and, as it were, passed by a step from a modern mansion to an old dingy tenement! This ancient man o' war was indeed a contrast to the spaciously built, and elaborately fitted up-to-date three-decker we had just quitted. For this so-called blockship (derivation unrevealed) was simply an old-fashioned 74-gun two-decker, lightened aft by removal of the poop (which gave her an odd, shorn appearance) to admit of fitting in a high-pressure auxiliary engine, with reduction of armament to 60 guns. The combination in the blockships of the screw-propeller and heavy sailing rig was incongruous; the more so when under steam, as the high-pressure engines puffed and snorted like locomotives. Yet, while sense adversely contrasted the old with the new, sentiment restored the balance; for, were not these uncouth blockships but transformed 'Seventy-fours', the very type of ship which, from Rodney to Nelson, covered the British Navy with everlasting renown? It was 'the thunders from their native oak' that did not merely quench the enemy above, but 'quell the floods below'. The *Cornwallis* was undoubtedly very old, for her huge and clumsy wooden 'knees' dated her construction back to the early years of the century. Yet, ancient or no, she could boast, with nineteen shot holes received at Sveaborg, of being the fighting ship of the whole Baltic Fleet. These holes in her sides, rudely plugged, as well as her ripped-up decks, roughly patched, were objects of much curiosity to me; as representing such scars as must have been common in the days when 'hearts of oak were our ships, jolly tars were our men'. One of the shots she received went right through the cooking galley, while dinner was being prepared, wastefully scattering the pea soup and salt junk all over the deck! On second thoughts, therefore, one felt proud of the venerable *Cornwallis*, and of sailing in a ship identical with those that won Trafalgar. The old world associations of the ship appeared to react on the crew, among whom there was little of the modern smartness we had been accustomed to on the *Duke*.[16]

The *Cornwallis* had sustained her damage during a diversionary bombardment at Sandhamn, east of the main part of Sveaborg. She had suffered only 14 casualties, none of them fatal. Ten years after the bombardment of Sveaborg she became part of a jetty at Sheerness. A century later she was sold for breaking up.

[16]Don, op cit.

20

Peace and Afterwards

The fall of Sebastopol (strictly the occupation of its southern part by French and British forces) did not end the war. There was no reason why it should have done. The Allies had a toe hold on a tiny part of the coast of the remote part of the Russian Empire. To advance further would have required an effort and commitment of resources of colossal proportions, and where would the advance have gone? Even supposing that Allied armies had been able to force their way further into the interior of the vast area of Russia, at what point would the advance become so significant for Russia as to force the autocracy to sue for peace? History, before and after, strongly suggests that this point would never have been reached. Meanwhile, the Russian main army held the towering mountains of the coastal range of the Crimea. The Allied Fleets held the Black Sea and the Baltic, but the Allied Forces held very little else.

But the naval base at Sebastopol from which the Russian Black Sea Fleet had sailed two years before to destroy the Turkish squadron at Sinope had been eliminated, along with the fleet. The insult to the policeman of the world, and to the 'ocean powers', had been avenged. The only war aims about which all three allies, Britain, France and Turkey, agreed, had been achieved. The new government in Britain wished to go on fighting, to achieve the significant victory which had been denied to their fighting forces, to take the Crimea, Finland, even Poland from Russia. The French wanted simply to leave Russia weak and to shift the centre of diplomatic influence to Paris. What the Turks wanted, after all this, was needless to say, of little significance.

However, great as were the logistical problems the situation created for relatively unindustrialized Russia, they were even greater for Britain and France. The two armies could not sit looking at one another on a tiny salient of the steep Crimean coast for ever. Sooner or later the Allies would have to withdraw, the Russian base would be reconstructed and the Russian Black Sea Fleet rebuilt. Great as the shock of the war had been to Russia – and it

has been argued that, in the special and complex circumstances of the autocracy, it sowed the seeds of 1905 and 1917 – nevertheless the autocracy held firm. Some new threat to Russia at a point vital to her interests was going to be necessary to bring about the conditions in which a peace, however limited, could be negotiated.

The answer lay in the Baltic. The haunting ghost of Sebastopol, which had so obsessed Allied politicians, was now laid to rest, or could be represented as having been laid to rest. Something had at last been achieved, a spectacular victory, won at whatever disproportionate cost, which ordinary people could understand. Over two summers of reconnaissance, blockade, and raid, experience had been gained in the Baltic which showed that Kronstadt, for all that its defences had been greatly strengthened, was vulnerable to attack and might be overwhelmed. The rapid construction of more floating batteries was providing a formidable new weapon designed specifically to assist in that process. The fall of Kronstadt and the consequent opening of St Petersburg to attack and even possible occupation, however temporary, was an unacceptable risk for the autocracy.

It was made all the more real by political moves towards a northern alliance which began to be made in the winter of 1855–6. The prolonged and complex diplomatic moves which had never ceased all through the war were intensified. The fall of the southern half of Sebastopol, which had been expected for some time, did not represent a crippling shock for the Russians. There were no calls for peace at any price. In France, although French troops had covered themselves with glory, it had been at an appalling price in casualties of war and in deaths from disease. It was said that not much more than one-third of the 300,000 men France had sent to the Crimea would ever return. The economic situation in the country was deteriorating and the war was becoming more and more unpopular. But the Emperor Napoleon saw the opportunity to re-draw the map of Europe in France's favour, providing the Allies negotiated from a position of sufficient strength. He pressed through diplomatic channels for a congress of all the rulers of Europe to set up a system to replace that which followed the end of the Napoleonic Wars; and the idea met with support. To give the Allies negotiating power, he not only increased the strength of the French Navy –particularly with floating batteries – but he also resumed negotiations with King Oscar of Sweden. General Canrobert, who had been the French commander in the Crimea, was dispatched to Stockholm. Better terms were offered than those which Oscar had turned down in the secret negotiations in Gotland in 1854 and as a result, on 1 November 1855, a Treaty of Alliance was signed between Sweden, France, and Britain under

which the Ocean Powers agreed to protect Sweden against Russia. Further secret clauses provided for a joint military action in Finland.

The negotiations that followed were exceedingly complex and rendered no simpler by the weakness of the Anglo-French alliance. Much of the discussion took place between the French and Austrian governments without British participation, or even, at times, knowledge. When the two powers had reached agreement their proposals were presented to the British Government. Demanding as the French and Austrian terms were, the British wanted more still from Russia. Palmerston, now Prime Minister, opposed an early peace on terms which would not curb future Russian ambitions. He foresaw the destruction of Kronstadt in 1856, the reconquest of Finland, the restoration of the independence of Poland and extensive territorial losses to Russia in the south. He was confident that continuation of the war would lead to acceptance by Russia of such terms and he used the threat of a further major campaign in the Baltic. Even after the Russians had accepted the terms drafted by the French and the Austrians as a basis for the end of hostilities and for negotiations towards the formal ending of the war, Palmerston wrote regretfully to Queen Victoria:

> It would no doubt have been gratifying . . . that another summer should have witnessed the destruction of Cronstadt by Your Majesty's gallant Navy, and the expulsion of the Russians from the countries south of the Caucasus by Your Majesty's brave Army . . .[1]

Galt[2] lists the names of 161 gunboats 'prepared for the Baltic in 1856', divided into four squadrons under Keppel, Codrington, Yelverton and Cooper-Key. He gives the total available British naval force for the Baltic as 42 line-of-battleships, 56 heavy frigates, 123 corvettes, 220 gunboats and 100 mortar vessels, 'and nearly the whole of this gigantic force is composed of screw or paddle-box ships . . . Well may Russia be desirous of coming to terms'. Whatever the truth of the matter, well she might be with this sort of information in circulation.

The deliberations of the Military Committee of the British Cabinet, which met, according to Palmerston's diary, at least eight times in the autumn of 1855, according to Lambert, who has searched this material,[3] show little or nothing tangible on the Baltic. Russia, however, was faced with a grave situation. The war had revealed serious weaknesses in the

[1]Benson and Esher, op cit.
[2]Galt, op cit.
[3]In an oral communication.

administration, as it did in Britain. A campaign in 1856, with its emphasis on the Baltic, would at the least greatly increase Russian difficulties and in due course harden the peace terms the Allies were prepared to accept. Russia was now faced by four allied powers with immensely greater resources financially and industrially than herself. At a council on 20 December 1855, Tzar Alexander II approved the acceptance of the terms offered by the Austrians and the French, with some reservations, as a basis for negotiation. Much further diplomatic activity followed, characterized by the use for the first time of the electric telegraph as a means of rapid communication to speed negotiations.

It became increasingly apparent that not only was Sweden clearly aligned with the Allies but that Austria would join them in active hostilities against Russia if the war continued. At an Imperial Council in January 1856, it was pointed out that a campaign in 1856 would involve major conflicts in two seas. To move Russian armies from the south at ten miles per day would take three months, and they would arrive exhausted and in rags. British and French forces, fresh and well-equipped, could be in the Baltic in ten days or a fortnight from Britain. The Allies were now in a position to strike at Russia's vitals and it was most unlikely that better peace terms would be achieved than were now offered by them. Russia was weak militarily and financially. There was a danger of revolt in some Russian territories, not in Finland, but in Poland especially. The Council voted unanimously in favour of accepting the peace terms offered and the Tzar was very ready to agree. Provisional terms were signed in Vienna in late January and it was agreed that representatives should meet in Paris to negotiate an armistice and draw up a treaty to end the war.

The signing of the Treaty of Paris on 30 March 1856 formally ended the war, but it did nothing to change British attitudes towards Russia. If Russia, as a result of the war, lost much prestige and influence and had been clearly revealed as a backward country, of enormous size and population but technically and industrially primitive in a world advancing in these fields with incredible speed, Britain had suffered too. Although the greatest industrial nation on earth, her technology and her resources to apply it far in advance of any other society, she had been shown to be militarily weak and incompetent on land. The achievement of the British armed forces had been naval. The steam fleet in the Baltic had eliminated the sail fleet of Russia simply by being there. The ever-increasing threat to St Petersburg had played its part in the ending of the war and the destruction of the image of Russia as a leading power in Europe.

In the long run the effects of the British assault on Finland were to be

considerable, and they echo down to the present day. Russia lost the dominant position she had had in the Baltic since 1815. Åland was demilitarized and became a neutral zone as a result of an international agreement signed in Paris in March 1856, at the same time as the general peace treaty. Bomarsund was never to be rebuilt to present a threat to the Western World. This agreement laid the foundations for the semi-autonomous Åland within Finland of today. But more than that, the building – and the destruction – of Bomarsund injected enough capital into this society of small farmer-seafarers to enable it to cross the threshold into an era of capital generation through participation in the world's carrying trade when successive steps were taken by Tzar Alexander II towards the liberalization of trade in the aftermath of the war. Some Ålanders in their own interests had been somewhat ambivalent in their attitude to the British and their loyalty to Russia, but in the aftermath of the war they were forgiven in an amnesty on the initiative of the emperor.

