Extending the Borders of *Russian History*

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Russia's First World War: Remembering, Forgetting, Remembering

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In many societies the aftermath of war has been inscribed in collective remembrance, embodied in public ceremonial, and encoded in personal memory, in complex and contested ways. This article indicates how an uneven process of remembrance has operated with respect to Russia's First World War. It begins by making the point that Russia's war has only recently begun to attract the attention it deserves. By contrast with the historiography of other belligerents, a lengthy historiographical caesura frustrated any serious examination of the multiple dimensions of Russia's wartime experience. Apart from a handful of Soviet studies on specialist topics, little scholarly work of note saw the light of day in Russia.[1] In Britain, Germany, France, Italy or Australia, the First World War was commemorated and depicted in a variety of forms, but nothing comparable occurred in the Soviet Union. I do not want to labor this point, partly because it is so obvious, even if it exaggerates the degree of serious historical work that actually appeared anywhere before the 1970s. The final section of this article considers the ways in which, during the war itself, attempts were being made to historicize wartime experience. Thus the prolonged historical amnesia referred to above does not indicate a lack of interest amongst contemporaries in the prospective recollection and representation of the war, as they struggled to reflect upon its devastating consequences at the time and to imagine what future historians would make of it. Contemporaries devoted considerable energy to providing a documentary record, conscious of the need to record for posterity the unprecedented impact of the war.

REMEMBERING (NOW)

For reasons that will become clear, the collective memory of Russia's First World War did not become entrenched after 1918. Instead, the remembrance of war was entrusted to the historical profession. The results were modest. To be sure, the military history of the war was the focus of a book on the eastern front, while other studies dealt with duma politics and with the political aspects of economic mobilization.[2] But the explosion of work from the 1960s onwards on the social history of late imperial Russia and on the interwar period did not find its counter-

part in studies of the Great War. This seems set to change. Recent works have embraced propaganda and popular culture in wartime Russia, the impact of German occupation of the Baltic lands, refugees and population displacement, peasant women's protest, and the fate of prisoners-of-war.[3] To be sure, we lack studies of important topics, including religious activity in wartime, military ceremonial, children, war widows, the Red Cross, disability, and the impact of war on popular opinion. Many topics in the economic history of the war remain obscure. But we have come a long way in the last few years.[4]

Setting historiography to one side, what of public or collective remembrance of the Great War? As we shall see, a deep silence rapidly settled over the war after the Bolshevik Revolution. But in post-Soviet Russia, official attention has at last begun to be devoted to the war. In 1995, the State Duma, the Council of the Federation and the President issued a proclamation on the dates to be designated as "victory days." A new date was added to the calendar (23 February), marking the "Day of Defenders of the Fatherland," although it somewhat confusingly identified this as the occasion when the Red Army scored a victory over the forces of imperial Germany, overlooking the fact that the Red Army had hardly begun to form.[5] Dan Orlovsky points out that some Russian observers now regard the war as the starting point of Russia's modern troubles. Clearly they belong to a tradition in which the Great War is blamed for helping to bring about the Revolution of 1917, a familiar but rather sterile argument that does not encourage serious scholarly work on the war. Also important in modern-day Russia, according to Orlovsky, is the lack of any "spiritual" coming to terms with the millions of dead, wounded and bereaved, whose suffering needs to be reclaimed on behalf of "new Russia."[6] In this reading, the Great War may yet acquire fresh significance as emblematic of current political concerns. Yet such a blanket preoccupation with war, loss and reckoning tends to portray an entire nation as the "victim" of war, leaving little room for individual accounts, whether they focus upon personal tragedy or upon self-realization.

Forgetting: 1917–1990

How and why did silence, rather than collective remembrance, come to be the defining characteristic of Russia's place in the history of the Great War? What have been the consequences of that silence? Is it as absolute as appears at first sight?

A few brief remarks are in order about the various ways in which the war impinged upon the lives of the tsar's subjects. Around 15 million men donned a uniform between 1914 and 1917. Around 626,000 were killed in battle, 2.6 million were wounded and more than 3.6 million were captured or listed as missing in action.[7] The experience of having been drafted, having fought, having been wounded or imprisoned, or having become sick brought home to the individuals

concerned, and their families and friends, the scale and scope of the war. Others, men and women, were drafted into the organized war economy or volunteered as nurses or welfare workers. They experienced the war as a productive effort, as backbreaking work and as an encounter with danger. Everyone experienced the war as a strain on consumption, through the inflation in the prices of basic goods. (There were, of course, advantages to be had if one commanded control over goods in short supply.) For other civilians, the war amounted also to a brutal form of involuntary population displacement. So far as Russia's troops were concerned, the war figured as a bloated behemoth that absorbed ever more manpower. The old army, having attempted to fashion a more modern system of induction and training before 1914, was quickly overwhelmed by the scale of the wartime mobilization. The war disrupted lives, and it also wreaked havoc with military convention. When the summer offensive of 1917 collapsed, front-line troops began to return to their homes and units in the rear refused to go to the front. The often-quoted figure of two million deserters strains credibility, but there is no doubt that desertion decimated the ranks of the Russian army during 1917.[8]

