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THE Great War in Russian Memory

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trace. These acts are much harder to document, but nonetheless constitute an important component of World War I memory.

The marginalization of World War I was not accomplished by some kind of overarching directive from top Soviet authorities. Changes in the nature of World War I memory occurred over decades through thousands of individual bureaucratic, personal, or institutional contests in which memory of the war was both intentionally and unintentionally protected or undermined. Engaged in these contests to promote particular kinds of World War I remembrance were thousands of individuals, such as the members of the Old Moscow Society who donated their time to the upkeep of the All-Russian War Cemetery, A. G. Shlikhter, who may have fought to preserve his son's gravestone, and the military theorist A. A. Svechin, who was a prominent member of the Red Army's commission to study war experience in the early 1920s. Although the Old Moscow Society, which disappeared in 1929, and Svechin, who was shot as an enemy of the people in 1938, both ultimately failed in their efforts to promote their visions of World War I memory, their struggles are worthy of our attention. The lone gravestone left standing in the Moscow memorial cemetery is symbolic of the persistence of particular visions of World War I memory in spite of considerable efforts to destroy them.

Remembrance of World War I evolved in the interwar period (like many other Soviet interwar social phenomena) for a variety of reasons, including the curtailment of civil society in the late 1920s, Stalinist repressions, power struggles in the Red Army, the complex efforts to define a new Soviet proletarian literature, and the inherent difficulty of creating a heroizing narrative about the lost war of a toppled empire. But throughout the entire interwar period, World War I was decentered rather than forgotten. As some types of World War I memory were destroyed, idiosyncratic new ways of remembering the war appeared. It is the persistent efforts of individuals (and institutions) in interwar Russia to interpret, consider, and reflect on World War I that have truly been forgotten by generations of Soviet citizens and historians alike.

TRANSNATIONAL CONTEXTS AND RUSSIAN WAR MEMORY

Just as Russian and Soviet wartime mobilization and state-building need to be considered within the context of "the common European deluge" of 1914–1921, Russian and Soviet literary and cultural responses to the calamity of war must also be situated among the European cultural responses to the World War I era.[27] European historians of World War I have vigorously debated the extent

to which World War I was a complete break with the past. They have discussed the balance between modern, ironic sensibilities and traditional, heroic sensibilities in postwar Europe. While some authors such as Paul Fussell, George Mosse, and Modris Eksteins emphasized the transformations in intellectual and social life wrought by the war, and the creation of a distinct "modernity" that could variously be defined as ironic or violent, other scholars, notably Antoine Prost and Jay Winter, have instead pointed to the way that traditional structures of religion and community provided continuity and a compelling framework within which to understand the war. They have debated whether the memory of World War I challenged or strengthened the ideal of the heroic warrior and have queried the extent to which the memory of the war bolstered patriotism and nationalism. These debates have profound implications for the analysis of World War II as well. Was it the experience of World War I that led directly to the violent lawlessness of the interwar period, the rise of fascism, and the second war? Or did the origins of the second conflict emerge from divisions within European society that existed long before 1914? This work engages these debates by returning the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union to their rightful places in the cultural history of interwar European memory of World War I.

The Soviet situation also had significant commonalities with the experiences of the new Eastern European states that, like the Soviet Union, succeeded a defeated and humiliated empire.[28] Also, like the Soviet Union, these countries developed historical narratives about the complex period of the "common European deluge" to bolster the legitimacy of their fledgling states; but their narratives were often contested. At times, the Soviet Union's discussion of World War I was comparable to that of Germany, Austria, and the East European successor states; at other times it reflected the key issues addressed in British, French, and American wartime memory, and sometimes Soviet views of the war remained distinctive.

Like Prost and Winter, I emphasize continuity over rupture in my analysis of Soviet war memory. While there is no doubt that the vast cataclysm of war, revolution, and civil war fundamentally reshaped the Russian state, the intensive Soviet efforts to create "the New Soviet Man (and Woman)" often disguised essential continuities between tsarist and Soviet *mentalités*, and between tsarist and European wartime mobilizations and Soviet peacetime rule.[29]

Continuities in World War I discourse were double-edged swords; in the interwar period, Russians and Soviets used traditional religious and moral values to question warfare and heroism in powerful ways, but also drew on

belligerent tsarist tropes extant before World War I in the building of a new Soviet militarism. As the threat of a second war drew closer, the balance between these two trends began increasingly to shift away from questioning and toward belligerence.

Failing to recognize Russia as a part of Europe has historical as well as historiographical implications. Along with excluding Russia from modern debates about World War I and memory, historians of both Europe and the Soviet Union have underestimated the extent to which Russian and Soviet memory interacted with contemporary Russian émigré and interwar European war memory. In the dislocation of the postwar years, Russian war participants remembered World War I not only in Moscow, Petrograd, and Kiev, but also in the Russian diaspora in such places as Paris, Berlin, Sofia, Belgrade, Harbin, and San Francisco. Following Aaron Cohen, who compared remembrance of World War I in the diaspora with the anniversaries of World War I in the Soviet press and demonstrated that émigrés' collective remembrance of the war highlighted their honorable behavior to construct "a non-Soviet Russian past," this book contextualizes Soviet works within the larger rubric of diasporic Russian war memory.[30]

It is also critical to remember that Russian-language printed materials crossed international borders. Until the end of 1923, the Soviet government allowed selected materials published abroad about Russia's World War I and the Russian Revolution to be distributed in the Soviet Union, after the Main Administration for Literary and Publishing Affairs (*Glavlit*) carefully vetted them.[31] The literary publishing house Gelikon in Berlin, for example, identified its place of publication as "Moscow-Berlin" to signal its loyalty to the Soviet Union and facilitate the importation of its books into the Soviet Union.[32] Soviet books were, of course, also sold abroad. The boundaries of knowledge between the diaspora and the metropole were thus somewhat porous in the early Soviet years, creating multiple vectors of memory in the Soviet Union and Europe.