The town of Mariehamn was founded in 1861. Subsequently, step by step, through the ownership first of wooden sailing ships, then of steel square-rigged ships as they were disposed of by the rest of the world's shipowners, and then of old steamers, and finally of modern motorships and the ultimately sophisticated great Baltic ferries of today, this tiny population of Swedish-speaking islanders in Finland has turned itself into one of the most prosperous as well as politically one of the most privileged minorities in Europe.[4]

The defeat represented by the terms of the Treaty of Paris and the neutralization of Åland led to an extensive reappraisal inside the Russian autocracy. The war, in the words of Paasivirta:

> Had given the St Petersburg government a remarkable experience of Finland which was to be significant for the future. The Finns had given proof of being loyal subjects, more than in mere words and reassuring newspaper statements. The Finns had spontaneously resisted when the enemy threatened, for example in June 1854 at Kokkola, before the area military commander had reached the spot with his troops. Above all, resistance had been offered to the enemy by people from different social levels, both burghers and farmers.[5]

The emperor himself came to Finland in 1856 and announced in the Senate that there would be various reforms in Finland, and, though he was

[4]For a detailed description of this historical phenomenon see Greenhill and Hackman, *The Grain Races – The Baltic Background* (London, 1986).
[5]Paasivirta, op cit.

not specific, this event marked the beginnings of a different social and political atmosphere, following not only on the war but on a period when, fearing that they might become contaminated with the 'madness' of '48, the Tzar, as Grand Duke, had treated the Finns with some suspicion. When the changes began to come they took two forms, economic and political. The merchant shipping industry was revived with liberal interest-free loans for new construction, which was rapidly complete, so that Finland soon had a new fleet of merchant ships, smaller in number but of bigger capacity and better construction, more suited to the world trading conditions of the 1860s. More than that, to meet the shortage of tonnage in the immediate post-war years as early as May 1856, an order was issued which made it legal for 'peasant' vessels to pass out of the Baltic and sail to western Europe. This gave a great fillip to sailing in small vessels and for larger vessels from rural areas to compete in the world's carrying trade. Export duties on tar and timber were suspended. The completion of the Saimaa canal in 1856 opened the way for Karelia and the lake areas of eastern Finland not only to export their massive resources of forest products more readily but also to participate in world shipping, and large sea-going vessels were to be built as far inland as Joensuu. There was a general freeing of restrictions on economic activity. Finnish trade agencies were established abroad. Limited liability companies began to be established and it was proposed that Finland, and her merchant ships, should have her own flag.

Five years after the end of the war, in 1861, the Finnish Diet was recalled by the emperor for the first time since 1809. Censorship was relaxed. Political discussion became better informed and more widespread. Political and Finnish national consciousness was becoming stronger and was to continue to develop to the point at which the restriction of liberty in the 1890s under Alexander II's successors, Alexander III and Nicholas II, was to produce tensions to bursting point.

A strong Finnish culture based on the Finnish language had by then emerged. Through all the vicissitudes which followed the British assault on Finland this culture developed until the Russian Revolution of 1917 enabled Finland to break away to independence. It was to blossom forth in this country of forests, lakes, and archipelagos, of hot, brilliant summers of perpetual sunlight and dark arctic winters, in painting, music, architecture, poetry, and design of a quality unique in Europe. It was to blossom forth in the transformation of Finland from one of the economically backward countries of Europe as late as the 1930s into one of the most prosperous in the 1980s. In few societies in history can political, economic and aesthetic

developments have been so closely linked with the environment as they have been in Finland.

Bomarsund, September 1975 –
Boetheric, September 1986.

Tailpiece

'All, that's all, enough, enough
joy for this evening
song for this sunset.

We will stop, we will leave it
we will round off, we will end
for better singers
for more skilful poets.'[1]

[1]Unknown singers, recorded by Arwidsson and Crohns before 1836 and in Kemi, North Ostrobotnia, by Topelius, in 1803 or 1804, quoted in Kuusi, Bosley and Branch, *Finnish Folk Poetry: Epic* (Helsinki, 1977).

Bibliography

Notes on the Primary Sources Consulted

The source material on the Baltic campaigns of the war with Russia in 1854–6 is vast, and in many languages, including Swedish, Finnish, German, French and Russian as well as English. It is also widespread geographically. The proper understanding of the campaigns, and particularly of the very important hydrographic work of Captain Sulivan and his assistants, entailed the acquisition of first-hand knowledge of the labyrinth of islands, and rocks in which they worked, and meant that extensive fieldwork was a necessary part of the research for this study. This fieldwork involved travelling the length of the coast of Finland from the Swedish to the Russian borders, and much travel by land, sea and air in the Åland Islands during the course of many visits to the Northern Baltic.

With such massive and rich source material available we have had to be selective. Our principal sources have been in English and in Swedish. The biggest gap has been in the study of Russian language primary sources. The relative inaccessibility of material has meant that we have drawn principally on Borodkin in the Swedish translation for the Russian view of events and on Isaksson's account for the Russian version of the defence of Bomarsund. We have also found Curtiss invaluable. Very useful local material in Swedish and Finnish is to be found in the archives and other sources in the Finnish coastal towns.

The principal English language primary sources used are to be found in the Public Record Office and in the manuscript collections of the National Maritime Museum. These are listed below. In addition, we have consulted a host of secondary sources which are also listed. While we hope that we have succeeded in making some original contribution to 'Crimean' war studies, particularly, perhaps in suggesting a point of view other than that previously adopted by many historians, the extent of our debt to the researches of others is obvious.

National Maritime Museum: *Official Correspondence, Logs, Private Letters and Memoirs*
CAL/310, Captain Henry Caldwell, *Duke of Wellington*, remark book
COD/108/1, 109/1 and 2, 113/1 and 2, Admiral Sir Henry Codrington, official and private correspondence.
HAR/301–343, Sir John Ross, letters

HTN/6, Captain H Keppel, Bomarsund diary, HTN/52a, letters from the Baltic
JOD/200/1 and 2, Captain Byam Martin, Baltic Journal
LOG/N/A/28 *Arrogant*
MAS/9 Admiral T L Massie, private letter book
MEY/1 Lt Francis Meynell, illustrated log
MLN/198/7 Admiral Sir H D Chads, Memoir by an old Follower
MRF/104 (MS 75/119) Captain MacKenzie, White Sea log
NAP/1–16, Admiral Sir Charles Napier, letters to
PAR/98 and 99, 163/8, Admiral of the Fleet, Sir William Parker, official correspondence
RUSI/NM 86 (28) Captain Washington's report
SAN/T/101, The Hon Victor Montagu, letters home
WWL/1, 8, 10, and 11, Admiral Sir Baldwin Wake Walker, official correspondence

Public Record Office: *Official Correspondence and Records*
ADM/5623–5625, Admiralty correspondence, minutes, etc re- the Baltic campaign
FO 65/221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 251, and 442, FO/356/1, Correspondence with St Petersburg
FO 65/448, Correspondence with Warsaw
FO 634/3 and 4, Correspondence with Memel
FO 748/1 and 3, Correspondence with Stockholm
WO 1/386, Newcastle minute to Admiralty, correspondence between Jones and Napier
WO 6/69, General Harry D Jones, Dispatches, Baltic
WO 78 1031 (MR 193) Plans of Fortress of Bomarsund
W/C 650 (MR 189) Map showing Position of Allied forces at reduction of Bomarsund

An Alphabetical List of the Main Articles and Books Consulted
AALTONEN, Reino, trans Torvalds, Ole, *Hangö Fästning* (Hängo, 1971).
AHLSTRÖM, Al, *I Kulturens och Krimkrigets tecken* (Jacobstad, 1948).
AHLSTRÖM, Christian, *The Port of Odessa, and Finland's Shipowners, 1862–1871* (*Nautica Fennica 2*, 1979).
AIROLA, Olli and HARJUNPÄÄ, Kaisu, *Ruotsinsalmen Merilinnoitus, 1790–1855* (Kotka, 1978).
ALBION, R G, *Forests and Sea Power. The Timber Problem of the Royal Navy: 1652–1862* (Harvard, 1926).
ANDERSON, Edgar, *The Crimean War in the Baltic Area, Journal of Baltic Studies*, Vol V, No 4, Winter '74. *The Scandinavian Area and the Crimean War in the Baltic, Scandinavian Studies*, Vol 41, No 3, Aug '69.
ANDERSON, Olive, *A Liberal State at War*, (London, 1967).
ANDERSON, R C, *British and American Officers in the Russian Navy, The Mariners' Mirror*, Vol 33, No 1. *Russian Fleets in the Crimean War, The Mariners' Mirror*, Vol 32, No 3, Vol 44, No 4, Vol 45, No 2.

Annual Register, 1854, 1855.
Annual Statement of Trade of the UK, 1853–57 (London).
A Royal Correspondence, Letters of Edward VII and George V to Admiral Stephenson (London, 1938).
AUSUBEL, Herman, *John Bright – Victorian Reformer* (London, New York, Sydney, 1966).
BALTIC PILOT, Vol III, *Gulf of Finland, Gulf of Bothnia and Åland Islands*, The Hydrographer of the Navy (London, 1976).
BANCROFT, Hubert Howe, *The Works of*, vol xxxiii, *History of Alaska, 1730–1885*, (San Francisco, 1886).
BARTLETT, C J, *Great Britain and Seapower* (London, 1963).
BAXTER, J P, *The Introduction of the Ironclad Warship* (Cambridge, Mass, 1933).
BENSON, A C and Viscount ESHER, eds, *The Letters of Queen Victoria* : 3 vols, (London, 1907).
BEST, Geoffrey, *Mid-Victorian Britain, 1851–70* (London, 1971).
BIDDLECOMBE, Sir George, *The Art of Rigging* (London, 1848). *Autobiography* (London, 1878). *Steam Fleet Tactics, 1857* (London, 1857).
BJÖRKLUND, Anders, *Splitvedjäntor* (Stockholm, 1977).
BONNER-SMITH, D and DEWAR, A C, eds, *Russian War 1854, Baltic and Black Sea*, Vol LXXXIII, Navy Records Society, 1943.
BONNER-SMITH, D, ed, *Russian War, 1855, Official Correspondence*, Navy Records Society, 1944.
BONNIAS, D F *The War in the Gulf of Finland in the Year 1854* (Göteborg, 1854).
BORODKIN, Major-General M, *Kriget vid Finlands Kuster, 1854–1855*, (Helsinki, 1905).
BOSTRÖM, Birger, *Hangö udd forntida hamnar och hällristningar* (Hangö, 1968).
BRANDES, Dr George, trans EASTMAN, Samuel C, *Impressions of Russia* (London, 1889).
BRIGGS, Asa, *The Age of Improvement* (London, 1959).
BROCK, P W, *Lord Cochrane's Secret Plans, Mariners' Mirror*, Vol 16, No 2, Apr 1930.
BURN, W L *The Age of Equipoise* (London, 1964).
BURNEY, Staff-Cmdr C *The Boy's Manual of Seamanship and Gunnery* (London, 1871).
BYELAVENETS, P I, *On the Necessity for a Navy and the Significance of the Navy in the History of Russia* (St Petersburg, 1909).
CALTHORPE, Lt-Col Somerset J Gough, *Cadogan's Crimea* (London, no date).
CARLGREN, Wilhelm M, *The Emergence of Sweden's Policy of Neutrality*, Revue Internationale d'Histoire Militaire, No 57. (Paris, 1984).
CECIL, Algernon, *Queen Victoria and her Prime Ministers* (London, 1953).
CHADS, Sir Henry Ducie, *Memoir of, by an old Follower* (Privately printed, Portsea, 1869).
CHAMBER'S *Russian War* (ed. London, 1856).
CHAPMAN, Fredrik Henrik AF, *Architectura Navalis Mercatoria* (Stockholm, 1768).