The comparison with Germany is illuminating. By November 1918 Germany was obliged to accept defeat, and a new government came into being. Some political leaders on the left in Weimar Germany welcomed the war as the driving force behind political reconstruction. But many ordinary Germans experienced the Great War as a traumatic event, which had scarred the population. Veterans and war widows became very visible and pressed their claim for recognition and recompense. They demanded that their fallen comrades be given proper burial sites abroad, and the state acted upon those injunctions. The war might have been painful and embarrassing, both for individual soldiers and for the German state, but its very capacity to shock and destroy also ensured that the war remained firmly in public and private consciousness. During the 1930s, when the "front generation" still numbered ten million, the Nazi regime paid particular attention to the needs of war veterans. Thus the war constituted a major point of reference; indeed, neither Weimar nor Nazi Germany could ever be said to have come to terms with it. Veterans talked endlessly about "their" war; some spoke of having "the war in their bones." The same was true of the troubled German state.[9]

The experiences of German soldiers in the Ost Land were of particular significance, personally, professionally and collectively. One outcome of the Dolchstoß or "stab in the back" was that military freebooters took up arms to attack the "Reds" and to seek revenge for the "betrayal" of the homeland, envisaging battle as a continuation of the struggle to defend the "real" Germany against its enemies within and without. In the Baltic, the Freikorps would reward themselves with land and other trophies. Here was an episode in which the past mattered hugely to the foot soldier. Germany could be "reborn" in the East, where everything was imaginable. Yet the possibilities of realizing a vision of a victorious new Germany were also combined with a sense that the colonizing mission had inextricable links to the German past: "When we explore the ele-

ments which gave the German Freikorps fighter spiritual bearing ... we can find traces of all the elements that have worked in German history." This iconography drew upon a rich storehouse of images from the distant past. Thus, the Freikorps traced their lineage back by several hundred years, to the Thirty Years' War and even to the era of the Teutonic knights.[10]

In contrast, the troops of the former Russian Imperial Army manifested a desperate desire to return to their villages, in order to embark on the revolutionary transformation of property rights in land. In other words, whereas in 1919 Germany's troops displaced their radicalization on to the suffering population of the Baltic, Russian troops went home to realize a vision of agrarian radicalism. In the Russian heartland, the old war was over; the memories evoked in the land transfer were not those of long-ago "national" campaigns but the peasants' war against the landlords. This conclusion is reinforced by the behavior of armed peasant bands during the Russian Civil War. The prize was not a revived national epic, but a *chernyi peredel* and a settling of accounts with the propertied strata.[11]

Some veterans from the World War did of course enter the Red Army, whose size swelled to around 2.3 million in July 1919 and around 4.4 million a year later. But, although it recruited former tsarist non-commissioned officers and "specialists" (as well as Red Guards, factory workers and peasant conscripts), and although it relied upon conventional military hierarchies of command and subordination, it was nevertheless a new institution. It did not rest upon tradition—new regiments were formed, with new rituals and symbols, with Communist leadership and Soviet military commissars, and with an emphasis upon revolutionary or comradely discipline. Described as the "Workers' and Peasants' Red Army," it drew a clear distinction between the new *krasnoarmeets* and the common soldier who served the tsar. There was little here to suggest the cultivation of continuities with the old army, still less any reverence for military tradition.[12] One did not celebrate regimental participation in the Great War. The kind of camaraderie evident for example in the French, British and German armies was absent from Russia's generation of 1914. What mattered was commitment to the cause of the Revolution. This temporal discontinuity deprived the soldier of any sense that the experience of fighting in 1914 or 1915 amounted to something of historical significance. The Civil War became instead the "formative experience."[13]