Furthermore, Soviet publishing houses, like publishers around the world, actively sought out "suitable" literary works about World War I to translate into Russian. Writers such as Henri Barbusse, Jaroslav Hašek, Ernest Hemingway, T. E. Lawrence, Erich Maria Remarque, Romain Rolland, and Arnold Zweig all appeared in Russian translation at various times in the interwar period. Publishers also translated the memoirs of key military and political figures, such as David Lloyd George, Raymond Poincaré, Kaiser Wilhelm, and

Paul von Hindenburg. Meanwhile, the memoirs of General Aleksei Brusilov, the World War I works of such Soviet writers as Il'ia Erenburg, Sof'ia Fedorchenko, Kirill Levin, Mikhail Sholokhov, and of filmmakers such as Boris Barnet circulated in English, French, German, Spanish, Dutch, Yiddish, Serbian, Czech, Danish, and Japanese translations in the interwar period. During World War II, when Russia became the ally of Britain and the United States, the World War I novels of Sergei Sergeev-Tsenskii were also translated into English. Remembrances thus crossed borders in multiple directions.

Scholars have been quick to recognize the Soviet Union's uniqueness in its failure to commemorate the so-called "Great War," but they have not so readily acknowledged Soviet awareness of and even participation in some European trends, such as in the stormy reception of Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*.[33] By emphasizing the Soviet Union's separateness from European culture, scholars have underestimated the extent of the Soviet Union's participation in a pan-European dialogue about World War I.

Soviet authors in the early 1920s were keenly aware of European remembrance of the war and highly cognizant that the Soviet approach to World War I differed sharply from that of its European neighbors. They engaged with and responded to the phenomenon of memorialization in Europe, often by consciously rejecting it and seeking to undermine the sacred nature of European World War I monuments. A 1931 novel by Vladimir Lidin, *The Grave of the Unknown Soldier* (*Mogila neizvestnogo soldata*), proposed that the body underneath the Arc de Triomphe in Paris belonged not to a heroic and patriotic Frenchman but to a Russian-Jewish legionnaire who was killed "like a bandit" for refusing to follow orders. The Frenchmen who thought they were venerating a "legendary" soldier, a character in the "tale of the greatness of France," were in fact revering a revolutionary mutineer.[34] The novel symbolically overturned both the meaning of the monument and the French interpretation of the war.

No Soviet writer, however, was more scathing about Europe's drive to memorialize the war in the 1920s than Il'ia Erenburg. In the 1924 foreword to the first Soviet edition of his World War I memoir, *The Face of War* (*Lik voiny*), he implicitly defended the Soviet Union's lack of commemoration by attacking the prevailing European obsession with World War I memory.[35] Erenburg is so well known for his powerful anti-Nazi propaganda during World War II that the pacifism of his early writing is often overlooked. Erenburg was living in Paris when the war broke out. He became a newspaper correspondent on the Western Front after he tried to volunteer for the French Army but was

rejected for physical infirmity. In the midst of covering the war for the Russian newspaper *Birzhevye vedomosti* (Stock Exchange Gazette) Erenburg suffered a nervous breakdown, but he recovered to continue his reportage of life in the trenches.[36] In *The Face of War,* Erenburg spoke eloquently of war's insanity, pointlessness, and human suffering. He wrote as a "moral witness," an "individual with a terrible tale to tell," based on his "direct and personal" experience of the horrors of war.[37] In the foreword to the memoir, he expressed a different kind of outrage as well: the horrors of capitalism and the vulgar commemoration of the war that he experienced in interwar Europe:

> "The renowned Morte-Homme! Here more than forty thousand people perished," yelled out the conscientious guide. And behind him they turn curiously: forty thousand! . . . It would be good to send a postcard from this very place.
>
> On the lousy ground invalids crawl—pieces of meat, without arms, without legs, often without eyes or face, burned to a hot liquid or half-suffocated by gas. They sell postcards with views of the places where they left their arms, legs, or eyes. But I'll give them what-for. And chasing away the cripples, the waiter from the café brings iced cocktails. . . .
>
> The bones of the unknown soldiers are dug up and then buried again in the middle of the Place de l'Étoile in Paris and Congress Square in Brussels. Delegations, flags, wreaths. Today the Shopkeepers' Society of Vincennes, tomorrow the war attaché of Uruguay, the day after tomorrow, Mr. Poincaré himself. Here there are so many vulgarities that it becomes magnificent. In Brussels, for example, they have led gas pipes to the bones. An inextinguishable icon-lamp. What do you want: the shopkeepers of Vincennes are poets at heart.
>
> Near Verdun a guide exclaims:
>
> "Attention! Up to eighteen thousand skulls. The bones of the defenders of Fort Demoine!"
>
> The curious approach. "And why don't they smell?"
>
> "Oh, mister, everything is perfectly arranged. And then . . . four years have already passed. . . ."
>
> . . . The European tradesman, ready to sell skulls! . . .
>
> And so, everything is in order. It can all begin again from the beginning. There are enough cities not destroyed and people who are not crippled.[38]

In his memoir, and also in his fictionalized, satirical, and highly irreverent version of his experiences of war and revolution, the 1922 novel *The Extraordinary Adventures of Khulio Khurenito and His Disciples . . . . (Neobychainye pokhozhdeniia Khulio Khurenito i ego uchenikov. . . .)*, Erenburg excoriated battlefield excursion bureaus for profiting from the suffering and death of millions.[39] He expressed his concern about the increasing trivialization of the war at newly built monuments all across Europe. He claimed that these commercialized

and trivializing forms of memory "sold" Europeans on patriotism once again by allowing them to forget the horrors of war. This re-envisioning of World War I paved the way for the remilitarization of Europe for the next war, but Erenburg insisted on reminding Europeans about the horrors of war that they were trying to forget. He offered his writings as an antidote to both the forgetting of the realities of war and to its mindless and vulgar glorification.

