

# Oh, That! Myth, Memory, and World War I in the Russian Emigration and the Soviet Union

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Among the lore of the Russian émigré community in France you can find the story of a confrontation that took place at the Russian military cemetery in St.-Hilaire-le-Grand near Reims (Champagne), the final resting place for almost a thousand soldiers of the Russian Expeditionary Force who died on the western front during World War I. One day in 1975 a Soviet delegation arrived to leave a commemorative plaque for “Soviet soldiers killed in the struggle against Nazism,” even though some of the thirty-six Russians and Ukrainians buried at the cemetery after World War II had apparently fought with the Nazis.<sup>1</sup> The visitors also intended to replace the crosses identifying those who died between 1914 and 1918 with a simple stone tombstone topped by a red star, a plan that encountered resistance from local authorities and Russian émigré groups. This disagreement over the proper way to memorialize Russian war dead in an obscure military cemetery did not create a major international incident, but it does remind us that some Russians remembered World War I long after 1917. The war, for example, was an “epochal” event for Russian military émigrés, an experience reflected in novels, memoirs, social clubs, interest groups, journals, public lectures, and war monuments.<sup>2</sup> In 1939 the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* devoted 124 pages to World War I, a hundred pages more than the space given to the October revolution. One poignant monument in the French countryside still asks future generations to remember Russian sacrifices made during World War I: “*Children of France! When the enemy is vanquished and you can freely pick flowers on this field, remember us, your Russian friends, and bring us some.*”<sup>3</sup>

Today the Great War appears more often as Russia’s “forgotten” or “unknown” war.<sup>4</sup> In contrast, critics, historians, and art historians of interwar Europe have made extensive use of the concept of collective memory and its expressions to examine the political, social, and cultural

1. Jacques Schoonjans, *Moscou veut annexer les morts antisoviétiques*, available at <http://www.russie.net/france/cim-hislaire.htm> (last consulted 13 August 2002).

2. V. Ershov, “Emigrantskie organizatsii veteranov voiny v 1920–1930-e gody (po materialam GARF),” in A. Kruchinin, ed., *Pervaia mirovaia voina i uchastie v nei Rossii (1914–1918)*, pt. 2 (Moscow, 1997), 77.

3. For information and pictures, see the information presented by the Centre régional de documentation pédagogique (CRDP) de Champagne-Ardenne, especially on the website “Le cimetière russe de Saint-Hilaire-le-Grand,” 2000, at <http://crdp.ac-reims.fr/memoire/lieux/1eregmCA/cimetieres/russes/sainthilaire.htm> (last consulted 13 August 2002; emphasis in the original). On the Russian Expeditionary Force, see Jamie Cockfield, *With Snow on Their Boots: The Tragic Odyssey of the Russian Expeditionary Force in France during World War I* (New York, 1998).

4. N. N. Alebras, “Pervaia mirovaia voina v soznanii rossiiskikh istorikov-sovremennikov,” in I. V. Narskii and O. Iu. Nikonova, eds., *Chelovek i voina: Voina kak iavlennie kul'tury* (Moscow, 2001), 282; Catherine Merridale, *Night of Stone: Death and Memory in Twentieth-Century Russia* (New York, 2001), 96–100.

consequences of World War I, and they have examined the myths that Europeans constructed to explain, cope with, and evade a traumatic and confusing war experience.<sup>5</sup> There the memory of World War I served to mobilize support for a variety of causes: a culture of the radical right in Germany, an anti-status-quo civic republicanism among veterans in France, and a moderate conservative consensus in Britain.<sup>6</sup> On an individual level, participants and the bereaved remembered the war to cope with a traumatic war experience and give meaning to life during difficult political and economic times.<sup>7</sup> In the Soviet Union, however, the Great War “sank into silence.”<sup>8</sup> There were no major public monuments to the war, no great cemeteries for World War I fallen, and no Armistice or Remembrance Day.<sup>9</sup> The Bolsheviks memorialized another history: the thoughts and lives of Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin, the leadership of the party during the revolution and civil war, the Russian and European revolutionary traditions, and the trauma and violence of the revolution, the civil war, and the Stalinist period all served to obscure the experience of World War I among ordinary people. Historians of Russia have therefore not analyzed the roles that the memory of World War I played in Russian life, and Russia remains largely absent from comparative studies of the war and its legacy.<sup>10</sup>