CHESNEY, Kellow, *A Crimean War Reader* (London, 1960).
CHRISTIANSEN, Eric, *The Northern Crusades* (London, 1980).
CLOWES, Sir William Laird, *The Royal Navy – a history* (London, 1901).
COLOMB, Vice Admiral P H *Memoirs of Admiral the Rt Hon Sir Astley Cooper Key* (London, 1898).
CONACHER, J B, *The Aberdeen Coalition* (Cambridge, 1968).
CORLETT, E C B, *The Steamship Great Britain*, Royal Institution of Naval Architects, Spring 1971, No 1.
COTSELL, George, *A Treatise on Ships' Anchors*, (London, 1856).
CRANKSHAW, Edward, *Bismarck*, (London, 1981). *The Shadow of the Winter Palace* (London, 1976).
CUNNINGHAM, H D P, *On the rig and sails of Steam Ships of War*, 3rd Session of Institution of Naval Architects, March, 1862.
CURTISS, John Shelton, *Russia's Crimean War*, (North Carolina, 1979).
DANA, Richard Henry, *Seaman's Manual* (London, 1855).
DARDEL, Fritz Ludvig von, *Familien Tutings Lustresa till Bomarsund*, (Stockholm, 1854).
DAVIS, Ralph, *Rise of the English Shipping Industry in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, (London, 1962).
Dialogue between us and the English parley-boat, 1855, Jacobstads Museum archive.
Dictionary of National Biography
DODD, C, *Pictorial History of the Russian War*, (London, 1856).
DON, Dr William Gerard, *Reminiscences of the Baltic Fleet of 1855*, (Privately printed, Brechin, 1894).
DONNER, Professor Otto, *Från Krimkrigets tid, Vasa Tidning*, 1898, No 267.
DOUGLAS, Sir George and RAMSAY, Sir George Dalhousie, eds *The Panmure Papers*, 2 vols (London, 1908).
DOUGLAS, General Sir Howard, *Naval Gunnery, 1851* (London). *Naval Gunnery, 1855. Naval Gunnery, 1860.*
DREIJER, Matts, *Det åländska folkets historia I: I Från stenåldern till Gustav Vasa* (Mariehamn, 1979). *Glimpses of Åland History* (Mariehamn, 1968).
EARDLEY-WILMOT, RN, Capt S, *Life of Vice-Admiral Edmund, Lord Lyons 1790–1858*, (London, 1898).
EARP, G Butler, *A History of the Baltic Campaign of 1854*, (London, 1857).
EDWARDES, Michael, *Playing the Great Game* (London, 1975).
ELSTOB, Eric, *Sweden*, (London, 1979).
ERLANDSSON and EKLUND, *Engelska Tiden, Bunge Socken genom Tiderna*, (Visby, 1951).
FAVE, Napoleon, *Etudes sur Artillerie*, Vol V, (Paris, 1871).
FFRENCH BLAKE, R L V *The Crimean War* (London, 1971).
Finland's Skepps-kalender för år 1856
Finland's Skepps-kalender för år 1858
FITZROY, William Henry, 6th Duke of Grafton, *Letters from the Baltic to Lord Frederick Fitzroy, 1854* (Suffolk County Archives, HA 513/11/11–13).
Fornminnesinventering Saltvik, Planeringsrådet Museibyrån (Mariehamn, 1979).

FRIENDLY, Alfred, *Beaufort of the Admiralty* (London, 1977).
FROBERG, Eric, *Saga och Sägen från Fårö* (Stockholm, Visby, 1949).
FULFORD, Roger & STRACHEY, Lytton, eds *The Greville Memoirs*, (London, 1938).
FURUHJELM, Col K, *War Journal* (Coll Martin Isaksson).
Fästningen sprängdes sen Oscar I tackat nej till att besätta Åland Gotlands Tidningar, 12 Jan 1978.
GALT, Edwin, *The Camp and the Cutter or A cruise to the Crimea*, (London, 1856).
GAVIN, Catherine, *The Fortress* (London, 1964).
GELLNER, Ernest, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford, 1983).
GENTLEMAN's MAGAZINE, 1854–56.
GIFFARD, Admiral Sir George, *Reminiscences of a Naval Officer*, (Privately Printed, Exeter, 1892).
GONCHAROV, Ivan, *The Voyage of the Frigate* Pallada, ed & translated by WILSON, N W, (London, 1965).
GOTLANDS ALLEHANDA, 5 Sept 1980.
Gradual Increase of Russia, The (Gentleman's Magazine, 1854).
GRAHAM, Professor G S, *The Transition from Paddle-wheel to Screw-propeller* (Mariners' Mirror, Vol 44, No 1).
GRANÖ, Olavi, *Die Finnische Segelschiffahrt*, Fennia 81, No 2 (Helsinki, 1957).
GREENHILL, Basil and HACKMAN, John, *The Grain Races – The Baltic Background* (London, 1986). *The Life and Death of the Merchant Sailing Ship, 1815–1965*, (London, 1980) and ALLINGTON, Peter, *The SS Great Britain as the World's First Six-Master Schooner, Maritime Wales* No 9.
GRÖNSTRAND, Lars, Åländska skeppsporträtt i ord och bild, (Mariehamn, 1978). *Finnish Sailing Vessels – The Salama of Gamla Karleby*, Meddelanden Från Sjöhistoriska Museet vid Åbo Akademi, No 9.
Haapasaari – menneisyys ja nykypäivä – Julkaisutoimikunta (Haapasaari, 1957).
HACKMAN, John, *Shipowner, Estate and Vessels, Rural Community Navigation in Vårdö, 1868–1918*, (Licentiate thesis, 1981).
HACKMANSKA *arkiv*: English correspondence, B.82, 20.7.53–31.12.54. B.83, 1.1.55–3.6.56. (Åbo Akademius Bibliotek).
HALEVY, Elie, *History of the English people in the 19th century* (London, 1947).
HALLDIN, Gustaf, *Svenskt Skeppsbyggeri* (Malmö, 1963).
HALSTEAD, E P, *The Screw-Fleet of the Navy* (London, 1850).
HAMMARSTRÖM, Docent Ingrid, *Anglo-Swedish Economic Relations and the Crisis of 1857, Scandinavian Economic History Review*, Vol x, 1962.
HANSARD, *3rd Series*, 1850–56.
HAUTALA, Kustaa, *Finnish Tar Trade, Annales Academiae Fennicae*, 1963.
HAY, W J, *On the Protection of Iron Ships from Oxidation and Fouling*, 4th Session of the Institute of Naval Architects, March 1963.
HELLSTEN, Ruben, *Ett Bomarsundsminne i England*, Ålands Sjöfart, No 4, 1957.
HEYECK, T W, *The Transformation of Intellectual Life in Victorian England* (London and Canberra, 1982).
HIBBERT, Christopher, *The Destruction of Lord Raglan* (London, 1961).

HIRN, Marta, *Från Bomarsund till Sveaborg* (Helsingfors, 1956).
HOBSBAWM, EJ, *Industry and Empire* (London, 1968).
HOETZSCH, Otto, *The Evolution of Russia* (London, 1966).
HOUGHTON, Walter E., *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830–1870* (New Haven, Conn, London, 1957).
HUGHES, The Rev R E, *Two Summer Cruises with the Baltic Fleet in 1854–55* (London, 1855).
HUNT's *Yachting Magazine* (London, 1856).
HÖJER, *Svensk utrikespolitik från Carl XIV Johan till Oscar II, Svensk Tidskrift*, 1942: 7.
Ilmarinen, 17th June, 1854.
Illustrated London News, 1854–1856.
IRONMONGER, Lucille, *Lord Aberdeen* (London, 1978).
ISAKSSON, Martin, *Kring Bomarsund* (Helsinki, 1981).
JACKSON, J Hampden, *Estonia* (London, 1941).
JACKSON, Melvin H and de BEER, Charles, *Eighteenth Century Gunfounding* (London, 1973).
JACOBSTAD during the Crimean War and Jacobstad in the 1850s, from *Utveckling i Samverkan* (Jacobstad, 1956–1981).
JAMES, Robert Rhodes, *Albert, Prince Consort* (London, 1983).
JAMESON, William, *The Fleet that Jack Built* (London, 1962).
JANE, Fred T *The Imperial Russian Navy* (London, 1899).
JUTIKKALA, Eino with PIRINEN, Kauko, trans SJÖBLOM, Paul, *A History of Finland* (London, 1979).
KÅHRE, Georg, *Den Åländska Segelsjöfartens Historia*, (Helsingfors, 1940). *Under Gustav Eriksons Flagga* (Mariehamn, 1948) trans MACKAY, Louis, ed GREENHILL, Basil, *The Last Tall Ships* (London, 1978).
KAUKIAINEN, Yrjö, *Heydays of Finnish Shipping*, (Lecture). *Finland's Peasant Seafarers and Stockholm, Scandinavian Economic History Review*, Vol XIX, No 2, 1971. *The Transition from Sail to Steam in Finnish Shipping, Scandinavian Economic History Review*, Vol XXVIII, No 2, 1980.
KELLY, Mrs Tom, *From the Fleet in the 50s* (London, 1902).
KENNEDY, P M, *The rise and fall of British naval mastery*. (London, 1978).
KENT, H S K, *War and Trade in Northern Seas* (Cambridge, 1973).
KEPPEL, Admiral of the Fleet, The Hon Sir Henry, *A Sailor's Life under Four Sovereigns*, 3 vols (London, 1899).
KINGLAKE, A W, *Invasion of the Crimea*, 9 vols (London, 1877–1888).
KIPPING, Robert, *Rudimentary Treatise on Masting, Mast-making and Rigging of Ships* (London, 1888).
KIRBY, W F, trans *Kalevala: The Land of Heroes* (London, Dover, NH, 1985).
KIVI, Aleksis, trans MATSON, Alex, *Seven Brothers* (Helsinki, 1959).
KLINGE, Matti, trans MITCHELL, David, *A Brief History of Finland* (Keuruu, 1981).
KOCHAN, Lionel and ABRAHAM, Richard, *The Making of Modern Russia* (London, 1962).

KRISTINESTAD, Documents, Coll Christer Norrvik. Documents in Kristinestad Town Hall.
Kulturmiljöinventering Lemland – Museibyrån Planeringsrådet (Mariehamn, 1980).
Kulturmiljöinventering Vårdö – Museibyrån Planeringsrådet (Mariehamn, 1980).
KUUSI, Matti, BOSLEY, Keith and BRANCH, Michael, ed & trans. *Finnish Folk Poetry: Epic*. (Helsinki, London, Montreal, 1977).
LAMBERT, Andrew, *Battleships in Transition – The Creation of the Steam Battlefleet, 1815–60* (London, 1984).
LAPPALAINEN, Pekka, *J V Snellman* (Kuopio, 1982).
LARDNER, Dionysius, *The Electric Telegraph popularised* (London, 1860).
Leisure Hour, 1854.
LEVIEN, Michael, ed *The Cree Journals* (Exeter, 1981).
LEWIS, Michael, *The Navy in Transition, 1814–64* (London, 1965).
LILLE, Sten and GRÖNSTRAND, Lars, *The Finnish Deep-Water Sailers*, (Lieto, 1979).
LINDSAY, W S, *Our Navigation and Mercantile Marine Laws* (London, 1852).
LIPSON, E, *Europe in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1948).
LLOYD, Christopher, *Lord Cochrane* (London, New York, 1947). *Dundonald's Crimean War Plans, Mariners' Mirror*, Vol 32, No 3.
Log of the Proceedings of HMS Leopard *bearing the flag of Rear-Admiral Plumridge March 11th–August 22nd, 1854*, Coll Sverre Scott.
LÖNNROT, Elias, Compiled by, trans MAGOUN, F P, *The Kalevala*, (Cambridge, Mass and London, 1963).
LUNDEBERG, Philip K, *Samuel Colt's Submarine Battery, The Secret and the Enigma*, Smithsonian Institution, 1974.
LUSCOME, Ellen, *Myrtles and Aloes, A Salcombe Sketchbook* (Kingsbridge and London, 1861).
LUUKKO, Armas, *Peasant Shipping as a Profitable Trade, Scandinavian Economic History Review*, Vol XIX, No 1, 1971.
MacMUNN, Sir George, *The Crimea in Perspective* (London, 1935).
McMURRAY, Campbell, *Old Order, New Thing* (London, 1972). *Working Men Who Got Wet* (St John's, 1980).
MALM Papers, The, Åbo Akademius Bibliotek.
MARCOMBE, David, *The Victorian Sailor* (London, 1985).
MARTIN, Vice-Admiral W F, *Observations on Steam Tactics and Rowing*. (Privately circulated, London, 1858).
MARTINAZZOLI, Rector Kerstin, *Affairen vid Halkokari, Osterbottningen*, (No 203, 5th Sept 1970).
MASON, Michael, GREENHILL, Basil and CRAIG, Robin, *The British Seafarer* (London, 1980).
MATZ, Edvard och Erling, *Sällsamheter på Åland* (Kristianstad, 1981).
MEAD, W R *En Ort Att Vallfårda Till, Finsk Tidskrift*, h.5, 1955. *Finland* (London, 1968). *Finland and the Landfall of British Authority, The Norseman*, Vol XVI, No 1, 1958. *Finland, a reassessment, Geography*, Vol 68, Part 1, Jan 1983. *Hundra År Efteråt, Finsk Tidskrift*, h.3, 1954. *John Good in Österbotten, Finsk Tidskrift*, CL,

1951. *The Conquest of Finland*, *The Norseman*, Vol IX, Nos 1 & 2, 1951. *The Discovery of Britain by the Finns*, *The Norseman*, Vol VIII, Nos 3 & 4. *The Discovery of Finland by the British*, *The Norseman*, with JAATINEN, S H, *The Åland Islands* (London, 1975).