Erenburg's description of commemoration is striking because it contained features of both official Soviet ideology and typical European treatments of the war. His authorial voice overflowed with the irony that has been noted as a key characteristic of a "modern" consciousness, and Erenburg's firsthand account of World War I shares much in common with the British writers that Paul Fussell featured in his landmark study *The Great War in Modern Memory.* Erenburg directed his irony squarely at those who sought to use the memory of the war for their own personal profit or to ignite another war. He consistently questioned why men had to be turned into "pieces of meat" and resisted frameworks of comfort that defined a purpose for the soldiers' sacrifices. Erenburg, in ironic detachment, asserted that he did not have his own agenda in writing about the war; in the foreword to the first edition of the work, he claimed not to be "for" or "against" the war but aimed to describe "the hundreds of different faces of war, while war's true face remained invisible to me."[40]

Erenburg showed himself to be fully a member of the European intellectual community struggling to find direction in the postwar world. His writings demonstrate the penetration of the Soviet public sphere by the common European quest to understand the "Great War" and prevent the next one, and also by European uncertainty, irony, and unwillingness to arrive at definitive conclusions in the transformed postwar world. The Soviet Union may not have officially recognized World War I as part of its own founding myth, but in the 1920s, it nonetheless took part in the pan-European intellectual movements that interpreted the war and coped with its aftermath.

SOVIET MOBILIZATION FOR WAR

While integrating the Soviet Union into the pan-European history of the memory of World War I is a central goal of this work, I also illuminate a second, specifically Soviet story, about the role of World War I memory in the mobilization of an already war-traumatized population to prepare for the next war. I define mobilization broadly, as the Soviet state's attempts to shape the cultural attitudes of its citizens not just to facilitate such concrete military activi-

ties as conscription, military training, and preparation for civil defense, but also to influence citizens' understandings about the nature of war itself and to enable them to envision their potential roles in prosecuting the next war.[41] Soviet leaders in the 1920s and 1930s believed that war was the norm for international relations in the era of capitalism, and so they rejected liberal pacifist thought as both naïve and potentially dangerous to national security.[42] At a time when Bolshevik attitudes during World War I were uncompromisingly antiwar, Lenin urged soldiers not to lay down their arms, but rather to turn the imperialist war into a civil war. My book explores the interaction of World War I memory with other Soviet myths of heroism and patriotism to understand the broad cultural foundations of Soviet military mobilization and attempts to make war "thinkable" in the Soviet interwar period.[43]

World War I's marginalization by the Soviet state and its persistent association with the Russian Empire's military failure and ineptitude makes it, in some ways, a more intriguing object of study than the Civil War in regard to military mobilization. Because of the very exclusion of World War I from official myth-making, representations of the war did not have to adhere as closely to official narratives as did depictions of the October Revolution or Civil War. The marginal location of World War I (and likely of the Russo-Japanese War as well, though this must be the object of future study) provided an intellectual and political space in which Soviet writers could discuss wartime experience in complex ways. While many, though far from all, Civil War accounts described military events in black-and-white terms, World War I was often represented in various shades of gray.[44] A substantial portion of the postwar public discussion about World War I by Soviet veterans, journalists, historians, artists, film directors, and writers contested the glorification of warfare and the veneration of the male warrior hero by depicting the ugliness, horrors, and ambiguities of war.

World War I narratives defied Soviet conventions because of a series of inherent contradictions in Soviet ideology: between the Soviet government's rejection of World War I as a tsarist and capitalist war and its need to inspire military prowess, heroism, and sacrifice among the war-weary Soviet population in the 1920s; between the communist narrative of the internationalist and proletarian brotherhood of all soldiers and the need to develop a national-patriotic ethos in defense of the Soviet motherland; between the pacifist elements inherent in depicting the horrors of war and the need to make the next war "thinkable"; between heroizing the revolutionary refusal to fight an imperialist war and the need to inspire obedience and perseverance among Soviet soldiers.

The way in which World War I memory dealt with these contradictions evolved over the course of the interwar period, and this evolution sheds light on the ongoing scholarly debates about "The Great Retreat." Ever since 1946, when sociologist Nicholas Timasheff first introduced the term, there has been a vibrant debate about the relationship between early Soviet cultural policies and the cultural trends of the 1930s and 1940s.[45] Timasheff pointed to the rise in Russian nationalism, the return to traditional education, concessions given to religion, and the diminishing of women's rights to suggest that Stalin had abandoned the revolutionary policies of the 1920s in favor of conservative but popular norms. Other cultural analysts have also neatly divided the early Soviet period into two "cultures," positing a sharp division between the liberating and experimental culture of the New Economic Policy era in the 1920s and the monumental, conservative, and repressive Stalinist culture of the 1930s.[46] It is very tempting to tell the story of World War I memory within this context, because there is much corroborating evidence. In such a narrative, World War I memory challenges Soviet heroism, nationalism, and masculinity during the freer 1920s and then becomes renationalized, reheroized, and remasculinized in the repressive 1930s. But, in fact, both patriotic and pacifist, nationalist and internationalizing, masculine and "feminizing" rhetoric coexisted throughout the entire interwar period.