Russian people did in fact have “sites of memory” where they expressed myths, displayed symbols, and mobilized opinion around the memory of World War I. Such sites of memory, as the French scholar Pierre Nora has described them, are the physical and mental locations where information, images, and cultural expressions about the past are organized to serve various political, social, or personal purposes in the present. Collective memory, according to Nora, is a natural part of pre-modern societies, where tradition and ritual link the individual and the community to the past, and the past is experienced in the present, not learned as something separate from daily existence. Modern life has dis-

5. “Myth” is used here to mean an explanatory story and does not imply truth or falsehood. On myths, memory, and commemoration of the war in Europe, see the work of Paul Fussell, George Mosse, Modris Eksteins, Samuel Hynes, Daniel Sherman, Jay Winter, Alex King, Antoine Prost, Adrian Gregory, Robert Whalen, David Lloyd, and Annette Becker, among others.

6. For an overview, see Adrian Gregory, *The Silence of Memory: Armistice Day 1919–1946* (Oxford, 1994), 3–6.

7. George Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York, 1990), 5–7; Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge, Eng., 2000), 5.

8. Daniel Orlovsky, “Velikaia voina i rossiiskaia pamiat’,” in N. N. Smirnov et al., eds., *Rossia i pervaiia mirovaia voina: Materialy mezhdunarodnogo kollokviuma* (St. Petersburg, 1999), 49.

9. The Moskovskoe gorodskoe bratskoe kladbishche (Moscow Military Cemetery) opened in February 1915 and lasted into the 1920s as the All-Russian War Cemetery but had disappeared by the early 1930s. The only major public monument to World War I in Russia, an obelisk raised in Viaz’ma in 1916, was destroyed in the 1920s. See N. Zubova and M. Katagoshchina, “Pamiatnik velikoi voiny,” *Moskovskii zhurnal*, 1994, no. 5:52–55; K. G. Sokol, *Monumenty imperii* (Moscow, 1999), 174.

10. Orlovsky, “Velikaia voina i rossiiskaia pamiat’,” 51.

rupted this collective memory, and we now experience the past (if we do at all) mostly through history, a specialized discipline where thinking about past events is “willful and deliberate, experienced as a duty rather than as spontaneous” and is “psychological, individual and subjective, rather than social, collective, and all-embracing.”<sup>11</sup> Sites of memory exist to mediate “a residual sense of continuity” with the past in the era of history, but as conscious, not spontaneous, constructions they only mimic the older type of collective memory, for “we must create archives, mark anniversaries, organize celebrations, pronounce eulogies, and authenticate documents because such things no longer happen as a matter of course.”<sup>12</sup> Modern memory is not what people remember; it consists of the public icons and symbols of the past that focus today’s collective identity: the people and events, monuments and buildings, institutions and concepts, or books and works of art that represent the past in everyday social, cultural, and political life.<sup>13</sup> Myth and memory have specific purposes, and they change in time and space as their usefulness, reception, and means of distribution change.<sup>14</sup> The relative absence of sites of memory for World War I in the Soviet Union thus does not mean that Russian culture contained no memory of the war, only that it may have appeared in other forms, other places, or other times than we expect. It can be found if we look outside the dominant narrative of Russian history that conflates the Russian past with the Soviet experience.

This article looks at some of the ways Russians remembered World War I and the sites of memory, both physical and mental, that focused this memory in the 1920s and 1930s. It is not a study of the historiography of World War I or individual remembrance, except where these contribute to collective memory, nor is it a comprehensive discussion of all the manifestations of World War I in Russian literature, politics, or culture. Individual memories of the Great War appear in many corners of Russian culture, but modern collective memory has specific social, cultural, or political functions, and its institutional and cultural expressions are most noticeable when its public uses are strong. In the case of Russia, public commemorations of World War I were especially obvious in émigré military culture and in Soviet newspaper commemorations of the first of August, the day that Germany declared war on the Russian empire in 1914.<sup>15</sup> For twentieth-century Russian memory was divided between two

11. Pierre Nora, “General Introduction: Between Memory and History,” in Pierre Nora and Lawrence D. Kritzman, eds., *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, vol. 1, *Conflicts and Divisions*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York, 1996), 8.

12. *Ibid.*, 1, 7.