The example of the Latvian Riflemen is also instructive. Formed in 1915, and allowed to bear Latvian flags and insignia, they went into battle to defend Latvia against German invasion, in which cause they suffered grievous losses in the winter of 1916. Even as, famously, they fought in defense of Lenin's Revolution, they symbolized the claims of Latvia for recognition. Nationalists subsequently claimed the Riflemen as martyrs of Latvia who deserved to find a place of honor in Riga's national cemetery, whereas in Soviet historiography they belonged to the pantheon of revolutionary heroes. Here was a complex mixture of military comradeship, radical political zeal and invented national tradition. From one standpoint, the defense of revolutionary Petrograd validated the conduct of these

men. From another, the Great War could indeed become their "formative" experience. In other words, once nationalism became part of the equation, the war might assume a quite different significance.[14]

Against this background, no formal space was found in the Soviet Union for personal recollection of the Great War. True, the well-known writer Konstantin Paustovskii alluded to his war service. Employed as a medical orderly (*fel'dsher*) by the Union of Towns, Paustovskii encountered civilians displaced by enemy action or by the decisions of the Russian High Command. His memoirs vividly describe the degradation of refugees, as well as the cultural transformation of Russia's provincial towns. Paustovskii himself was excited by the war, which helped give meaning to a life hitherto purposeless.[15] But this is a rare exception in the memoir literature. Soviet officialdom sanctioned certain kinds of experience, but the lives of millions of Russian citizens during the Great War did not belong to the realm of valid testimony. The literary efforts of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn are the exception that proves the rule: in placing personalized accounts of wartime episodes at the center of his narrative of *Red Wheel*, Solzhenitsyn deliberately flouted the official Soviet line.[16]

Memories of war were recorded differently and for different reasons by some of the non-Russian national minorities. Armenians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Jews, Kazakhs and Germans interpreted the war in terms of national hurt and disaster; at least, this was the interpretation advanced by a patriotic intelligentsia. The collective memory of these minorities emphasized the ways in which the civilian population of the borderlands had been brutalized, whether by the Ottoman state (in the case of Armenians) or the tsarist state (in the case of the other minorities). The displacement of population not only rendered these minorities vulnerable to hunger, cold, and epidemic disease; it also threatened to "de-nationalize" entire ethnic groups, whose members were spread across European Russia, the Urals, Central Asia and Siberia. Patriotic elites began in the midst of war to collect reminiscences that would testify to national hurt. The suffering of Russian Jews was set in a familiar context of collective national suffering, with allusions ranging from Biblical torment to more recent pogroms in Eastern Europe. Latvian, Lithuanian and Polish leaders, by contrast, expressed the fear that they faced the lot of the Jews, "to be scattered across the globe."[17]

There are fascinating questions here about the process whereby new successor states sought after 1918 to realize a vision of the nation-state, whether by drawing upon wartime struggles or by embarking upon state-building programs such as the construction of new national museums. How were these managed, staffed, and filled with collections worthy of the nation? How did they seek to attract visitors, and what responses did they evoke? The museum was doubtless a site dedicated in part to the triumph of the national ideal in wartime; it would include reference to the tribulations of war and to the survival of the "nation" under extreme conditions such as occupation, dissolution, and war. Within its walls the state could present a narrative of "national time" as well as national travail—a site where

the nation could assert its continuity and survival in the face of catastrophe. A Latvian open-air ethnographic museum was established outside Riga in 1924, as was a new national art museum. One of its advocates, Janis Silins wrote that: "Our growing confidence demands that we spend our money on this outstanding purpose; we should remind ourselves of our living houses and cottages in Latvia, of those rooms where our spirit dwells."[18] The theme of national remembrance appears also to have been developed by Latvian educationists. Children were invited to work on their memories and to question their parents as well. A 1927 text instructed them to ponder the following: "Do you remember what your mother and father told you about their childhood and youth? What nation did they live in? ...What holidays and other celebrations were there? What wars? What unrest?"[19] This kind of "memory work" doubtless took place in Poland, Lithuania, and Estonia as well. Strenuous efforts went into the collection of Lithuanian folksongs.[20] Museums, schools, universities, clinics, musical associations and other institutions were turned into laboratories for the cultivation of national memory.