Like Katerina Clark in her recent work, I argue that the chronology of "The Great Retreat" obscures key aspects of Soviet World War I memory.[47] First of all, it would be a mistake to argue that all World War I remembrance in the 1920s contested Soviet heroic and patriotic narratives; from the revolution onward, a portion of World War I discourse echoed heroic tsarist tropes and facilitated their integration into Soviet discourse in ways that augmented and reinforced representations of new Soviet heroes. One of the key aspects of Soviet culture in the 1920s was thus its unstated reliance on the tsarist culture that it claimed to have destroyed. Likewise, it would be a mistake to view the 1930s solely as the decade of reheroization, renationalization, and remasculinization. Internationalist and pacifist ideas and moral critiques of the violence of war survived throughout the interwar period. There was always a counterpoint between heroism and antiheroism, though the heroic voices became much louder and the antiheroic voices grew fainter as time passed. This was not so much a shift away from socialist ideals, but a partial reconfiguration of how these ideals interacted with preexisting Russian cultural "building blocks."

tova decried Brusilov's new popularity, arguing that the heroization of Brusilov was confusing to schoolchildren because "this World War I general's claim to fame was based on his defense of a regime that Lenin would soon overthrow."[72] Thus, even during the patriotic fervor of World War II, there were voices raised against the figure of Brusilov and the rehabilitation of the heroic memory of World War I. Revolutionary and internationalist interpretations contested the ideological soundness of the new patriotic and heroic discourse. During World War II, however, such voices were in the minority, in contrast to the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s when such opinions had been influential in circumscribing the study of World War I.

The Reception of All Quiet on the Western Front

Although there is a tendency to imagine the Soviet Union as separated from European cultural and social trends in the 1920s, the Soviet Union actively participated in one of the most significant episodes of international World War I remembrance: the highly contested reception of Erich Maria Remarque's blockbuster war novel *All Quiet on the Western Front*. The appearance of this novel was an international phenomenon in which Russian-speakers actively participated. The novel appeared in translation within six months of its original publication in German. A very short summary of the entire novel appeared in the journal *Molodaia gvardiia* (Young Guard) in July 1929, a forty-five-page illustrated edition came out in *Roman-Gazeta* (Novel-Newspaper) in early 1930, and this shortened edition was reprinted as a pamphlet by the Soviet Worker publishing house that year. The book appeared in full in 1929 in *Vestnik inostrannoi literatury* (Bulletin of Foreign Literature), and in a variety of editions by Federation, Red Proletarian, and Land and Factory. The latter two publishing houses offered large print runs (of as many as 100,000 copies) at low prices, producing a "cheap library" edition that cost only 35 kopeks. The work also appeared in Georgian and Ukrainian translations, and there were Soviet editions in the German language with a foreword by Karl Radek and a special school edition with a Russian-German glossary for language learners.[73]

Many Soviet critics warmly received *All Quiet on the Western Front*. The hundred thousand copies of the Land and Factory edition reproduced glowing reviews from the Soviet press on the cover leaves. These reviews came, not surprisingly, from the two journals directly involved in publishing the book, but

also from the official government newspaper *Izvestiia* as well as *Literaturnaia gazeta* (Literary Gazette), *Krasnaia zvezda*, and *Vecherniaia Moskva* (Evening Moscow). The review quoted from *Molodaia gvardiia* read: "The portrayals that Remarque developed in his novel are so significant that one can speak of this book as one speaks of an event. No other work has captured the immediacy of war material with such breadth or with such tragic significance." *Vecherniaia Moskva* wrote, "This book is terrifying, like the most implacable face of war. It is like a song; you cannot throw anything out if it."[74] In 1929, then, Soviet readers and critics were avid consumers of Remarque's novel and took part in building its international acclaim.

The most striking excerpt on the cover leaf of the novel came from *Izvestiia*, the official bulletin of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet Union. After noting that *All Quiet on the Western Front* had sold a million and a half copies in Europe and the United States, the reviewer proclaimed:

> He [Remarque] allows the reader to understand, to feel, almost to touch that horrible state of mind that a person experiences in the environment of contemporary slaughter, with all of its technological means for the annihilation of people, with all of the brutality that spontaneously arises in the soldier, with its mass conversion of human bodies into a bloody mash, with all of its madness, the imprint of which to a greater or lesser degree almost always remains on a person who has been in battle, who has been exposed to the danger of being killed and killing. . . . Remarque depicts this person–wild beast [*chelovek-zver'*] in his book.[75]

The *Izvestiia* reviewer lingered on Remarque's description of the horrors of modern war, acknowledging that all soldiers become "wild beasts" in the midst of battle and that virtually all of them return home bearing the stamp of the insanity of war. This candid discussion of war stood in stark contrast to the usual tropes of Soviet militarization; it seems almost as if the *Izvestiia* critic was articulating a pacifist rejection of war itself.

The tone and vocabulary of some of the positive reviews of *All Quiet on the Western Front* hinted at some underlying ambivalence, however. *Literaturnaia gazeta*, for example, applauded Remarque for recording only "the facts" and for avoiding "arguments and unnecessary humanitarian emotionalism."[76] The adjective "humanitarian" held the key to understanding some Soviet critics' unease with Remarque. In the late 1920s, Soviet ideologues attacked "bourgeois" humanism and humanitarianism for valuing the fate of individuals above the well-being of the toiling classes. This individualistic and

class-blind attitude could erroneously lead to compassion for the class enemies of the Soviet state or to a rejection of the use of violence to achieve revolutionary goals.