13. Étienne François and Hagen Schulze, eds., *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte I* (Munich, 2001), 17–18.

14. *Ibid.*, 18.

15. The sources for this article are newspapers, official publications, and journals of émigré military organizations in France, San Francisco, and Shanghai. Most are found in the collections of the University of California, Berkeley, and the archive of the Association pour la conservation des valeurs culturelles russes (hereafter ACCR) at the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam. I also use more widely available memoirs, periodicals, and military histories as well as several websites devoted to the Russian emigration. The

Russias: the Soviet Union and the Russian emigration.<sup>16</sup> Outside the Soviet Union, a non-Soviet Russian memory of World War I flourished in the interwar period, and the war became an important memory that military émigrés used to overcome the rupture from the past (imperial Russia) and the present (Russian territory) caused by revolution and life in emigration. Military émigrés created modern sites of memory to assert their connections to the Russian past and remind people not to forget them and their version of Russian history. The war had a different expression in Soviet Russia, where journalists and publicists evoked its image, but not its historical content, to sever the USSR from the Russian past and separate the first socialist society from its enemies in the present. This Soviet memory of the war was consciously constructed, located in public space, and intended to mobilize the Soviet population, but there were few, if any, other sites of memory devoted to the war, and the press had little use for the past in its first of August commemorations. World War I may never have dominated official public discourse in the Soviet Union, but a look at its sites of memory reveals some important characteristics of modern Russian memory and brings Russians back into the European experience of the Great War.

The selective memory of life in an idealized prerevolutionary Russia helped Russian émigrés cope with the experience of revolution and civil war, flight into exile, and the hardships of life in emigration.<sup>17</sup> Some 2 million escaped the revolution and civil war for the major cities of Europe, Asia, and the Americas after 1917, including at least 200 thousand who settled in France and up to 20 thousand in the United States (with several thousand on the West Coast).<sup>18</sup> These émigrés understood themselves to be part of “Russia Abroad,” the real Russia temporarily located spatially inside other countries. They resisted cultural assimilation, preferring instead to cultivate a Russian identity and preserve Russian values and traditions for an eventual return to the homeland.<sup>19</sup> Yet Russia Abroad was not imperial Russia in a social, political, or geographic sense, even if it was, in some ways, the real and imagined continuation of imperial Russian politics and culture. Émigrés had to develop new cultural practices as they adapted to a postrevolutionary life. They needed to define institutions and a sense of community to survive in an environment where they, as outsiders, faced the constant threats of poverty, assimi-

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Soviet sources are newspaper commemorations of 1 August in *Pravda*, *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, *Krasnaia zvezda*, and *Izvestiia*. These sources are used because I have not found large or systematic commemorations of the war in other places, including liberal émigré newspapers such as *Posledniia novosti* (Paris) or “thick” journals like *Russkaia mysl'*, nor have I discovered nonmilitary émigré institutions or monuments that rival the scope of the military emigration's devotion to the memory of the war.

16. On the divided memory of the Holocaust in Germany, see Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (Cambridge, Mass., 1997).

17. Marc Raeff, *Russia Abroad: A Cultural History of the Russian Emigration, 1919–1939* (New York, 1990), 156–57.

18. James Hassell, *Russian Refugees in France and the United States between the World Wars*, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, vol. 81, pt. 7 (Philadelphia, 1991), 22, 33.

19. Raeff, *Russia Abroad*, 4.

tion, and local neglect. These Russians outside Russia developed their own narratives of Russian history, memories that countered the centrality of the Soviet experience and denied the legitimacy of the Bolshevik government. Almost everyone (except the émigrés themselves) has long overlooked such alternative visions of the Russian past, but the significance of the emigration has increased in today's Russia, where interest in non-Soviet history has become an important part of the search for a usable Russian past.<sup>20</sup>