To be sure, there is a Soviet academic literature on the First World War. But it occupies a different intellectual universe. Some of it was sponsored by the emerging military establishment during the 1920s, whose planners wished to draw lessons from the wartime experience. Specialist journals such as *Snabzhenie Krasnoi armii, Voennaia mysl' i revoliutsii*, and *Voina i revoliutsiia* devoted space to aspects of economic mobilization, the preserve of military technocrats. Much of the mainstream historiography belonged to the genre of economic and labor history, with a heavy emphasis upon statistics, as if there were literally safety in numbers. However, no one took up the challenge posed by Prokopovich, Grinevetskii, and others who studied the macroeconomic impact of the war.[21] Other scholars seemed to be more comfortable with detailed studies of policy-making, with some descriptive data thrown in for good measure. Arkadii Sidorov was probably the doyen of this tradition. Sidorov had launched his career as a specialist on industrial mobilization and financial-economic policy as early as 1927, with a preliminary study that appeared under the auspices of the Institute of Red Professors.[22] Notwithstanding an official Stalinist line from the mid-1930s to the mid-1950s that contradicted his research findings, by emphasizing Russia's "semi-colonial" status, Sidorov and his students drew attention to the close links between the tsarist state and big business, and thus to the existence of highly developed elements of capitalism in pre-Revolutionary Russia. By the early 1960s Sidorov had himself established a new orthodoxy. He occupied a position of considerable influence, and his students were responsible for the most serious work on the political economy of the war, couched in terms that sought to establish the "preconditions" (*predposylki*) for the October Revolution.[23]

In similar vein, relatively few émigré memoirs dealt with the experience of war. There is a valuable unpublished account by Evgenii Nikol'skii, who attended to the needs of Russia's refugee population in 1915–16, but not much else.[24] Émigré economists and lawyers supplied an academic need in several impressive volumes

for the Carnegie Endowment. Sir Paul Vinogradoff, chief editor of the Russian series, planned to write a general history of the war, which would show the "revolutionary crisis ... in its historical setting; political breakdown, theories and practice; the gospel of hatred; fictions and realities; club despotism; the coming reckoning." After his sudden death, his project was replaced by Michael Florinsky's somewhat more sober account. Other planned volumes included studies of German capital, the psychology of zemstvo workers, landholding and land settlement, the labor market, trade and commerce, and "social conditions and movements in Ukraine during the war." However, they were never published.[25]

Why, then, was the war largely forgotten? Partly, to make an obvious point, it was forgotten because other wars quickly assumed greater prominence in the lives of Russian citizens and their rulers. Within the new Soviet historical narrative, other conflicts represented either the triumph of the Bolsheviks over their enemies, as in the Civil War, or of the Soviet Union over its external foes, as in 1941–1945. Vast amounts of state-sponsored propaganda were devoted to the creation and consolidation of myths about the centrality of these conflicts. Russia's new rulers had no cause to find meaning in a war launched by the old regime. The Great War had already become something of an embarrassment. Forgetting the war was partly "accidental" (other forms of settling accounts became more important to officialdom, and to the individuals who grieved about them) and partly deliberate (class struggle brought tsarism down, not the strains induced by war). Individuals too may have disowned the war, either because they were encouraged to find a different kind of meaning in the Civil War, and/or because they embarked on the challenging tasks of social, economic and political reconstruction, without wishing to look back.

Perhaps soldiers and civilians alike abandoned quickly any sentimental attachment to the war, having recourse instead to attacks upon internal foes (speculators, profiteers, fifth columnists, and shirkers, as well as more familiar enemies such as landlords, traders, factory owners and factory foremen). This popular preoccupation with the class enemy dovetailed neatly with Bolshevik doctrines of social conflict. If this is true, then the Russian population found significant meaning in social antagonism, rather than in the war effort as such. Put another way, the subsequent Soviet amnesia corresponded to the popular mood of antipathy towards capital as opposed to any mass engagement with the war as such—even if it deprived Soviet citizens of any sense that their participation in the Great War deserved some kind of recognition.

Whatever its mainsprings, Soviet forgetting found expression in the absence of public monuments akin to the Cenotaph and the Menin Gate. There were no gardens of remembrance, no village war memorials, and thus no opportunity for those who wished to transcend grief.[26] Military units were dismantled and reordered as the Red Army emerged, so there was no regimental continuity and an absence of institutional devices for remembering one's fallen comrades. No graves marked the spot where soldiers fell in battle or civilians perished en route

to a place of safety. Oblivion was officially sanctioned. The Moscow city cemetery where "fallen soldiers" were buried in 1915–17 became the site of mass burial of the Cheka's victims, until it was bulldozed to make way for the "Leningrad" cinema.[27]

Remembering (then)