While many early reviews of the artistic qualities of Remarque's book were extremely positive, some of the early praise was qualified because of the novel's nonproletarian nature and its pacifist opposition to all wars. In an August 1929 article in the journal *Na literaturnom postu* (On Literary Guard), Z. Lippai called Remarque a petty-bourgeois "humanist and pacifist" who wanted to write an apolitical pacifist novel, and who completely ignored the class aspects of the war. Yet Lippai went on to say that, despite Remarque's intentions, the book was extremely valuable to the proletarian reader because it unwittingly broke out of the bounds of petty-bourgeois literature and no longer served bourgeois class interests. "Thanks to its high artistic truthfulness, it is hard to make this book a means of disseminating pacifism, with whose help it would be possible to distract the attention of the masses from the threat of a new war." Lippai asserted that instead the book was a "brilliant foundation for political agitation against the preparation for imperialist war as well as against imperialist war itself."[77] Instead of interpreting the book as a tragic tale of a lost generation destroyed by the war, Lippai saw the book as a call to action to the proletariat to prevent imperialist war and if necessary turn imperialist war into civil war against the bourgeoisie.

Lippai's reading of the novel against the grain of its own class nature demonstrated the powerful impact that the novel had on this Soviet critic who sought to rescue it from its potential political defects. The article clearly admitted the dual nature of Remarque's work and the fact that it might be read as an attack on all war instead of as a call to class war. This kind of "apolitical" pacifism thus passed into Soviet discourse along with the novel. The initial participation of the Soviet Union in the world reception of the novel revealed both genuine enthusiasm and a desire to adopt the novel into a Soviet framework.

One of the key elements to Sovietizing the novel was to recast the ending from a focus on tragedy to a focus on action. No generation could be "lost" in a Soviet context. Remarque's realism (Lippai pronounced Remarque to be an even finer realist than Zola) was extraordinarily attractive to Soviet writers and critics, but Remarque's decision to have Paul Bäumer die rather than join the revolution contradicted the fundamental principles of both Soviet literature and Soviet politics. Bäumer's pointless and ironic death only weeks before the armistice, on a day "that was so quiet and still on the whole front," denied him personal revolutionary development and deprived the reader of the promise of a revolutionary future.[78]

While critics between the years of 1929 and 1931 praised Remarque for a novel that, despite its class blindness, could still be interpreted as a proto-revolutionary book, after publication of the 1931 sequel *The Road Back*, Soviet critics distanced themselves from Remarque. In the novel, he did not portray Communists favorably and did not embrace revolution as salvation for the returning veterans.[79] *The Road Back* was not translated into Russian, and *All Quiet on the Western Front* was not reprinted after 1931, though the more than one hundred thousand copies still circulated and the book remained popular with readers.

In the 1930s, *All Quiet on the Western Front* captured the imagination of Soviet writers who sought to address Remarque's revolutionary deficiencies by writing adaptations of the novel. Internal reviewers at the State Literature Publishing House, however, were not at all impressed with two dramas based on Remarque's novel that were submitted to them, and so both remained unpublished. Nonetheless, these works tell us a great deal about the Soviet literary establishment's perceptions of Remarque and of World War I in the early to mid-1930s.

The first work was an early 1930s radio-play based on *All Quiet on the Western Front* by Nikolai Sokolovskii. I can find no evidence that any of this author's other work ever appeared in print in the Soviet Union. Within a year or two of the publication of Remarque's novel, it was clear to even an amateur writer that ideological trends demanded that traces of "bourgeois humanism" and rejection of war should be removed from the novel, while additional scenes of class struggle should be added. For example, Sokolovskii included the pivotal scene in which Paul Bäumer killed a Frenchman in the radio-play, but unlike in the novel, Bäumer did not promise "to fight against this, that has struck us both down."[80] The end of all wars was not the answer.

Instead, in a scene set in the beer hall in Bäumer's hometown while he was on leave, a radicalized Paul prophesied about a new war. Like any true revolutionary, he revealed his desire to turn the imperialist war into a war against the bourgeoisie. But this was to be a war of a peculiar sort: "The days, weeks, years we spent at war will return again. Our dead comrades will rise up then and will march with us. Our heads will clear up and we will have a goal in front of us. Our dead comrades will walk alongside us. We will destroy you." In Sokolovskii's macabre vision, the dead would rejoin the living, not to see if

the survivors were carrying out their legacy as in *J'accuse* and not to witness the success of the cause as in *Borderlands*, but to annihilate their enemies—the bourgeoisie. This radio-play envisioned the revolution as a supernatural event, enabled by the participation of the now clear-sighted living who could finally see who their true enemies were and the raised dead who could turn back the clock to fight a new war. This particular image of resurrection was not found suitable, however, for a Soviet audience in the 1930s.

In the same beer hall scene in Sokolovskii's radio-play, a German worker and mother discussed her vision for her son at war. This German mother was the antithesis of the one described by Kollontai in her 1924 memoir. This mother said, echoing Lenin, "They will give you a weapon. Take it and learn to kill. Get to know this science, not to kill your brothers as your father did, but to destroy the masters, those who made the war."[81] This radio-play eliminated any trace of Remarque's pacifism and instead called for the use of violence against the "masters" in retribution for the war. In Sokolovskii's play, Paul Bäumer took up this call to fight against the bourgeoisie. He died as a martyr to the revolution, not as a helpless victim in a senseless war. According to Sokolovskii's revised ending to Bäumer's story, he was killed at the barricades on May 1, 1918, proud of his party card in the Union of Revolutionary Front-Line Soldiers of Germany.