Military culture was one place where émigrés sought to preserve Russian traditions and deal with the problems of living in a nation without a state. The military emigration was a major constituency in Russia Abroad, populated with former officers and soldiers from the imperial Russian army, remnants of the White armies, ex-prisoners-of-war, military personnel in newly independent states that were once Russian territory, and military cadets and other youth groups.<sup>21</sup> The *Russkii obshchevoinskii soiuz* (Russian All-Military Union, ROVS) was the largest and most visible émigré organization, with between 40,000 and 60,000 members in the interwar period.<sup>22</sup> The *Soiuz russkikh voennykh invalidov zarubezh'ia* (Union of Russian Military Invalids Abroad), another "national" military organization, had a total membership of 6,082 veterans, 1,288 women, and 1,089 children in the late 1920s.<sup>23</sup> Such émigré military institutions were often part of a hierarchy with a central umbrella institution based in Paris and affiliated branches scattered across the world.<sup>24</sup> ROVS leaders saw their organization as a battle group dedicated to overthrowing the Soviet government, but most émigré military organizations had a broader and more mundane mission to serve members and the local émigré community. The *Obshchestvo russkikh veteranov velikoi voiny v San Frantsisko* (Society of Russian Veterans of the Great War in San Francisco, RVVV), founded in 1924, pledged to "keep and observe the holy covenants of the Russian Army and Fleet," support ideological (*ideinoi*) and active connections with other Russian military organizations, fulfill "national patriotic duties and satisfy the cultural-educational needs of members," and provide them with material and moral assistance.<sup>25</sup> The society formed an active part of the San Francisco émigré community, with a library of more

20. Karl Schlögel, ed., *Russische Emigration in Deutschland 1918 bis 1941: Leben im europäischen Bürgerkrieg* (Berlin, 1995), 11.

21. V. F. Ershov, *Rossiiskoe voenno-politicheskoe zarubezh'e v 1918–1945 gg.* (Moscow, 2000), 5.

22. Hassell, *Russian Refugees*, 62. Membership figures cited here reflect official information given in brochures and publications, but the number of members who participated actively was much lower. For a description of the many Great War military organizations throughout the emigration, see Ershov, "Emigrantskie organizatsii," 77–87.

23. *La Fédération des Invalides Mutilés de Guerre Russes à l'Étranger* (Paris, 1929).

24. The Shanghai branch of the Union of Russian Military Invalids Abroad, organized in 1926, had 78 members, 97 women, and 45 children in 1932. In 1937 the Parisian Union had 15 associated unions and 6 groups in 21 countries. *The Invalid's Friend* (April 1932): 8; *Drug invalida* (January 1937): 2.

25. *Obshchestvo russkikh veteranov velikoi voiny v San Frantsisko* (San Francisco, 1937), 2. For a similar mission statement from the Union of Russian Military Invalids in Shanghai, see *The Invalid's Friend* (January 1933): 3.

than 3,000 volumes, a building on Lyon Street, a long-running journal, a women's committee, and programs for the unemployed and disabled.<sup>26</sup> Military officers and veterans usually held conservative political views, and some were political extremists, but the military emigration as a whole was not a marginal group inside Russia Abroad. It was an important part of the social infrastructure and mainstream culture of the emigration in the interwar period.

The construction of a positive memory of World War I became a part of the self-understanding and institutional cohesion of émigré officers and veterans, where the Great War became, in essence, a Lost Cause similar to the tradition that developed in the American South after the American Civil War.<sup>27</sup> The myths, memory, and social institutions of the military emigration were the depositories for an honorable Russian war experience that served to obscure the experience of the revolution and the civil war, and this military culture formed a web of individuals and institutions that created, transmitted, and replicated the memory of World War I throughout Russia Abroad. Their memory of the war was, despite its many facets, an attempt to replace defeat in revolution and degradation in exile with the history and values of a non-Bolshevik Russia. Fedor Stepun, the noted writer and former artillery officer, recalled one letter from a war buddy that shows how a positive memory of World War I could counter the negative experience of the revolution and civil war: "If you only knew how true and beautiful 'our' war, if you let me express it so, seems to me after all the horrors of the proletarian revolution and civil 'slaughter' [*boini*]." <sup>28</sup> Former imperial officers had known what was true and what was false, who was a friend and who was an enemy in the Great War, unlike the revolution and civil war where loyalties, values, and perceptions of reality became muddled.<sup>29</sup> The creation of a positive World War I experience could have a personal cathartic effect for war veterans in the emigration, but leaders of émigré military institutions also mobilized the memory of the war to support a variety of political and social purposes.