As in other belligerent societies, the Russian public was desperate for news from the front. Newsreels and documentary films went some way towards satisfying that demand, conveying an impression of the war without risking too "realistic" a version. Sometimes battle scenes were staged for the benefit of cameras; on occasions, old footage (for example, of the Balkan wars in 1912–13) was presented as fresh material. The one significant exception was the capture of Erzerum, where authentic footage tended to dominate, and where the documentary style conveyed the bravery of Russian troops and the desolate state of the city. The Skobelev committee, which issued a substantial number of patriotic films and other propaganda material, excelled itself here. Much of its wartime output emphasized the use of new military technology, the threat posed by Germany to Russian female virtue, and the need for goodness and courage to triumph over evil and cowardice.[28] By 1916, however, the patriotic emphasis upon adventure and bravery had given way to a more troubling preoccupation with loss, suffering and the depressing endlessness of war.[29]

Images of war did not derive exclusively from official propaganda. Tales of bravery, albeit produced in somewhat stylized form, were scattered throughout the popular press. Newspapers carried reports of heroic action, even by refugees who were otherwise imagined incapable of independent agency. The tale was told of an anonymous refugee who had tricked a party of German soldiers into thinking that she could direct them back to their base camp near Tarnopol. Instead of helping them she took out a bomb concealed in her bag, threw it in their midst and wounded all eight of them. She was rewarded with her photograph in the local newspaper. These images are important, because they countered the prevalent depiction of refugees as feckless, undisciplined, immoral, and diseased.[30]

Other kinds of record were generated by teachers, psychologists, and social workers, as well as by collectors of folksong. A group of pedagogues attached to the Kiev Froebel Society collected some of the drawings done by children, one of whom produced a cartoon-like mini-history of the outbreak of the war. The collection, entitled "Children and the War," also included letters written by children to soldiers at the front, offering them encouragement about the conduct of the war, and reassurance about the care being lavished on their families and wounded comrades.[31] This material was not collected explicitly in order to provide the basis for future historians. Presumably it was assembled to enable child psychologists to engage with the mental world of the next generation of citizens. Serious efforts were also made to collect folksongs from Russian, Ukrainian, Lithuanian

and Georgian soldiers serving at the front and in the rear. The most active collector was the peasant turned *fel'dsher* V.I. Simakov (1879–1955) who traced the emergence of a diversified popular culture, in which traditional soldiers' songs were mixed with urban ballads, outlaws' songs, *chastushki*, and other genres.[32] This activity demonstrates the rich variety of source material on which a fuller social and cultural history of the war might be based.

It is understandable that the tsarist government and the military should have devoted resources to the dissemination of particular images of the enemy and of the efforts required on the home front. What is more impressive and unusual is the way in which contemporaries sought to historicize the war, by deliberately generating material that would contribute to a future account of the war. The famous historian Sergei Platonov (1860–1933) was emphatic about the need for testimony to be sought from displaced persons, in order to supply raw material for the "future historian." He had in mind collections of letters, stories, poems etc., extracts of which appeared in the periodical press and in specialist publications dedicated to the refugee "problem": "I emphatically urge that those who concern themselves with the collection of information about refugees should hold onto everything that comes into their possession, rejecting nothing, retaining every little scrap of information, every personal opinion, without reservation and without stricture, storing everything away for the future scholar."[33] The need to remember was particularly acute for the patriotic intelligentsia for whom death and displacement spelled national disaster—the erasure of the nation through occupation and enforced migration (loss of national solidarity and cultural meaning in Siberia etc.). The leading Jewish historian, Simon Dubnow, wrote in 1918 that "[t]he historic events of the last four years are so profound that many years will be needed for the preparatory work to be undertaken, in order to allow the future historian to make sense of them."[34]

Russia's educated elite acted upon these injunctions. In this regard, the Tatiana committee—formed in 1914 to look after the interests of war widows, but by 1915 heavily involved in refugee relief—was all important. Toward the end of 1916 a distinctive approach towards refugees can be detected in the offices of the Tatiana committee. Two moments stand out as being particularly significant. First, the committee launched an ambitious program to publicize the history of refugeedom, by means of a special exhibition that was scheduled to take place in the spring of 1917. Underlying this initiative was a belief that the Russian public needed to be better informed about the living conditions and activities of refugees, who were not all "beggars, idlers and spongers." The exhibition would be funded by private contributions and sponsored by 82 refugee organizations.[35] In its preliminary proposal the Tatiana committee spoke of four main themes that needed to be highlighted: conditions in Russia's borderlands before and during the war (including "the destruction of settlements, property and artistic monuments"); the "sorrowful journey" of refugees, including the background to their displacement, the course of their movement and the assistance given by government and public

organizations; the living conditions in their new homes (including "the work undertaken by refugees and their impact on the local population"); and lastly the restoration of normal life in the regions cleared of enemy occupation.[36]