Despite this new revolutionary twist in Bäumer's biography, the reviewer for the State Literary Publishing House felt that the play did not sufficiently illuminate the tensions between soldiers and officers, or the soldiers' lack of desire to fight and their growing antiwar mood. The critic felt that Sokolovskii had failed to capture the tension between the front and the rear that was central to Remarque's novel and that the beer hall scene was unsuccessful. He complained that what in Remarque was "magnificent in its brevity and clarity was here dragged out" and turned into "sentimental melodrama." The critic's evaluation reveals both the clumsiness of the attempt to repair Remarque's faulty ideology and the reviewer's real appreciation of Remarque's achievement. This reviewer was willing to overlook the ideological faults in Remarque's novel and let it stand as written because of its exceptional strength in depicting the war. Of course, by rejecting the radio-play, the critic also limited the population's exposure to the novel.

The second play, *The Traitor*, which was reviewed and rejected by the critic Kir'ianov on behalf of the State Literature Publishing House in October 1936, took a different approach. It was a biographical play about Remarque in the 1920s that carried on a polemic with the ideas of Remarque. The dramatist of

the rejected play was likely Mikhail Borisovich Zagorskii, the author of several actors' biographies and works on theater history, including *Gogol and the Theater* and *Pushkin and the Theater*.[82]

Zagorskii's play was written sometime after 1931 when Soviet critics perceived Remarque as betraying the revolutionary promise they saw in *All Quiet on the Western Front*. The play was set in Berlin after the novel's publication; it featured Remarque's interaction with his frontline comrades, the well-known characters from his novel, some of whom were rescued from their fictional deaths to appear in the play.[83] Zagorskii depicted Remarque as a miserable neurasthenic, torn between a life of fame and fortune and the ideals of class struggle embraced by his lower-class war comrades, especially Katczinsky, now a conscious revolutionary.

A new character in the play was Jeanne Duval, the daughter of the French printer that Paul Bäumer killed in *All Quiet on the Western Front*. When Jeanne Duval sought out Remarque to find out more about her father's death, he admitted, "I promised him that I would become a typesetter and live the life of a simple worker near you, to replace your father and to fight against the war that destroyed both him and me." Duval then accused Remarque of deceiving her father.[84] Zagorskii depicted Remarque as betraying his working-class comrades by accepting fame and fortune and aligning himself with the Germans who had sat the war out in the rear. He also disappointed his comrades by failing to depict the true class nature of the imperialist war.

Kir'ianov's 1936 review of this play reveals a great deal about Soviet critics' admiration for Remarque's style and about changing tides in the Soviet literary scene. Kir'ianov felt that the play had some merits: "Zagorskii succeeded in avoiding Remarque's pacifism. He succeeded in sharpening scenes and filling them with class content." Like Sokolovskii, Zagorskii sought to repair Remarque's known defects while showcasing his novel. Nonetheless the critic found fault with Zagorskii's adaptation: "but for Remarque's readers, the choice of scenes will seem unconvincing, for the majority of them are the least characteristic of the original. And then, for those who have not happened to read the original, these scenes will seem insufficiently connected and illogical."[85] Kir'ianov thus faulted Zagorskii for not remaining true to the novel and failing to successfully convey the essence of the original to audience members who had not read it. He felt that the spirit of the original novel should remain accessible to Soviet audiences.

The conclusion to Kir'ianov's review offers important insight into transformations in Soviet ideology: "As for polemics with Remarque—this time

has passed. Similar conversations have been removed from the order of the day. The play was intended for a certain moment and done in a cultured way (*kul'turno*), but this moment has passed. Now there is no longer any reason to publish it."[86] By 1936, the issues of "turning the imperialist war into a civil war" and rejecting "bourgeois" pacifism in favor of revolutionary militarism were passé. On the one hand, Soviet autarky had lessened the need for world revolution. On the other hand, after the National Socialist takeover of Germany in early 1933, the Soviet Union's recognition by the United States later that year, and the Soviet entrance into the League of Nations in November 1934, Soviet ideologues no longer lumped the Western powers together in the same undifferentiated category of "imperialist." Soviet leaders, including Stalin, began to develop their own language of pacifism in response to the bellicose rhetoric of Nazi Germany. The few years that elapsed between the writing of the play and its review destroyed its relevance and eliminated the possibility of its publication, even though it was ideologically correct for its time and "cultured." Even though Soviet ideologues found *All Quiet on the Western Front* acceptable for only a very brief time, these two plays demonstrate that the novel captured the admiration and respect of Soviet authors and critics in the mid-1930s, and it continued to have resonance in Soviet intellectual life despite the fact that it was not reprinted between 1930 and 1959.

Although the American film adaptation of *All Quiet on the Western Front* directed by Lewis Milestone for Universal Pictures was not shown publicly in the Soviet Union, Soviet readers learned about its notoriety.[87] In 1931, the journal *Proletarskoe kino* (Proletarian Cinema) reported on the stormy reception of the film. A brief article chronicled how around this "patriotic" film "genuine militaristic passions flared up." It reported that copies of the film were stolen from a movie theater on the border of Germany and Holland and burned because it was "not to someone's taste" that hundreds of Germans were crossing the border daily to see a film that was banned in Germany proper. The article also mocked fifteen members of the British Parliament for their protest of the German ban on the film. The MPs asserted that the film "did not lower the honor and prestige of Germany but rather showed her heroic struggle against the allies." The author of the article then commented, "As they say, 'What wouldn't comfort a child [*chem by ditia ne teshilos*']?'"[88] The article revealed the author's disdain for both the film and its militaristic critics, but also showed that the European scandals surrounding the reception of both the novel and the film were of interest to the Soviet public.