MEE, Arthur, *The King's England, Kent.* (London, 1936).

MONTAGU, Rear Admiral The Hon Victor A, *A Middy's Recollections, 1853–1860*, (London, 1898).

MORLEY, John, *The Life of Richard Cobden* (London, 1879).

MURRAY, Robert, *Rudimentary Treatise on Marine Engines* (London, 1852).

MÖLLER, Dr Sylvi, *Gamlakarleby Stads Historia*, Del 3.

NALDER, Major-General R F H, *The Royal Corps of Signals* (London, 1958).

NARES, Vice-Admiral Sir George S, *Seamanship* (Portsmouth, 1897).

NICKELS, Sylvie, KALLAS, Hillar and FRIEDMAN, Philippa, ed *Finland, An Introduction* (London, 1973).

NIKULA, Oscar, *Sveaborg en Vägvisare* (Helsinki, 1939).

NOLAN, E H *The Illustrated History of the War against Russia*, 2 vols (London, 1857).

NORDLUND, K I, *Blad ur Närpes Historia, Part III* (Vasa, 1931).

NYMAN, Valdemar, *Vargata, en postvägsby*, Åländsk Odling: VI (Mariehamn, 1973). *Det åländska folkets historia*, I: 2 *Ålands medeltida kyrkokonst* (Mariehamn, 1980).

Några anteckningar från Bomarsunds Belägring, 1854: Några anteckningar gjorda under fångenskapen i Frankrike, 1854–55. A Fragment.

O'BYRNE, Robert, *Naval Annual for 1855*, (London, 1855).

OKEY, Robin, *Eastern Europe, 1740–1985* (London, 1982).

OLSON, Keith W, *Between East and West*, *The Wilson Quarterly*, Autumn 1986 (Washington, 1986).

OSBON, G A, *Paddlewheel Fighting Ships of the Royal Navy*, *Mariners' Mirror*, Vol 68, No 4.

OTWAY, Rt Hon Sir Arthur, Bart, ed. *Autobiography and journals of Admiral Lord Clarence E Paget, GCB*, (London, 1896).

Österbottens Museet, Vasa: *1855 Map*.

PAASIKIVI, Juhani, *A Crimean appendix*, *British Medical Journal*, 22 Jan 1977.

PAASIVIRTA, Juhani, trans UPTON, Anthony F and Sirkka R, *Finland and Europe* (London, 1981).

PADFIELD, Peter, *Guns at Sea* (London, 1973).

PAINE, Jeff, *The Lancaster Shell Gun*, *The Canadian Journal of Arms Collecting*, Vol 16, No 3.

PALMER, Alan, *The Banner of Battle* (London, 1987).

PAPP, David, *Åländsk allmogeseglation* (Stockholm, 1977). *Åländsk husbehovsseglation*, *Historia bland Öar och Skär*, *Historicus Skriftserie*, vol VI. *Öislar, Om estänningarnas byteshandel på Gotland*, *Annales Societatis Litterarum Estonicae in Svecia*, IX 1980–84 (Stockholm, 1985).

PARRY, E Jones, ed *Correspondence of Lord Aberdeen and Princess Lieven, 1832–1854*, Vol II, Camden Society Vol LXII, 1939.

PEAKE, James, *Rudiments of Naval Architecture* (London, 1851).

PENN, Geoffrey, *Up Funnel, Down Screw!* (London, 1955).

PHILLIMORE, Admiral Sir Augustus, *Life of Admiral of the Fleet Sir William Parker, Bart*, 3 vols (London, 1876–80).

POHJANPALO, Jorma, *Suomen Kauppamerenkulku ja erityisesti linjaliikenteen osuus siinä* (Helsinki, 1949).

PUNTILA, L A trans MILLER, David, *The Political History of Finland, 1809–1966*, (Helsinki, 1975).

PURDY, John, Hydrographer, *Piloting Directions for the Gulf of Finland* (London, 1821).

RANCKEN, A W, *Sveaborg – Its genesis and destiny* (Helsinki, 1933).

von RAUCH, Georg, trans ONN, Gerald *The Baltic States* (London, 1974).

REICH, Captain C, *Anmärkningar rid Bomarsunds intagande*, *Royal Academy of Military Science – Proceedings 1855* – Vol 11.

REIN, Gabriel, *Statistik techning av Storfurstendimet Finland* (Helsingfors, 1853).

Results of Trials made in HM Screw Ships and Vessels, Admiralty 1861.

RIDLEY, Jasper, *Lord Palmerston* (London, 1970).

RIGBY, Elizabeth (Lady Eastlake) *Letters from the Shores of the Baltic*, 2 vols (London, 1842).

RITCHIE, Rear-Admiral G S, *The Admiralty Chart* (London, Sydney, Toronto, 1967).

ROBERTSON, Fredrick Leslie, *The Evolution of Naval Armament* (London, 1968).

ROBINSON, Cdr R S, RN, *The Nautical Steam Engine Explained . . . for the Use of Officers of the Navy, etc* (London, 1839).

RODGER, N A M *New Aspects of Naval History, British Naval Thought and Naval Policy, 1820–1890. Strategic Thought in an Era of Technological Change* (Annapolis, 1981). *The Wooden World, An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (London, 1986).

ROLAND, Alex, *Underwater Warfare in the Age of Sail* (Indiana, 1977).

ROYAL SOCIETY OF ARTS, *Transactions*, Vol 38 (1820).

ROYER, Alfred, *The English Prisoners in Russia* (London, 1854).

RUNEBERG, Carl Michael, *Finland under Orientaliska Kriget* (Helsingfors).

Russian/Finland Whaling Company, 1850–65, Summary of article in *Izvestiya Moskovskago* (Moscow, 1914).

RÖHR, Albert, *Wilhelm Bauer, Ein Erfinderschicksal* (Deutsches Museum, 1975).

RÜMALA, Erkki, *Saimaa ja Salama* (Savonlinna, 1978).

SAMAROV, Lt-Col A A and PETROV, Major F A, ed *Razvitie Minnogo oruzhiya v russkom flote*, Dokumenty (Moscow 1951).

SANDERS, L C *Lord Melbourne's Papers* (London, 1889).

von SCHWEINITZ, *The Expedition against the Åland Islands in 1854*, a lecture to the Military Association, Berlin, Feb, 1855, (Privately published, Vienna, Paris, 1855).

SCOFFERN, J, *Projectile Weapons of War and Explosive Compounds* (London, 1858).

SCOTT, Charles Henry, *The Baltic, the Black Sea and the Crimea* (London, 1854).

SCOTT, Sverre, *Bomarsunds Fästning* (Stockholm, 1974).

SEAWARD, Samuel, *Memoir on the Practicability of Shortening the Duration of Voyages by the Adaption of Auxiliary Steam Power to Sailing Vessels*, *Journal of Institute of Civil Engineers*, Feb 1841.

SETON-WATSON, Hugh, *Nations and States* (London, 1977).
SEYMOUR, H D *Russia on the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov* (London, 1855).
SITWELL, Edith, *Victoria of England* (London, 1936).
SJÖBLOM, Walter, *Kristinestads Historia* (Kristinestad 1915).
SMYTH, Brigadier The Rt Hon Sir John, *The Story of the VC* (London, no date).
SOMERVELL, D C, *English Thought in the 19th Century* (London, 1929).
SPENCER, Arthur, *Gotland* (London, 1974).
STEVENS, Robert White, *On the Stowage of Ships and Their Cargoes* (London, 1869).
STEWART, Captain the Hon Keith, *Private Journal kept on board HMS* Termagant & *HMS* Nankin, (Coll Ålandsbanken).
STRANGE, Albert, *An Old-Time Cruiser, The Yachting Monthly*, 1919.
SULIVAN, Captain B J, *Letter from*, Coll G P Tucker.
SULIVAN, Henry Norton, ed *The Life and Letters of Admiral Sir B J Sulivan, KCB, 1810–90* (London, 1896).
SÖDERHJELM, J O, *Démilitarisation et Neutralisation des Iles d'Aland en 1856 et 1921* (Helsinki, no date).
Tables shewing the trade of the UK with different foreign countries and British possessions, in each of ten years from 1841 to 1850. (London, 1855).
TALVIO, Paavo, *The Sveaborg (Viapori) Fortress and its artillery, 1808–1855, Sotahistoriallin en seura ja sotamuseo vuosikirja*, Vol 10, 1978.
TAYLOR, R, *Manning the Royal Navy, The Reform of the Recruiting System, 1852–1862. The Mariners' Mirror*, Vol 44, No 4.
THEORELL, Emil, *Diary*. Coll Martin Isaksson.
THOMSON, David, *England in the 19th century*. (London, 1950).
Times, The, 1854–1856.
TOLS, Robert W, *The Russian Rockefellers*, (Hoover Institution Press, no date).
TREUE, Dr, *Der Krimkrieg* (Göttingen, 1954).
TURNBULL, Laurence, *The Electro-Magnetic Telegraph* (Philadelphia, 1853).
United Service Magazine, 1854–5.
URBAN, William, *The Baltic Crusade*, (Illinois, 1961).
VULLIAMY, C E, *The Crimea* (London, 1939).
WALLACE, D Mackenzie, *Russia*, 2 vols (London, Paris & New York, 1877).
WARD, J T, *Sir James Graham* (London, Melbourne, Toronto, New York, 1967).
WARNER, Oliver, *Marshal Mannerheim and the Finns* (London, 1967). *The Sea and the Sword, The Baltic 1630–1945* (London, 1965).
WEBB, R K, *Modern England: From the 18th century to the present* (London 1969).
WEST, The Rt Hon Sir Algernon, *Memoir of Sir Henry Keppel, GCB, Admiral of the Fleet* (London, 1905).
WESTWOOD, J N, *Endurance and Endeavour, Russian History 1812–1980* (Oxford, 1973).
Who's Who, 1911.
WIENER, Martin J. *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit 1850–1980* (Cambridge, 1981).
WIKSTRÖM, Paul, JACOBSSON, Ole, LINDQVIST, Anders G, TOIVANEN, Pekka and WISTBACKA, Benny, *Utveckling i samverkan* (Jacobstad, 1981).

WILÉN, Broge, *Postfärderna över Ålands hav* (Mariehamn, 1975).
WILLIAMS, H Noel, *The Life and Letters of Admiral Sir Charles Napier*, KCB (London, 1917).
WILSON, Philip Whitwell, ed, *The Greville Diary*, 2 vols (London, 1927).
WILSON, William A, *Folklore and Nationalism in Modern Finland*, (Bloomington & London, 1976).
WINTON, John, *The high price of valour, Illustrated London News*, Sept 1979.
WOODHAM-SMITH, Cecil, *Florence Nightingale* (London, 1952). *Queen Victoria* (London, 1972). *The Reason Why* (London, 1953).
WOODWARD, David, *The Russians at Sea* (London, 1965).
YOUNG, G M *Victorian England: Portrait of an age* (London, 1936).

INDEX

Following the Swedish language practice, words beginning with the Swedish letters Å, Ä and Ö, are placed in that order, after Z.