Leading figures in the national committees certainly saw the proposal for an exhibition on "Russia and her devastated borderlands" (*Rossiia i razorennye okrainy*) in a positive light.[37] Not only would it help to challenge prevailing misconceptions about the "idle refugee"; it would also afford an opportunity to display the talents and cultural attributes of national minorities in the Russian Empire, most of whom impinged only tangentially on the consciousness of the "Russian foreigner." The Latvian Central Welfare Committee called upon its local affiliates to submit handicrafts and agricultural produce, as well as testimonies of defense work and photographs of living conditions. Several governors expressed their misgivings, arguing that handicrafts and other items should be submitted without any national attribution, but rather as products of provincial life. Arguably, however, the source of particular exhibits was less important to the national committees than the decision of the organizers to include a record of enemy occupation and despoliation of the imperial borderlands. In this manner they would help to constitute a new sense of national purpose, that is to remind refugees that they had a duty to participate in the reconstruction of their homeland. Although nothing came of these elaborate plans (the timing was judged inappropriate in April 1917), it appears that many items of refugee provenance were actually submitted from as far afield as Krasnoiarsk, Baku and Odessa. Typical items submitted by Latvian refugees included jewelry, dolls (in national costume), embroidery, leather goods, and furniture.[38]

In a related initiative the Tatiana committee sponsored an even more remarkable project designed to gather material from refugees at first hand about their experiences before, during and after displacement. "An extremely important indicator [of the refugee movement] are the stories of refugees themselves."[39] Refugees were encouraged to describe their experiences in their own words. If they needed help in formulating a coherent narrative the Tatiana committee obligingly published a schedule of 24 questions that might be put.[40] The aim was very much to secure stories from "simple people" and not just from the refugee intelligentsia. Other kinds of testimony were also sought: photographs, drawings, reports, memoirs, stories and *belles lettres:* "The material that is collected ... will be collated and organized systematically and will form part of a projected volume of 'Collected materials on the history of the refugee movement during the world war'."[41] This doctrine represents a significant shift away from the earlier emphasis on supervision and discipline, which inevitably tended to deny a voice to refugees. Unusually, the project deliberately places the human agent at the center of attention.

The project straddled the final months of the tsarist regime and the short life of the Provisional Government, and eventually yielded several published accounts of episodes in the lives of refugees and relief workers. One sympathetic

observer recorded that the exhausted and frightened refugee had "the eyes of a wounded animal." Another wrote of his encounter with a distraught father who had just buried his young daughter, concluding that "I comforted him." But not all accounts depicted the active and benevolent relief worker. The elderly Iakov Vol'rat, originally from Kurland, spoke not only of the pain and torment of displacement, but also of the fact that his experience was "interesting for an observant individual," who had access to "unexpected and different places, peoples and customs."[42] Throughout 1917 a sub-committee of dignitaries, officials and historians continued to encourage the collection of material for the projected history of refugeedom: "recognizing that facts and observations, even if they seem at first to be insignificant and trivial, may prove to be of great interest. ...The most important thing is for the description to be *sincere and truthful.*"[43]

The only other similar project which has come to light was conducted by the Jewish ethnographer, Solomon Rapoport (pen name S. Anskii, 1863–1920). Rapoport carried out relief work amongst Jewish refugees in Russian Poland, Galicia and Bukovina during the war, and in his diaries he makes much of his wish to record as much as possible of the Jewish experience, whether recounted in stories, poems or song. In so doing, he appears to have sought to convey the integrity of popular religious sentiment from which the Jewish population derived some comfort in troubled times. In other words, according to Rapoport, Jewish civilians made sense of their experiences through recourse to traditional systems of belief.[44]

Conclusion

Historians of Russia have been accused of a readiness to "skip" World War Two.[45] The same accusation can be leveled even more legitimately at historians in respect of the First World War. Why this unwillingness on the part of Russianists to give war its due? The explanation is simple, at least so far as Soviet scholarship on the First World War is concerned: Russia's Revolution was validated not by reference to the immediate circumstances of social upheaval but by reference to socio-economic "preconditions" over the longer term. In this framework there was no room for accounts of war that hinged upon human agency. As a consequence, no significant attempt was made to solicit the memories of millions of ordinary people, or to recover and record their history. Before long, other projects for dramatic social and economic transformation occupied center stage. Major efforts were made to invest in the heroization or demonization of individuals or social collectivities associated with the Revolution. In Soviet Russia remembrance of the Civil War implied the commemoration of the victor over the vanquished; to have commemorated the Great War would have been to invite the recollection of a something more akin to a shared endeavor, amongst people who shortly thereafter became bitter foes. It was important to wipe the slate clean, in order to record the struggle to make society and state anew.