There is another aspect of the film that connects it to war memory in the Soviet Union—the biography of the director. The son of a successful manufacturer, Lewis Milestone was born Lev Milstein in Odessa, and attended Jewish schools in Kishinev. Sent to engineering school in Germany by parents trying to discourage his love of theater, Milestone ran away to seek his fortune in the United States. When the United States entered World War I, Milestone volunteered for the army and served in the Photographic Division of the United States Signal Corps, becoming a photographer and then a filmmaker and editor. Although he did not see combat, Milestone "witnessed the impact of war when he had to preserve, photograph and catalogue limbs that had been sent from the battlefield to Washington."[89]

Milestone began his career in Hollywood after the war, and when asked to direct *All Quiet on the Western Front*, he took inspiration from the work of Sergei Eisenstein, borrowing from Eisenstein's pioneering montage methods to create "some of the most realistic and horrific battle scenes in cinema history."[90] Bringing the butchery of war to the screen in this innovative way carried a pacifist message. Contemporary American reviewers believed that the film "preach[ed] the doctrine of peace." In his later life, Milestone told an interviewer that he "didn't believe in war and was against violence." He claimed that his war films were a success because he "tried to expose war for what it is and not glorify it."[91] Milestone, raised and educated in a Russian-Jewish milieu and influenced by early Soviet filmmaking, shaped both the style and the message of this classic "American" film.

The Nazis cast aspersions on the film version of *All Quiet on the Western Front* by calling it a "Jewish" film because of Milestone and Carl Laemmle, its producer.[92] While of course rejecting the Nazi racism that this formulation implied in the early 1930s, I would nonetheless like to consider the film alongside the work of other Russian-Jewish witnesses of war. Many of the most powerful Soviet voices that explored the morality of violence and forcefully depicted the tragedies of war—Erenburg, Voitolovskii, Babel', Levin, and Katsov—were all Russian-Jewish writers. This controversial film that some called pacifist and some called patriotic, then, could be seen as part of a transnational Russian-Jewish tradition of interpreting the impact of war. The poignancy of these accounts was enhanced by the dual identities of the writers witnessing atrocities committed against "their" people (the Jews) by "their" people (the Russian and Red armies). Jewish writing was tinged with the trauma of being a victim who was ostensibly on the same side as some of the perpetrators.

Both before and after the attacks on Remarque heated up in 1931, Soviet readers, like readers all over the world, tore through *All Quiet on the Western Front* "like a shot."[93] Some readers were engaged enough to write to the publishers in Moscow with their opinions of the book. These letters, written mostly

in Russian but also in Ukrainian between 1929 and 1937, demonstrate the popularity of *All Quiet on the Western Front* as well as the Soviet readers' predominantly positive responses to the work. One Stalingrad worker explained in a 1931 letter that the novel was hard to find and "did not ask" but "ordered" the publishing house to put out the book "in innumerable quantities" so that everyone could read it. Another wrote a review of the novel "from a dark little corner" of the Soviet Union and wanted to know if her letter had reached the center.[94] These letters demonstrate that the more than one hundred thousand copies of the novel were dispersed across the Russian, Belorussian, Ukrainian, and Kazakh Soviet republics and in demand.

Many of the letter writers described the novel in glowing terms. One librarian from the Belorussian Republic argued that the book deserved the Nobel Prize because "the author is full of such passionate tender sympathetic love for man, in spite of his protestation that he is only 'accustomed' to killing." This call to give Remarque the Nobel Prize echoed European calls for Remarque to receive this high honor. Another letter from a joiner who was a Komsomol member at the model construction project at Magnitogorsk explained that he had read the novel over and over again. He suggested that the "authorities" should give the publishing house a thousand-ruble prize for putting out the novel and that every honest citizen of the Soviet Union should read *All Quiet on the Western Front*. The novel was clearly appreciated by some members of the Soviet public as something out of the ordinary, written by an author who possessed the "will, courage, and nerves of steel" to depict these "terrifying events."[95]

As might be imagined, the novel struck a chord with World War I veterans. A thirty-five-year-old boilermaker from Rostov on the Don, who had been wounded twice in World War I, declared after reading the novel that Remarque "became a brother" to him because the novel showed the "suffering of the human soul." In his 1931 letter, he wrote: "Finally I am satisfied that I found a person who recounted to the world the suffering, the torments of the gray trench soldier of the 1914–1918 war. . . . [Remarque] has become valuable not only to me, but I think to the million-strong mass of frontline soldiers whom he reminded about the horrors of the meat-grinder of the human body." Another Russian veteran stated that the novel made him "live through the war a second time," and a younger writer acknowledged that the book confirmed his father's war stories.[96] The World War I veterans living in the Soviet Union were paradoxically grateful to Remarque for reminding them of the horrors that they had experienced. Given that they had few public outlets to express

their feelings and opinions about the suffering they had endured, especially in comparison to Civil War veterans, Remarque's stirring up of memories gave them the opportunity to reflect on their experiences and share them with others, while the novel also validated their own suffering.

Not all of the letters were uniformly positive. Some readers, like the professional critics of the novel, raised the issue of Remarque's lack of class-consciousness in his explanation of the war. One sixteen-year-old letter writer complained that Remarque had failed to portray "that class which still and now thirsts for war," and another letter writer would recommend the novel to former soldiers of the German front, but "hardly believes" that there would be any among them "who understood the reason for this war less than Remarque."[97] The absence of an explicit class framework in the novel lessened its value in the eyes of these Soviet readers.