Aaltonen, Colonel Reino, 53, 203n, 204, 205n
Aberdeen, Lord, 63–4, 103–4, 112, 119, 121, 150, 157, 194, 198, 269, 273, 275, 294, 304
Abrahamsholm, 333
Acre, bombardment of, 97, 132
Adrianople, Treaty of, 21
Aguilas, 153
Ahlström, Al, 182n, 316n, 317n, 318n
Albemarle, Lord, 75, 91
Albert, Prince, 40, 62, 80, 88
Alexander I, Emperor, 3–5, 13–15, 25, 28–9, 48; as Grand Duke of Finland, 15–16
Alexander II, 313, 330, 341–3
Alexander III, 343
Alexander, fort, 58
Algiers, bombardment of, 66; fall of, 21
Alholmen, 318
Alliance, Treaty of, 119, 339
Alma, battle of, 24, 268, 272
Almanac of the St Petersburg Academy of Sciences, 1854, 267
American Historical Review, 119n
Amsterdam, 166
Andal, 205
Anderson, Edgar, 45; –, Olive, 158n, 160n
Anglesey, Lord, 91, 127
Annual Register, 193
Antwerp, 162, 166
Arabian coins, 8
Archangel, 59
Architectura Navalis Mercatoria, 327
Argyll, Duke of, 273
Arkaf, N A, 52–3
Arsenale, 326
Athens, 54
Athorpe, Mr, 187
Austria, 13, 39–40, 43, 46, 55, 98; neutrality of, 122, 240; proposes Peace terms, 45, 340–1; puts pressure on Russia, 120
Austro/Hungarian Empire, 122
Azov, Sea of, 53
Baird steam engine, 56
Bakholm (Vallisaari), 328
Balaclava, battle of, 24, 273; – harbour, 154, 274
Baltic Port (Paldiski), 34, 133
Bamböle Vik, 170
Bank, Dr, 146
Baranovsky, Professor S, 179
Barbary pirates, 20; – States, 12
Barber, Ord Seaman Thomas, 266
Baring, Sir Francis, 104
Bartlett, C J, 65, 88n
Barösund, 193, 206, 211–13, 223, 239–40, 287, 297–8
Bauer, Wilhelm, 62
Baxter, J A, 42n
Beaufort, Capt Sir Francis, 31, 83, 145
Beckbruk shoal, 188
Belgium, 157
Benson, A C, 304n, 340n
Berg, Governor General, 329
Bergman, Ingmar, 288
Bergö, 231
Berkeley, Rear-Admiral, 105, 113–16, 199, 249, 273, 275
Biddlecombe, George, Master of the Fleet, 204, 206, 211, 215, 251, 282, 291
Björneborg (Pori), 11, 162, 175
Black Sea Fleet, Russian, 47–50, 52–4, 110, 120
Blackwell, 65
blockade, orders to set up, 117–18, in Baltic, 122, 137, 152–170
Bodisco, Major-General, 37, 57, 224–5, 245–6, 255–6, 258–9, 267
Boharsef, battle of, 97
Boman, Matts, 170
Bomansson, Dr K A, 243
Bomarsund, 136–7, 175, 197, 199, 203, 206, 210, 212, 222, 299; building of, 24–38, 44, 324; channels to, 230–5, 290, 301; fall of, 236–68, 271, 273, 281, 296, 303; first bombardment of, 223–5, 227; Russians expect attack on, 203; visited by Washington, 57

Bomar Sound, the, 35, 57
Bombay, 337
Bonnias, D F, 148n
Boreal Forest, 6
Borenius, A A, xvii
Borgå (Porvoo), 15, 17, 124, 126, 308
Bornholm, 136–7, 139–40
Borodino, battle of, 202
Borodkin, Major-General M, 52, 53n, 56, 124, 126, 179, 224–5, 228, 261n, 265n, 312–13, 315, 327–9, 333–5
Borovkovich, Dr, 225
Bosley, Keith, xvii, 345n
Bottniska Stapelvånget, 11
Boyd, Commander, 216, 222
Boxöfjärden, 231
Brahestad (Raahe), 162, 166, 171, 176–81, 185–6, 188, 192–3, 208, 319–20
Branch, Professor Michael, xvii, 345n
Bremen, 155, 196
Brierly, Sir Oswald, 44, 215–16, 241–2, 281
Bristol, 65, 71, 162
Broman, Mr, 151
Brooke, Rajah, 139
Brunel, Isambard Kingdom, 73
Brändö, 229
Bränklint ('C' or Tzee) tower, 246, 251, 255–6, 281
Brännerіet, 188
Buchanan, Mr, 131, 142
Buckle, Capt Claud, 171, 174, 223–4, 233, 242
Bug, river, 305
Bulgaria, 120
Bunge, 288
Burma War, first, 66
Burton, Capt James, 96; –, Lieut, 186
Bussö, 230–2; -fjärd, 232
Byelavenets, P I, 48n
Byng, Admiral, 140
Bythesea, VC, Lieut, 254–5
Båthusvik, 231

Cadiz, 166
Calais, 242, 267
Caldwell, Capt Henry, 159
Canrobert, General, 339
Cape St Vincent, battle of, 96
Carlgren, Wilhelm, 149n
Carmichael, J W, 309–10, 334–5
Carrington, Lieut, 187
Caspian Sea, 54
Catherine the Great, 13, 34, 47
Cattegatt, *see Kattegat*
Chads, Rear-Admiral Sir Henry, 102, 114, 129, 145, 216, 241, 249, 252–3
Chamber's *Russian War*, 33
Chapman, Fredrik Henrik af, 327
Chatelain, Lieut, 228, 246, 259
Chatham, 110
Chichester, 266
Chydenius, Anders, 11
Civil Engineers, Institute of, 69
Civil War, American, 161
Clarence, HRH the Duke of, 66
Clarendon, Earl of, 117, 122, 131, 142
Clanricarde, Lord, 32
Clyde, river, 65
Coastguards at sea, 88, 114, 128
Cochrane, Capt, 196, 215, 228
Cochrane's secret weapon, *see Dundonald, Lord*
Codrington, Admiral Sir Edward, 132
Codrington, Capt Henry, 75, 90–1, 132, 141, 167, 172, 199, 217, 221–2, 275–7, 285–7, 291–3, 314, 340
Coffin, Capt, 75
Colomb, Vice-Admiral P H, 75n, 80n
Conacher, J B, 64, 100n, 101n, 103n, 274
Concert of Europe, 40
Conrad, Joseph, 95
Constantine, fort, 59; –, Grand Duke, 54, 57–8, C-in-C Baltic Fleet, 122; admires Hall, 210
Constantinople, 54, 101, 118, 122
Cook, Capt James, 82
Cooper, Miss, 320
Copenhagen, 132, 138, 162
Corfu, 162
Cork, 110
Corry, Rear-Admiral, 102, 108, 141, 197, 200, 206, 211, 214
Cotsell, G, 300n
Courland, 34
Cowell, Fanny, 253; –, Lieut, 220
Cox, Heisch & Co, 180
Craig, Robin, 86n
Crankshaw, Edward, 33, 46
Crawford, Capt, 49–50
Crimea, annexation of, 4; British force in, 44–5, 268–9, 271–4, 294–5, 304–5, 329, 338–9
Crimean War, declaration of, 47, 118–19, 155; merchant ship of – period, 7; origins of, 39–46
Cronstadt, *see Kronstadt*
Crown, Admiral, 55
Cumming, Capt Arthur, 207–8
Curtiss, John Shelton, 24n, 44, 45n, 119n, 122

Dagerort, 141, 144
Dago Island, 135, 204, 322
Dahlin, 188
Dahlsbruk foundry, 123
Dahlström, C M, 152
Dana, R H, 282
Daniloff, 2nd Lieut, 205
Danube, 101, 120, 122, 147
Danzig, *see Gdańsk*
Dardanelles, the, 43, 118–20
Dardel, Fritz von, 260
Darwin, Charles, 83
Daugava, river, 6
de Tolly, General Barclay, 24
Degerby, 57, 229–30, 235, 242, 323
Delane, John T, 99, 271–2
Delet Teili, 25, 254
Dell's gunpowder cases, 81
Demerara, 162

Denmark, 3, 4, 6, 20, 39, 56, 118, 132–3, 166; king of, 138
Deptford, Royal dockyard, 66
Devonport, Royal dockyard, 72, 114, 132, 337
Diet, Swedish, 10, 11, 13, 15, 325
d'Hilliers, General Achille Baraguay, 237–8, 243, 249, 253, 262, 267, 269–70
Djergatschoff, Major, 209
Dneiper river, 305
Don, Dr William, 146n, 307, 330, 336–7
Donner, Commercial Counsellor, 188
Dresser & Co., Henry, 180
Drottningberg, 205
Dufferin, Lord, 256
Dugdale, Admiral, 55
Duncan, Dr, 186
Dundas, Admiral J W D, 99; –, Rear-Admiral Sir Richard Saunders, CB, 90, 168, 295–6, 319, 323, 336
Dundonald, Lord, 102–3, 229
Durham, Lord, 31, 34, 50–1

Eardley-Wilmot, S, 45, 120n, 121n, 305n
Earp, G Butler, 111n, 114, 116n, 144, 147, 192, 208
East India Company, 75, 91, 208
East Looe, 288
Eckerö, 25, 170
Edward VII, 75, 139n, 213n
Ehrensvärd, Augustin, 326–7
Ekenäs, (Tammisaari), 201, 208–10, 223
Elgsnabben, *see Älvsnabben*
Ellenborough, Lord, 111
Elmgren, an eyewitness, 334
Elphinstone, Admiral, 55
Elsinore, 133, 152, 267
Engel, G L, 17
Esher, Viscount, 304n, 340n
Estonia, 5, 8, 20, 46, 118, 134, 137, 150, 198, 204, 297, 313, 316, 318, 320–3
Euston, Lord, 213, 215–6, 257
Euxine, the, 101
Evans, Mr, 204
Excelmans, Capt, 252

Falkland Islands, 83, 111
Falmouth, 171
Farö, 174, 239–40; – Sound, 237, 288, 298
Finby, 247, 265; -vik, 25
Finland, Bank of, 15, 334; – Grand Duchy of, 13, 16, 17, 19; Old, *see Karelia*
Finland's Skepps-Kalender, 162, 165–6, 319
Finnish Affairs Committee, 16; – Diet, 343; – National Defence Battalions, 124, 314
Finno-Ugrian languages, 8, 9
Finströms Bergö, 170
Fitzroy, Commander, 83; –, Lord Frederick, 215n
Fjälskär, 266
flags of truce, 314–17
Flaka vik, 223
'Flashman', 336
Flisö, 229
floating batteries, 301, 303–6, 330, 333, 339
Forsberg, A, 188
Fraser, George McDonald, 336
Fredrikshamn, (Hamina), 126; –, Treaty of, 13, 15, 27
French, invasion scare, 56, 109; –, threat to Britain, 41, 84, 110, 293–4
Fulford, Roger, 104n
Furuhjelm, Lt Colonel, 225, 245–6, 248, 255, 265
Furusund, 185
Fyn, 6
Fårö, 287, 293; – Sound, 135, 173, 240–1, 243, 287
Färjsund, 25
Föglö, 229–30, 242; -fjärden, 231

Gadelli, Lieut, 264
Galbraith, Arthur L, 210
Gallipoli, 120
Galt, Edwin, 52, 266n, 340
Gamla Karleby (Kokkola), 11, 12, 160, 165, 177, 185–93, 210, 310, 312, 342
Garbutt & Son, Robert, 164–5
Gdańsk, (Danzig), 3, 32, 259
Genoa, 162
Gentleman's Magazine, 32
George V, King, 139n, 213n
Geta, 170
Gibson, Captain, 288n; Mr –, MP, 193
Giffard, Captain George, 76–7, 90–1, 106–8, 137–8, 130, 135, 140, 171–7, 183, 185, 190, 196–7, 228, 251–2, 291, 293; –, Captain Henry Wells, 179; –, Osbern, 179n
Glasgow, 75
Glasse, Captain Frederick, 171, 233, 335
Goncharov, Ivan, 55, 72
Gorchakov, Prince, 313
Gordon, Arthur, 64
Gotby, 25
Gotland, Island of, 59, 135, 139, 149–51, 166, 240, 287–8, 322, 339
Gotska Sando, 139, 173, 285
Graham, Sir James, instructs Washington, 56–7; 62–3, naval reforms, 98; appoints Napier, 100–5; 110, problems of manning, 115–16; war aims, 118, 120–1; instructs Paget, 127; 130, 132, instructs Napier, 150, 158; in House of Commons, 193–4; praises Hall, 210, 227; receives reports, 212, 220, and instructs Napier, 237–40, 243–4; 249, 267, controversy between G & Napier, 272–3, 275, 293, asks Sulivan's opinion, 296, commissions floating batteries, 303–4
Grahn, Lt Colonel, 225, 262
grain trade, 21, 56, 159
Grandy, Commander M W S, 152
Grant's cooking/distilling galley, 81
Great Belt, the, 6, 100, 130–1, 133
'Great Game', the, 3, 40
Great Northern War, 4–5, 10, 16
Great Western Steamship Co, 65–6, 73
Great Wrath, the, 10
Greek Orthodox Church, 13–14, 40
Greenhill, Basil, 86n, 342n
Greenwich, 67, 75, 285, 337