Attempts were made to historicize the war even as it was taking place. There were (to use Henry Rousso's term) different "vectors" of memory at the time. The most significant were semi-public organizations such as the Tatiana committee and its talented and energetic professional staff. These efforts were also shared by the national committees, whose transformation into political authorities after 1918 enabled the non-Russian participants of war to begin to recollect their experiences, albeit in a new national register. Whether this was therapeutically preferable to Soviet amnesia is an issue that is impossible to resolve.

Notes

An earlier version of this paper was read to the Russian History seminar at St. Antony's College, Oxford (May 2001). I am grateful to the participants for helpful comments.

1 The two main bibliographies are G. Khmelevskii, *Mirovaia imperialisticheskaia voina, 1914–1918: sistematicheskii ukazatel' knizhnoi i stateinoi voenno-istoricheskoi literatury za 1914–1935g.* (Moscow, 1935; reprinted Cambridge, England: Oriental Research Partners, 1973), and R.E. Rutman, *Rossiia v period pervoi mirovoi voiny i fevral'skoi burzhuazno-demokraticheskoi revoliutsii* (Leningrad: AN SSSR, 1975).

2 Norman Stone, *The Eastern Front* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1975); Lewis Siegelbaum, *The Politics of Industrial Mobilization in Russia, 1914–1917: A Study of the War-Industry Committees* (London: Macmillan, 1983); Raymond Pearson, *The Russian Moderates and the Crisis of Tsarism, 1914–1917* (London: Macmillan, 1977). See also W. Bruce Lincoln, *Passage Through Armageddon: The Russians in War and Revolution* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986).

3 Hubertus Jahn, *Patriotic Culture in Russia during World War I* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); Vejas Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front: Culture, National Identity and German Occupation in World War I* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Peter Gatrell, *A Whole Empire Walking: Refugees in Russia during World War I* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999); Barbara Engel, "Not by Bread Alone: Subsistence Riots in Russia during World War I," *Journal of Modern History* 69 (1997): 696-721; Reinhard Nachtigal, "Seuchen unter militärischer Aufsicht in Russland: das Lager Tockoe als Beispiel für die Behandlung der Kriegsgefangenen 1915–1916?," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 48 (2000): 363–87. See also N. Smirnov, ed., *Rossiia i pervaia mirovaia voina* (St. Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 1999).

4 New work includes A.I. Utkin, *Zabytaia tragediia: Rossiia v pervoi mirovoi voine* (Smolensk: Rusich, 2000); O.S. Porshneva, *Mentalitet i sotsial'noe povedenie rabochikh, krest'ian i soldat v period pervoi mirovoi voiny* (Ekaterinburg: UrO RAN, 2000); A.Iu. Bakhturina, *Politika rossiiskoi imperii v Vostochnoi Galitsii v gody pervoi mirovoi voiny* (Moscow: AIRO–XX, 2000).

5 *Otechestvennaia istoriia* 1 (2001), 188, citing *Krasnaia zvezda*, 16 March 1995.

6 Dan Orlovsky, "The Great War and Russian Memory," in N. Smirnov, ed., *Rossiia i pervaia mirovaia voina* (St. Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 1999), 49–57.

7 *Rossiia v mirovoi voine 1914–1918 v tsifrakh* (Moscow: TSU, 1925), 30.

8 Allan Wildman, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 363–4.

9 Robert Whalen, *Bitter Wounds: German Victims of the Great War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 57.

10 Quoted in Liulevicius, *Warland*, 236–7.

11 It might nevertheless be interesting to compare the behavior of Cossack troops with those of the Freikorps. The problem of identifying a crystallized Russian "nation" is a theme of Jahn, *Patriotic Culture*, 173–4, and Gatrell, *A Whole Empire Walking*, 162–5.

12 Evan Mawdsley, *The Russian Civil War*, 2d ed. (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2000), 59–63.

13 Diane Koenker et al., eds., *Party, State and Society in the Russian Civil War: Explorations in Social History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989). Josh Sanborn is preparing important work on this topic for publication.

14 Alfred Bilmanis, *A History of Latvia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), 281. The Latvian rock band Skyforger recently issued an album called "Latvian Riflemen," with accompanying words and pictures telling the story of Latvia during World War I. See *http://www.toroddfuglesteg.com/skyforger.html*.