Other criticisms of the novel were more idiosyncratic. One former soldier from the Ukraine accused Remarque of "a tint of chauvinism" in the last pages of the novel when he "justified the defeat of the Germans as their being overwhelmed by well-fed enemies, forces who were superior in number and better supplied with shells." The letter writer feared that such a description of events "might arouse patriotic feelings in the German reading it."[98] This interpretation of the novel revealed the former soldier's continuing distrust of the Germans and his unwillingness to allow them any excuses for their defeat. It also underlined the multivalent nature of the novel that was criticized from all sides as either unpatriotic or too patriotic.

None of the letter writers that I surveyed, however, echoed the language of public criticism by attacking Remarque as a "bourgeois pacifist." The notion that the book could be an effective tool in the struggle against war was widespread, though how exactly it would serve this function remained in contention. Some readers placed the book within an orthodox framework of militant world revolution; a sixth-grade girl who read the novel as a school assignment declared, "I now understood that until we destroy the capitalist world . . . there will be bloody slaughter and millions of workers will perish, especially youth." As one former soldier framed it, only a war against capitalism would defeat imperialist war: "The proletariat of the entire world will have to once again drain the cup of sorrow in a battle for proletarian revolution."[99] These Soviet interpreters of Remarque's novel believed that one had to fight another war to end imperialist wars.

Other readers (including a Red Army recruit and the ardent Komsomol from Magnitogorsk) were inspired to direct military action by the novel,

promising to "go cheerfully to the defense of the border of the Soviet Union" and "to really study soldiering" to be "a defender" of the Soviet Union.[100] In this case, the future war would be prevented not so much by revolution but by proactive defensive action on the part of the Soviet Union. Yet, the novel was still interpreted within the context of military mobilization. These readers' interpretations of the novel strayed rather far from the dominant interpretations of the novel as pacifist.

Readers who projected the horrors of the past onto a future imperialist war did not all see the novel as motivation for militarization. The Stalingrad worker who demanded "innumerable" copies of the book wanted workers to read it because "in a future war [they] would have to turn into pieces of rotten meat." This worker then revealed his distress at this idea, writing, "Answer me. What then is life if we await, as they say, this unavoidable fate?" The novel led this person to despair about the horrors of the future rather than to volunteer "cheerfully" to fight in a future war. Other letter writers spoke about stopping war more generally, hoping that people would "wake up" and that "the new generation would not tolerate war." A twenty-six-year-old peasant who had "lived through the horror of war" wrote in 1933 that in war,

> workers become crippled, are poisoned by gases, are dying by every possible means of modern warfare made by the hands of these same people, who, as a result of the fear of death caused by these same weapons, reach insanity, and all the time do not understand that war is the greatest of the greatest insanities of the human race, against which it is necessary to fight with all the forces and all the means that can be applied.

This letter writer regretted that Remarque had not offered any explanation of how war could be stopped or how the people "perishing in this devil incarnate" reacted to it.[101] His reaction to the work clearly articulated a pacifist response that advocated the end of war without using "the greatest of the greatest insanities" as a means to that end. Readers' letters revealed that *All Quiet on the Western Front* struck a chord with Soviet readers and that they interpreted it in a wide range of ways. This range shows that the novel opened up dialogues about the nature and causes of war, about militarism and pacifism; and that, as in Europe, there were profound disagreements about whether there was a way to avoid "the unavoidable" and ever-looming imperialist war without engaging in war to do it. These reactions show that the Soviet government had cause to be concerned about pacifist ideas spreading among the population.

Twentieth Anniversary Discourse

In the field of literature, the turning point for the curtailment of World War I memory seems to be somewhat later than in the historical and military fields. For example, although *Quiet Flows the Don* underwent a thoroughgoing overhaul by censors in 1933, it continued to be printed in attractive editions and large print runs throughout the 1930s. Typical of Soviet cultural practice during the 1930s, there was a flurry of publishing about World War I in honor of the twentieth anniversary of the start of the war in 1934.[102] These extremely interesting works featured a complex view of World War I. This case study examines the fates of three particular books during the 1934 anniversary. All three works stand out for their compelling nature and their extraordinary literary and artistic qualities, but only two of the three could be published during the anniversary, and 1934 marked the last time that each work could be published for fifty years. None of them was reissued until the 1980s.

Two of the works appeared in the mid-1920s (Sof'ia Fedorchenko's *The People at War* and Lev Voitolovskii's *In the Footsteps of War)* but were attacked by critics at the end of the 1920s or in the beginning of the 1930s. Despite being subject to criticism, Voitolovskii's work appeared in a new edition in 1934, while Fedorchenko's work did not. Il'ia Feinberg's *1914* was published for the first time during the twentieth anniversary of the outbreak of war in 1934; the book was well received, but when the Union of Soviet Writer's Defense Committee later recommended that the work be reissued in honor of the Red Army's twenty-fifth anniversary, this proposal was rejected.

The People at War

Sof'ia Fedorchenko's *The People at War* was one of the most influential Soviet works about World War I in the 1920s, and it offered readers a very frank and compelling discussion of the brutal nature of war. In the introduction to the 1917 edition, Fedorchenko, a nurse at the front, claimed that she had collected the material for the book in 1915 and 1916 by listening to the soldiers speak to one another and recording what she heard (figure 6.1).[103] The book was reprinted in a substantially expanded edition in 1923, the only complete edition. The 1925 edition underwent thoroughgoing censorship and many anecdotes from both the 1917 and 1923 editions disappeared. A second volume, about the revolutionary months between February and October, appeared in 1925; fragments of a third volume, about the Civil War, appeared in the periodical press in the late 1920s, but the volume was not published in full until 1983.[104]