Greig, Admiral A S, 48, 55
Greville, Richard, 104, 271
Grey, Commodore the Hon F, 237, 243; Mr, Chargé at Stockholm, 142–3, 150, 182
Grinkarudden, 246, 250, 252
Gripsholm, 174
Grohara, *see Gråhara*
Grundsunda, 230–3
Gråhara, (Harmaja), 135, 137, 333
Gustav Adolf II, 12; – IV, 4; –, rock, 202, 205
Gustavsvärn, 202, 205.
Gustafsvärd, 328
Gäddtarmen, 201
Göteborg, 117, 130, 147, 149

Hackman, John, 342n
Hackmanska arkiv, 164–5, 180
Halkokari, 188–9
Hall, Captain William 'Nemesis', 75, 131, 204, 208, 210, 223, 227–8, 235, 250, 286, 291, 310
Halldin, Gustav, 12
Hamburg, 162–3, 165
Hamilton, Admiral, 55
Hamina, *see Fredrikshamn*
Handsaker, John, 262
Hangö, (Hanko), 5, 31, telegraph at, 123, 135, 140, 144, 192–3, 197, 200–6, 208, 210–12, 240, 249, 270, 287, 293, 313–15, 325
Hanse, the, 8, 9, 201
Hapsal, 322
Haraldsby, 25, 27
Hararna (Haren), 36, 228, 231, 246
Harmaja, *see Gråhara*
Hartlepool, 153
Harun, *see Hararna*
Hautala, Kustaa, 161n
Hawkins, Admiral, 86
Haxthausen, Baron von, 53
Hazelinus, Colonel J A, 151
Heathcote, Captain, 142
Heideus, Admiral, 48
Helsingfors (Helsinki), 5, 6, 11, 21, 162, 166, 191, 206, 208, 210–11, 243, 249, 268, 270, 300, 308, 312–13, 333–6; channel of Borgå, 124, to Hangö, 197; foundation of, 16, 17, 325–6, 201; Observatory Hill, 333–4; possible landing at, 126; Russian vessels at, 52, 135, 137–8, 140–2, 196, 200, 213, 239; telegraph at, 313; University of, 179, 334.
Helsingør, 6, 101, 162, 243
Henry, Bishop/St, 9, 190
Hewlett, Captain, 219
Hibbert, Christopher, 121n
Hill, Captain F W, 153–4; – & Hurrel, Messrs, 153
Hjelmstejerna, Lieut, 151
Hoetzsch, CHO, 5n
Hogland, 196, 308
Holmudd, 320
Hong Kong, 153
Hosken, James, 290
Hughes, Rev Robert, 257, 260, 333, 336
Hull, 162, 164–5, 185, 317
Hulta, 247, 251
Hulvik, 254
Hungary, revolt in, 39
Hummelvik, 25
Hydrographer to the Navy, 31, 57, 83, 134
Hälsingborg, 6, 101
Härkmeri beacon, 184
Höjer, Torvald, 151

Idman, Master P G, 21
Ignatieff, Count, 336
Illustrated London News, 37, 85, 102, 105–6, 110–11, 128, 134, 186, 216, 242, 303, 309–10, 312, 315–16, 332, 334–5
India, 3, sea route to, 40, 159
'infernal machines', 61, 310–11, 329–30
Ingria, 18
Inkerman, battle of, 24, 273
Ireland, 172, 290n
Iremonger, Lucille, 273
Irkutsk, 55
Isaksson, Martin, 24–5, 28–9, 35, 37, 143n, 171n, 173, 195n, 225, 230, 235, 245, 248, 255, 258, 265

Jackson, J Hampden, 320
Jacobi, Boris Semenovich, 60–1
Jacobstad (Pietarsaari), 12, 21, 162, 166, 181–2, 185, 315–18
James, Robert Rhodes, 40n
Jameson, Rear-Admiral Sir William, 91n
Jane, Fred T, 41n
Jerusalem, 40
Joensuu, 343
Johans farm, 324
Johnstone, VC, Leading Stoker John, 254–5
Jones, Brigadier-General Harry D, 238, 244–5, 247, 250, 252–3, 258, 267–70, 274, 300, 328
Jylland, 6
Jyvaskyla, Central Finland Museum at, 22

Kainuu, 160
Kalevala, the, 18
Kalvholm, 231
Kamchatka, 54
Kankkonen, Mr, 191
Karelia, 10, 16, 160, 343
Karl Johan XIV, 148
Karlskrona, 149, 326
Karlsson, Captain Karl V, 230
Kasko, 316
Kastelholm, 36, 233, 247, 261
Kattegat, 130, 166
Kaukiainen, Professor Yrjo, 161–2
Kemi, 345n
Keppel, Captain the Hon Henry, 75, 90–1, 138–9, 172, 200, 210–11, 241, 246, 248–9, 255, 257, 270, 285, 289, 290–1, 293, 340
Kertsch, 162
Key, Captain Astley Cooper, 75, 80, 168, 207–8, 323, 340
Kiel Bay, 130, 132, 134, 136–7, 244, 270, 307
Kinburn, 305, 330
Kinglake, A W, 121

Kioge Bay (Køge Bugt), 130, 137–8, 144
Klinge, Matti, 10
Kokkola, *see Gamla Karleby*
Korguyev, N, 48n
Korsgrundet, 317
Kostjenko, Lieut, 261
Kotka, 12, 313, 320
Kovitska, Bay of, 315
Krasnaya Gorka, 313
Kraushold, Captain, 225
Kristinestad, (Kristiinankaupunki), 23, 160, 162, 166, 181–5, 320
Krokskär, 231
Kronborg Castle, 6
Kronstadt, 5, 24, 27, 31, 33, 42–5, 49, 51–3, 55–7; Capt Washington visits, 56–60; mines at, 61, 81–2, 102, 106, 116, 118, 122; telegraph at, 123, 133, 137, 139, 143–4, 147, 168; reconnaissance of, 195–223, 239, 249, 267, 270–1, 273–4, 276, 288, 296–302, 304, 306–13, 325, 330, 339–40
Kråkbärsörar, 36
Kuggholmen, 9
Kuggskär, 9, 201
Kuggsund, 9
Kuivasaari, *see Mjölö*
Kumlinge, 25, 233–4, 254–5
Kuntzell, O R, 188
Kuusi, Matti, xvii, 345n
Kåhre, Georg, 20, 169, 230, 324
Kökar, 8, 17

Ladoga, Lake, 9, 16
Lambert, Andrew, 65, 81, 103, 110n, 294, 340
Lamsdorff, Count, 59
Lancaster gun, 244, 271, 299
Landsort, 196
Langhorn, 239
Lappvik, (Lappohja), 209
Latvia, 46, 118, 137, 150, 198, 206–7, 297, 313
Lazarev, Admiral, 52, 55
Ledfjärd, 235
Ledfjärden, 229
Ledskär, 229
Ledsund, 235, 241–5, 250, 264–5, 281, 287, 290
Lemland, 29, 30, 223, 229, 324
Leningrad, *see St Petersburg*
Lewes prison, 262
Lewis, Professor Michael, 84, 89, 90, 114; –, RM, Lieut, 187
Libau (Liepaja), 207–8
Lichfield, Lord, 213–14, 257
Liepaja, *see Libau*
Lignell, Sheriff Carl Oscar, 265
Liljestrand, Police Officer, 235
Lindsay, W S, 72, 134
Lisbon, 110, 152–3; –, disturbances in, 98; – trials in 1851, 73, 78
Listerbysund, 255
Lithuania, 3, 46, 137, 150, 198, 206, 297, 313
Little Belt, the, 6, 100
Little Northern War, 10, 16
Little Wrath, the, 10
Liverpool, 21, 162, 317
London Gazette, 267
London North-Western Rly, 80
Lovisa, (Loviisa), 166, 320
Lucas, VC, Acting Mate C D, 227, 255
Lumpar Bay, 232, 259
Lumparfjärd, 25, 32, 36, 224, 228, 231, 241
Lumparland, 30, 36, 228, 230–1, 242, 325
Lumparn, 241, 244–5, 248, 250, 266, 324
Lumparudd, 231
Luscombe, Ellen, 154n
Lushington, Dr, 153
Lutheran Church, 13–14, 19
Lyons, Admiral Sir Edmund, 120–1, 133, 305; –, Captain Edmund, 133–4, 137, 141
Låga Skärgården, 231
Lågskär, 224, 229, 235, 241, 243
Långnäs, 230
Lönnrot, Elias, 18
Lübeck, 9, 20, 165

M'Grath, Mr, 187
MacKay, Charles, 106
McMurray, Campbell, 67, 76n
Madden, Lieut, 186
Maitland, Captain, 75
Malm, Fru, 316–18; –, Otto, 316; –, Peter, 182
Mansion House, banquet at, 275
Mariehamn, 342
Marshall & Co, Thos D, 164
Martin, Admiral Sir Thomas Byam, 91; – Rear-Admiral Henry Byam, 68, 90–1, 107–8, 114, 130, 167, 194, 213–14, 227, 241–2, 257–9, 261, 263, 287–8
Martinazzoli, Kerstin, 189n
Mason, Michael, 86n
Matheson, 76n
Matyushkin, Rear-Admiral, 328
Meara, Miss, 321
Medical Statistical Returns, 288
Mediterranean Fleet, 49, 91, 97, 99, 103, 113, 173, 270
Mehamet Ali, 97
Meijerfeldt, 205
Melain, Captain, 262
Melart, Lieut, 37
Melbourne, Lord, 51
Melkoholm, 333
Melville, Lord, 295
Memel, 288
Men'kov, General P K, 44
Menshikov, Admiral, 119
Menshikov, Prince A S, 32, 35, 48, 51, 123
Menschikoff, fort, 58–9
Merchant Seamen's Registration Act, 63
Messkäret, 317
Michelsö, 27, 36, 175, 232, 246
Miclo, *see Mjölö*
mine, chemical contact, 61, 329; –, electronically-fired, 60–1, 329; –, first vessel damaged by, 309; submarine –, 60; -sweeping, first, 215–16
Minto, Lord, 97
Miolo Road, *see Mjölö*

Mjölö (Kuivasaari), 135, 137, 211–12
Moldavia, 101, 118–19, 122
Moller, Lt Colonel von, 202, 205
Montague, Mr, 187
Moorson, Vice-Admiral C R, 80–1
Morphy, Mr, N I, 187
Moscow, 243
Murray, Robert, 64, 66–7, 77–8
Mylor, 83
Mälaren, Lake, 8