15 See Konstantin Paustovskii, *Slow Approach of Thunder* (London: Harvill, 1965), 175–6, for an indication of "the utter helplessness of the world to which I belonged, the utter lonely rootlessness of my unsettled life."

16 For the latest rendition, A. Solzhenitsyn, *November 1916* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1999).

17 Gatrell, *A Whole Empire Walking*, 159, quoting Janis Goldmanis.

18 Information kindly supplied by Dr. Aija Priedite.

19 Vieda Skultans, *The Testimony of Lives: Narrative and Memory in Post-Soviet Latvia* (London: Routledge, 1998), 153.

20 Donald Rayfield, "The Soldiers' Lament: World War I Folk Poetry in the Russian Empire," *Slavonic and East European Review* 66 (1988): 66–90.

21 S.N. Prokopovich, *Voina i narodnoe khoziaistvo* (Sovet vserossiiskikh kooperativnykh s'ezdov, 1918); V.I. Grinevetskii, *Poslevoennye perspektivy russkoi promyshlennosti* (Kharkov: Vserossiiskii tsentral'nyi soiuz potrebitel'nykh obshchestv, 1919).

22 A.A. Sidorov, "Vliianie imperialisticheskoi voiny na ekonomiku Rossii," *Ocherki po istorii Oktiabr'skoi revoliutsii*, 2 vols. (Moscow-Leningrad: Gossudarstvennoe Izd., 1927): 1.

23 K.N. Tarnovskii, *Sovetskaia istoriografiia russkogo imperializma* (Moscow: Nauka, 1964).

24 E.A. Nikol'skii, "Bezhentsy v velikuiu voinu 1914–1918gg." (ms., Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, 1934).

25 James Shotwell, *Economic and Social History of the World War: Outline of Plan* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment, 1924), for brief autobiographies of the contributors.

26 Catherine Merridale, *Night of Stone: Death and Memory in Russia* (London: Granta, 2000), 123–25.

27 Orlovsky, "The Great War and Russian Memory."

28 Jahn, *Patriotic Culture*, 155.

29 *Ibid.*, 167, describing the film *The Poor Chap Died in an Army Hospital*, 1916.

30 *Zhizn' bezhentsev* (3 September 1916); "Geroistvo bezhenki," *Vestnik iuga* (6 September 1915); Gatrell, *A Whole Empire Walking*, 128–40.

31 *Deti i voina: sbornik statei* (Kiev, 1915).

32 Rayfield, "The Soldiers' Lament."

33 *Izvestiia Vserossiiskogo komiteta dlia okazaniia pomoshchi postradavshim ot voennykh bedstvii* 20 (15 May 1917): 8.

34 S. Dubnow, "Iz 'chernoi knigi' rossiiskogo evreistva," *Evreiskaia starina* 10 (1918): 195.

35 Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv [hereafter RGIA], f.1276, op.12, d.1382, ll.387–90.

36 *Izvestiia KTN* 17 (1 February 1917): 10; *Trudovaia pomoshch'* 10 (1916): 512, where this initiative was seen as a contribution to "the history of war in general."

37 *Armianskii vestnik* 8 (19 February 1917): 19–21.

38 *Zinojums* 51 (22 December 1916); V. Olavs, *Latviesu beglu apgadasanas centralkomiteja* (Riga, 1931), 144–46; RGIA, f. 1322, op. 1, d.13, l. 142ob.
39 "Sobranie materialov o bezhenskom dvizhenii," *Izvestiia KTN* 15 (1 January 1917): 10–11.
40 Gatrell, *A Whole Empire Walking*, Appendix 2.
41 *Izvestiia KTN* 9 (1 October 1916): 5-6; *Trudovaia pomoshch'* 9 (1916): 394.
42 E.Glukhovtsova, "Skazka zhizni," *Izvestiia KTN* 18 (15 February 1917): 21–28; Iakov Vol'rat, "Begstvo ot germantsev i skitaniia," *ibid.*, 19 (15 April 1917): 17–22. See also Vera Slavenson, "Bezhenskoe: po povodu pisem bezhentsev," *Vestnik Evropy* 51, no.7 (1916): 292–301.
43 *Izvestiia KTN* 23 (15 June 1917), 24, emphasis added.
44 David Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse: Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), 135.
45 Amir Weiner, "Saving Private Ivan: From What, Why, and How?" *Kritika* 1 (2000): 305–36.

IV

The Soviet Experience