Naissar, *see Nargen Island*
Nansen, Fritjof, 82
Napier, Vice-Admiral Sir Charles, his career, 95–9; appointment to Baltic command, 100–4; authority to declare war, 105; Reform Club speech, 104–6; Portsmouth speech, 106; sails, 111, 129; manning problems, 114–15; establishes blockade, 117–18; unpopularity, 121; hoists flag on *Princess Royal*, 129; 'sharpen your cutlasses' signal, 130–1; visits Copenhagen, 132, 138; unable to get pilots, 133; has no use for surveying ship, 134; receives orders, 137, 139–41, 143; turns back, 144; visited by Theorell, 145–6; visits Oscar I, 147, 150; weak command, 156; nervousness, 158, 169, 171–4; ignorance of raids, 182, 191, visits Stockholm, 195; begins reconnaissance, 197, 199–200, 204–8, vacillating, 210, his age, 211; 212–13; visits Kronstadt, 219–20, 222–4, criticises Hall, 227; 236–9; 243–4, afraid to move, 248–9; 252, 267, 269–70; heads for home, press turns against, 271–3, re-elected MP, 274; speech at Mansion House, 275, correspondence, 287; criticism of, 293, 296; justification for, 298; could have attacked Sveaborg, 327
Napier, Robert, 56
Napoleon Buonapart, 3–4, 13–14, 100, 196, 221
Napoleon III, Louis, becomes Emperor, 40; growing power of, 79; writes to Tzar, 119; sends envoys to Gotland, 239; reviews troops, 243; demands armoured vessels, 302; wishes to re-draw map of Europe, 339
Napoleonic Wars, 3, 4, 14–15, 19, 39, 63, 65, 86, 88, 90, 122, 157, 171, 295, 339
Nares, Admiral, 139n
Nargen Island, (Naissar, Nassau), 134, 140, 159, 204, 270–1, 293, 297–8, 307, 313
Navarino, battle of, 48, 74, 86, 127, 132
Neil, General, 269–70
Nelson's navy, 79, 81, 85, 91, 130, 217, 337
Neman river, (Nemunas), 3, 6
Nesselrode, Count, 45, 51
Neva, river, 4, 6, 24, 267
Nevsky, Alexander, 9
New Orleans, 162
New York, 162
Newborough, Lord, 257
Newcastle, 21, 288; –, Duke of, 121, 136, 194, 238
Newport, 162
Nicholas I, Tzar, visits Bomarsund, 29; suppresses Hungarian revolt, 39; wishes to coerce Turkey, 40; sees hovering fleet, 45; nautical passion, 47; appoints naval administrator, 48; holds Review, 49; his 'expensive toy', 51; withdraws from Naval affairs, 52; holds Council of War, 53; large fleet, 115; manifesto, 117; ignores ultimatum; 119, 121; keeps troops in North, 122; visits Finland, 123; orders inspection of Sveaborg, 327; death of, 322
Nicholas II, Tzar, 343
Nobel family, 56, 60–1; – mines, 61, 329
Nolan, E H, 135n
Nordlund, K I, 125n
Norfolk, Duke of, 138n
Norway, 13, 45, 116, 130, 148–9, 166
Nottich tower, 246, 253
Notvik, 35–6, 242, 246, 251–2, 255, 258, 262, 266
Novgorod, 9
Nugent, Lieut, 220, – RE, Major, 236
Nyman, Valdemar, 245n, 254, 255n, 264
Nystad, (Uusikaupunki) 5, telegraph at 123, 162–3, 166, 190, 319
Nyström, Carl Johan, 187–8
Närpes, 125–6, 183

O'Byrne, Robert, 111, 114
Oblomov, (a novel) 55
Oder, river 6
Odessa, 21, 162, 179, 210;, 305
Ohrblom, Policeman, 235, 242
Okhotsk, Sea of, 6, 153
Old Carleby, *see Gamla Karleby*
Old Salis, 316
Order of Merit, 91
Oregrund, 174, 298
Orloff, Count, 47
Oscar I, King, 24, 147, 149–151, 171, 195, 243, 259, 262, 339
Otter, Captain Henry, 167, 320
Otway, Sir Arthur, 127n, 130n, 139n, 141n, 196n, 216n, 223n, 243n, 253n, 256n, 270n
Oulu, *see Uleåborg*
Oulujoki, river system, 160

Paasivirta, Juhani, 23n, 45, 181n, 342
Paget, Captain Lord Clarence, 90–1, 102, 127–9, 139–40, 172, 192–3, 195, 213–16, 223, 243, 248, 252–3, 256, 270, 291, 293
Paixhans gun, 41, 58–60, 81–2, 87, 198, 244, 301–2
Paldiski, *see Baltic Port*
Palmerston, Lord, 31–2, 34, 47, 97, 104–5, 150, 304, 340
Papp, Dr David, 322
Paris, 259, 338; Peace Conference, 45; Treaty of 1856, 101, 161, 341–2
Parker, Vice-Admiral Sir Hyde, 75, 130; Admiral Sir William, 74, 99, 103
Parseval-Deschenes, Vice-Admiral, 212, 244, 267, 269
Pasypkin, Colonel, 328
Peake, James, 189
Pembroke, 146
Penn's engine works, 75, 285, 337
Pertunen, Miihkali, xvii

Peter I, fort, 58
Peter the Great, 4, 47, 49, 325
Peterhof, Palace of, 45, 309
Petäjävesi, wooden church at, 22
Phillimore, Admiral Sir Augustus, 74n
Pietarsaari, *see Jacobstad*
pilots, shortage of, 133; Swedish, 143; unnecessary, 144
Pjelaxfjärden, 320
Plumridge, Rear-Admiral James Hanway, 135–8, 140–1, 171, 173, 181–2, 186, 191–3, 213, 223, 227–8, 230, 241, 251, 259, 269, 314
Plymouth, 110
Pohjanpalo, Jorma, 21
Poland, 13, 32, 40, 46, 50, 126, 147, 150, 338, 340–1
Politkovsky, General, 61
Poltava, battle of, 5
Pori, *see Björneborg*
Porkkalanselkä, *see Barösund*
Port Baltic (Paldiski), *see Baltic Port*
Portsmouth, 55, 72, 87, 106, 110, 138, 266, 290
Portugal, civil war in, 96, 98
Porvoo, *see Borgå*
Price, Commander, 315
Principalities, the, *see Moldavia, Wallachia*
Privateers (unofficial), 156, 230
Privett, Chief Petty Officer George, 266
Prussia, 3, 13, 43, 98, 148, 150, 157–8; –, King of, 234
Prästö, 25, 27, 35, 37, 231, 236–7, 246–7, 254, 259, 262
Prästosund, 25, 175, 231, 242
Putyatin, Admiral, 55
Pärnu, 316

Raahe, *see Brahestad*
Raglan, Lord, 121, 127
Ramsay, Lt General, 208–9
Ramsey, Captain William, 196, 293
Rancken, A W, 326n, 327, 335
Randholm, 230
Rauma (Raumo), 166
Reform Club dinner, 104–6
Rein, Gabriel, 20
Reuskar Island, 213
Revel (Tallinn), 20, 31, 33–4, 42, 49, 57, 118, 133–7, 140–1, 144, 159, 197–8, 200, 204, 211, 267, 270, 307, 313
Revolution, American, 12; French, 12, 14; – in 1848, 40; Russian, 343
Rew, Prescott & Co, 182
Riga, 5–6, 20, 118, 137, 298, 316, 327
Rigby, Elizabeth, 17
Rio de Janeiro, 166
Risbank, fort, 217–18
Ritchie, Admiral G S, 134
Robb, Captain John, 74–5, 85, 216
Robinson, Commander, 74
Rodger, N A M, 23n, 82
Rodgers anchors, 300
Rokasovski, acting Governor-General, 123–4
Roland, A, 60n, 61
Romania, 118, 120
Ronnskär, 333
Roos, Mayor, 187–8
Ross, Sir John, 31, 34
Rossiiskaya Sovetskaya Federativnaya Sotsialisticheskaya Respublika, 3
Rousett, 45
Rover, The (a novel), 95
Royal Armouries, 265
Royal Society of Arts, Transactions of the, 96n
Royer, Lt Alfred, 210
Ruotsinsalmin, *see Svenskund*
Rural ship-owning, 19–22, 166–70, 234, 322–4
Russell, Lord John, 98–9, 104, 150; –, William Howard, 274
Russian troops held in the North, 45–6, 121–2, 197, 268, 276, 296
Rysbank, fort, 58–60
Ryssbrunn, the 324
Ryssnäs, 288
Ryssö, 205
Röhr, Albert, 62
Rönnskag, 229

St Nicholas Cathedral, 16, 211, 334
St Petersburg, 4, 6, 14, 16, 20, 24, 27, 31, 34, 44–7, 55–6, 59–60, 149, 158, 201, 210, 276, 309, 342; defence of, 122, 139, 325; mail route to, 25, 254; telegraph line to 313; threat to, 101, 110, 116, 126, 197–8, 215, 220–1, 304, 330, 339, 341
St Ubes, 153
Saggöfjärden, 231
Saimaa canal, 343
Salcombe, 153–4
Sallinen, Aulis, 23
salt trade, 323
Saltviksfjärd, 26
Samonsaari, 180
Sanders, L C, 51n
Sandhamn, 337
Sandö, 231
Schmitt, B E, 119n
Scott, Captain Francis, 138, 171, 224; –, Sverre, 35
Seaward, FRS, Samuel, 69
Seaman's Manual, 282
Sebastopol, naval base at, 41–3, 45, 55, 119–20; fortress, 45, 100, 110, 120–2, 165, 248, 271–4, 294–5, 304–6, 311, 313, 328–30, 333, 338–9
Secret weapon, Cochrane's, *see Dundonald, Lord*
Seskar Island, 215–16, 220, 314
Seymour, Vice-Admiral Sir George, 103; –, Captain Harry, 113, 146, 250, 310–11; –, H D, 49, 53–4
Sheerness Royal dockyard, 72–3, 110, 210, 275, 292, 337
Shenshin, Captain N V, 225
Shields, 162, 164
Sibbo (Sipoo), 17
Sibby, 247
Siemens & Halske, 313
Silistria, 120, 122
Simskäla, 231, 234; -fjärden, 231
Sinclair, Captain the Hon Matthew, 95

Singapore, 246
Sinope, Bay of, 41, 119; "Massacre" of, 41–3, 52, 60, 110, 118–20, 289, 302, 338
Sipoo, *see Sibbo*
Sitka, 153
Sjaelland, 6
Sjöblom, Walter, 184, 185n
Skarpans, 25–6, 36–7, 265
Skatklobb, 232
Skellefteå, 175–6
Skåne, 6
Skärgårdsflotta, 27, 36, 195, 202, 313, 326–7
Slite, 59, 149
Slätskar, 35–6, 231
Smith, Captain George, 189
Sneckendahl, C, 188–9
Sorokin, Judge, 225
Sound, the, 6, 100, 133, 136; – dues, 101
Southampton, 152
Sovetsk, *see Tilsit*
Spithead, 11, 113–14, 128–9, 132, 212, 272, 275
Spratt (Hydrographer), 83
Steinheil, Lieut-General, 24–5, 27
Stephenson, Henry Frederick, 'little Harry', 138, 139n, 213; Henry (Harry), 138, 210, 248, 270, 289
Stewart, Captain the Hon Keith, 243
Stockholm, 6, 8, 10–13, 15–16, 19–20, 31–2, 57, 124, 139, 142–3, 150, 166, 174, 184–5, 195, 201, 206–7, 259–60, 276, 288, 319, 339; post-route, 25, 254; – tar, 160–1, 184–6
Stockholmen, 316–18
Stockmar, Baron, 80
Storby, 25
Story, Capt Henry, 319
Strachey, Lytton, 104n
Stratford de Redcliffe, Lord, 119
submarine, development of, 62
Sulivan, Captain B J, his career, 83, 90; reports to Napier, 133–4; surveys Fårö Sound, 135; tries to find pilots, 142–3, 150; criticises Napier, 144–5; at Nargen, 159; views on blockade, 168–9, 172, 192; at Hangö, 204; at Kronstadt, 217–20; his 'trail', 223–37, 239, 241–2, 248, 251; at Bomarsund, 256; critical of Biddlecombe, 282, 291; captain of Merlin, 293; damage to vessels described by, 294; report to Graham, 296–301; examines Sveaborg, 307, and Kronstadt, 308–11; criticises Captains, 314–15, 318; visits Estonians, 320–1; surveys Sveaborg, 329–31, and deplores bombardment, 332–3; mentioned in despatches, 336
–, Admiral George L, 301; –, H N, 143n
Sunderland, 288n
Sundman, Carl Anders, 232–3
Suomenlinna (Viapori), *see Sveaborg*
Susilvodot islands, 326
Susisaari, *see Gustafsvärd*
Sveaborg, (Suomenlinna, Viapori), 5, 11–13, 16, 27, 31, 33, 42, 44, 49, 61, 118, 123–4, 132–3, 135, 137–8, 140–1, 144, 147, 159, 172, 197–9, 204–6, 210–13, 239–40, 263, 267–9, 271, 293, 295–9, 306–7, 312–13; bombardment of, 325–37
Svenskund (Ruotsinsalmin), 12, 201, 313
Symondite 80s, the, 109
Syria, campaign in, 97, 107, 129, 172, 274, 276
Söderholm, 230
Södrahamnen, the, 17

Tallinn, *see Revel*
Tammisaari, *see Ekenäs*
tar trade, 21, 160–1, 171–194
Tarle, 45
Taylor, R, 112n
telegraph service, 123, 183, 185, 259, 313, 341
Tesche, Staff-Captain, 246, 250, 255–6
Thames, Russian ships built on, 52
The Art of Rigging, 282
The Boys' Manual of Seamanship and Gunnery, 282
The Red Line, 23
Theorell, Lieut Emil, 142–3, 145–6, 150–1, 229, 232–3, 235, 250, 253, 256–7, 260–1
Thomas, John, 288
Thucydides, 72
Tilsit, (Sovetsk), Treaty of, 3–5, 12
Times, The, 98–9, 101, 104, 106, 113, 152–3, 155, 161, 165, 181, 198, 209–10, 214, 227, 267, 271–2, 274, 277
Timrö, 230
Tols, Robert W, 61
Topelius, 345n
Torneå, 163, 175
Totleben, General, 328
Toulon, blockade of, 95
Trafalgar, battle of, 55, 91, 132, 146, 289, 337
Tranvik, 247
Trångsund, 180
Träsk, 25
Turkinsaari, 180
Turkish Empire, 40; declares war, 41, 118–20, 164–5; Minister in London, 105; navy, destruction of 42–3; possible revolt against, 122
Turku, *see Åbo*; University of, 11, 17
Tutings, the, 260
Tvegata, 230
Tzee tower, *see Bränklint*
Töftö, 37, 232

Uleaborg (Oulu), 11–12, 160, 162, 165, 171, 176–181, 185–6, 188, 193, 208, 319–20
Umeå, 175
United States of America, 4, 21–2, 60, 70, 100–1, 156–7, 161, 302
Uusikaupunki, *see Nystad*

Vaasa, *see Wasa*
Vallisaari, *see Bakholm*
Vargata, 231, 254–5; -fjärd, 25, 27, 35–6, 232, 242, 246, 251
Varna, 120–1, 198, 268
Vendels, the, 8
Viapori (Suomenlinna), *see Sveaborg*
Viborg (Viipuri), 126, 162, 164, 180, 197, 308, 312–13, 325
Victoria, Queen, sees submarine model, 62; names submitted to, 102–3; reviews Baltic fleet, 129,

136; reviews Western Squadron, 80; her Birthday salute, 176; print of in Simskäla, 234; Codrington her ADC, 292, Palmerston explains to, 304, 340
Vienna, 122, 341; Congress of, 18, 39
Viipuri, *see Viborg*
Vikings, the, 8, 181, 323
Vingå, 117, 130–3
Virgin, Admiral, 142
Visby, 322–3
Vitsand, 209

Walker, Captain Sir Baldwin Wake, 63, 73, 80, 109, 212
Wallachia, 101, 118–19, 122
Wallin, Captain E, 188
War of 1812, 95
Wasa (Vaasa), 7, 11–12, 162, 166, 189
Washington, Captain John, 56–60
Waterford, 162
Watson, Captain, 196, 217–18
Waxholm 143
Webb, H W, 59
Wellington, Duke of, 147, 196
Wendelin, Simon Anders, 184, 320
Went, General, 188
Westerbotten, 317
Westerlund, Jacob, 324
Wetavessi, 188
Wickman, Master, 152
Wiklund, Henrik, 185
Wikström, P, 182n
Williams, H Noel, 96n, 99n, 102n, 104n, 115n, 116n, 118n, 133n, 221n, 239n,240n, 244n, 270n, 272n, 274n
Wilson, P W, 271n
Windau, 34
'Wingo Sound', *see Vingå*
Winton, John, 254
Wise, Lieut, C A, 186
Wisla, river, 6
Woolwich, 58, 72–3, 294
Wormsö, 204
Wrottesley, RE, Lieut the Hon Cameron, 266
Wårdö, 25, 173–5, 228, 230–3, 254

Yelverton, Captain Hastings R, 204, 208–10, 223, 254, 293, 340

Zverzhev, Lieut, 246

Åbo, (Turku), 10–12, 14, 16–17, 19–20, 25, 29, 57, 152, 162, 170, 234, 241, 245, 312–13, 326; telegraph at, 123; whaling company, 21, 153; – Akademi, 14, 17, 164
Ådo Fell, 317
Älvsnabben, 142, 147, 171, 195–7, 204, 276
Ängö, 36, 228, 230–2 301; -sund, 36, 224, 228, 231–2, 235, 241–2, 244, 290

Öresund, *see Sound, the*
Österberg, Captain, 188
Östervik, 231–3
Övrevik, 25

INDEX OF SHIPS

Active, 96
Ahtia, 178
Aina, 166
Ajax, 111, 115, 129, 214, 241
Akbar, 165
Aktive, 181
Alban, 167, 241
Albanaus, 181
Alert, 139n
Allotar, 320
America, 166, 257
Amphion, 111, 167–8, 207, 241, 250, 323
Amphitrite, 58, 60
Antaja, 320
Archer, 288
Argus, 152
Arrogant, 111, 204, 208–10, 217, 254, 293
Arrow, 83
Augusta, 208–10
Austerlitz, l', 196, 242

Bas, 178
Basilisk, 205–6
Beagle, 83
Belleisle, 252, 290n
Bellona, 114
Benbow, 267
Bessarabia, 52
Black Eagle, 75
Blenheim, 111, 129, 214, 227, 241
Boscawen, 111
Britannia, 145
Brunswick, 109
Bulldog, 217, 285

Caesar, 74, 85, 111, 114, 140, 214, 293
Cape Breton, 65
Carl, 166, 320
Caterina, 179
Centurion, 109
Charles W Morgan, 70
Charlotte, 182
Chatarina, 184–5
Christina, 59
Colossus, 109
Comet, 66
Conflict, 207, 316
Cornwallis, 337
Cossack, 307, 315
Courageous, 95
Cressy, 111, 140, 214
Cumberland, 113, 115–16, 250
Cutty Sark, 67

Dauntless, 135
Desperate, 217, 219
Diana, 59, 66
Dido, 139, 166
Dragon, 111, 205–6, 318
Driver, 111, 196, 215–16, 219, 229–33, 251, 288, 293, 307–8, 320
Duke of Wellington, 102, 111, 113, 129, 134, 140, 145–7, 173, 196, 214, 220–1, 260, 272, 295, 307, 336–7

Echo, 66
Edinburgh, 111, 129, 140, 145, 214, 241–2, 246, 252
Empress Alexandra, 58
Eous, 181
Esmeralda, RWYC, 213–14, 250, 257

Eugenie, 142
Euryalus, 95, 111, 196, 307
Excellent, 114

Fama, 170
Felix, 165
Fidentia, 166
Fides, 166, 320
Firefly, 317, 320, 323
Foam, 257
Formidable, 267
Frigga, 170
Fröja, 152–5
Föglö, 230

Galatea, 95
Gebroeders, 165
Genoa, 86
Glatton, 305
Gondola, RYS, 213–15, 257
Gorgon, 111
Great Britain, The, see The Great Britain
Grefve Berg, 70

Harrier, 319
d'Hautpolt, 95
Hecla, 75, 111, 131, 182, 204, 208–10, 223–4, 227, 235, 250, 255, 288
Helios, 164–5
Helsingfors, 21
Hercules, 21, 317
Hinde, 74
Hogue, 111, 129, 145, 214, 241, 293
Hoppet, 178

Imperieuse, 111, 135, 196, 217
India, 178
Indus, 288
Irresistible, 109

James Watt, 65, 111, 114–15, 206, 214, 293, 307
Jason, 95
John, 179

Kajana, 179
Kamchatka, 59
Kirjola, 164
Kirppu, 178

La Reine Hortense, 243, 252, 267
Leopard, 70, 91, 108, 111, 135, 140, 171, 173–4, 228, 265, 294
Lightning, 66, 83, 111, 133–5, 142, 204, 206–7, 217–18, 220, 229–31, 233, 236, 241–4, 251, 293
Louise, 181

Magicienne, 205, 217, 318
Mainio, 181
Majestic, 109, 111, 115, 214
Maria, 59
Mars, 109
Martin, 95
Mavis, 257
Melpomene, 136
Merlin, 83, 293, 308–10, 322, 332
Mesack, 179
Meteor, 66, 305
Miranda, 133–4, 141
Molla, 178
Monarch, 114–15, 206

Nagaden, 165
Najaden, 181
Nemesis, 75, 208
Neptune, 145, 171, 197, 214
Nile, 91, 111, 114, 214, 315

Ocean, 319
Odessa, 185
Odin, 111, 138, 171, 174, 176, 182, 185–7, 189, 191, 223–4
Olaf, 58–9
Olof, 179
Onni, 163
Oryol, (Orel), 56, 59

Palchau, 59
Pallada, 55
Pallas, 320
Pandora, 333
Patrioten, 165
Penelope, 251, 255, 266, 270, 281
Pet, RTYC, 257, 333
Peter I, 53
Philomel, 83
Phlegethon, 217
Powerful, 58, 97
Preciosa, 166
Prince, 243
Prince Regent, 80, 111, 114–15
Princess Royal, 102, 111, 127, 129–30, 140, 214, 270, 293
Pultusk, 95

Rattler, 73, 75
Rebecca, 154
Recruit, 95
Regent, 145
Reine Hortense, see La Reine Hortense
Retvizan, 56, 60
Rossiya, 335
Royal George, 111, 129, 132, 140, 199, 214, 216–17, 275, 285, 292, 294, 307

St George, 115, 214
St Jean d'Acre, 111, 128–9, 138, 140, 145, 193, 214, 241, 251, 285, 290
Seeteufel, 62
Selene, 164–5
Seuruus, 179
Simoon, 147
Snall, 179
Sophia, 178
Souffleur, 267
Sparrowhawk, 257
Suomi, 155
Svahn, 170

Tartar, 317–18
Termagent, 91, 243
Thames, 95
The Great Britain, 71, 73, 77, 97, 243, 281, 283–5, 290
Thunder, 303
Tiger, 179, 210
Titus, 178
Trafalgar, 145
Tribune, 135
Tähti, 181

Ulrica, 320

Valorous, 58, 111, 132, 171, 174, 176–7, 206, 223, 233, 242
Valfrid, 230
Vesta, 257
Viborg, 56
Victoria, 319
Victoria & Albert, 75
Victory, 79
Vixen, 76, 172
Vladimir, 52
Vulture, 111, 171, 174, 176, 185–7, 189, 191, 193, 223–4, 233, 244, 310, 335

Wellamo, 165
Wiborg, 165
Wilkas, 178
Windsor Castle, 146
Wrangler, 271

THE BRITISH ASSAULT ON FINLAND

1854 - 1855

A FORGOTTEN NAVAL WAR

Basil Greenhill and Ann Giffard

The conflict of 1854-56 with Russia is commonly known as the Crimean War, but it began and ended in the Baltic: indeed it is arguable that it ended *because* of what happened in those waters. This book describes what at first sight seems an obscure campaign of the Royal Navy, but its significance has been greatly underestimated since it was the first time in history that a steam battlefleet went to war. Furthermore, the threat of an attack on the Russian capital, St Petersburg, which tied down more than 200,000 of their best troops, had a far reaching effect on the outcome of the war.

The principal target of the Baltic Fleet were the Finns – ironically, less than happy subjects of the Tsar, but the owners of the largest proportion of Russian-flag shipping. The attacks on an almost undefended coastline and merchant marine had far reaching effects on both the Finns and the Russians, and helped to determine the development of the prosperous independent Finland of today.

Thus the book is more than just a survey of naval and military actions, but delves into the political, economic and social history of an area that is still little known in the English speaking world.

ISBN 0-87021-057-2