One myth of the war experience helped explain how a lost war could be honorable: the idea that Russia would have won but for a German-Bolshevik plot to destroy the nation, a plot realized in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in 1918. The former Russian Senator Baron Taube expressed this "stab in the back" myth when he described the Bolsheviks as "a shady band of traitors, openly in the pay of Germany as an instrument of war to demoralize the army and the Russian people."<sup>30</sup> In 1921 the "Russian Par-

26. *Obshchestvo russkikh veteranov*, 7–12. This society had from 60 to 93 members each year between 1927 and 1947 and still exists today. See *Vestnik obshchestva russkikh veteranov velikoi voiny*, no. 183 (26 May 1949): 42.

27. On the Lost Cause and its institutional expressions, see Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South, 1865 to 1913* (New York, 1987).

28. Fedor Stepun, *Byushee i nesbyusheesia* (St. Petersburg, 1995), 279.

29. Viacheslav V. Kostikov, *Ne budem proklinat' izgnanie . . . (Puti i sud'by russkoi emigratsii)* (Moscow, 1990), 55–56.

30. M. Taube, *La politique russe d'avant-guerre et la fin de l'empire des tsars (1904–1917)* (Paris, 1928), 408. There were obviously other interpretations and myths about the war in the Russian emigration, which was diverse in its political, cultural, and philosophical

liament in Constantinople,” a group that included prominent imperial Russian military and public figures, used the myth of Bolshevik betrayal to absolve Petr N. Wrangel’s army of defeat and stigmatize Bolshevik rule as dishonorable: “This army has cleansed, through its exploits, the infamous outrage of the Peace of Brest-Litovsk, the humiliation of the Russian people, and the shameful tyranny of the Bolsheviks.”<sup>31</sup> This myth and its variations suggested that the Russian army had acted for the highest possible purpose on the battlefield, only to lose the war on the home front through subversion by the enemy, its agents, and its dupes. In 1930 a writer for the prominent military journal *Chasovoi* cited dishonorable German tactics to explain the disintegration of the Russian army: “When the Germans recognized the impossibility of victory in honest [*chestnom*] combat, they threw into the Russian people and Russian army the great lie and provocation, more dangerous than poison gas, which did their work in inspiring the weak to flee and instilling suspicion and hatred in the souls of the strong.”<sup>32</sup> This myth placed World War I at the center of the military émigré interpretation of the revolution and civil war.<sup>33</sup> A commentator in Shanghai argued in the late 1920s that “there were not two wars in Russia. There was one war directed toward the defense of the fatherland . . . from foreign conquest.”<sup>34</sup> A decade later, the RVVV in San Francisco declared that the civil war was the “inevitable and ideological continuation of the Great War.”<sup>35</sup> The idea of the German-Bolshevik conspiracy allowed military émigrés to maintain their honor and justify their continued fight against Bolshevism into the interwar period.

The creation of an honorable war experience allowed Russian officers and veterans to uphold their military prowess, patriotism, and legitimacy as soldiers in emigration when there was no Russian government to recognize their status.<sup>36</sup> The public language of the military emigration was suffused with traditional images of military virtue and patriotism, a strong religious sensibility, and, less often, a nostalgic reverence for the monarchy.<sup>37</sup> Anton I. Denikin remembered that “in the First World War the traditions of the old knightly chivalry were *still* maintained,” an idea that countered the violence of the front experience and distinguished the

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orientations. Variations of the German-Bolshevik plot were strong in right-wing circles, but they could be found everywhere. See the memoirs from such major figures as A. I. Denikin, *The White Army* (London, 1930), 34, 36, and A. S. Lukomskii, *Memoirs of the Russian Revolution* (London, 1922), 76–77; but also from regimental historians like D. Khodnev, *L.- Gv. Finliandskii polk v velikoi i grazhdanskoi voine (1914–1920 gg.)* (Belgrade, 1932), 39.

31. Press release in ACCR, box 37.

32. *Chasovoi*, no. 24 (31 January 1930): 3.

33. White generals held this view even while fighting the civil war. S. I. Konstantinov, “Vliianie vzaimosviasi mirovoi i grazhdanskoi voin na psikhologicheskii raskol rossiiskogo obshchestva,” in Narskii and Nikonova, eds., *Chelovek i voina*, 182.

34. *Russkii invalid*, 22 May 1928, 6.

35. *Obshchestvo russkikh veteranov*, 4.

36. The concept of honor was central to White officers’ self-understanding of themselves and their conflict with Bolshevism. See Paul F. Robinson, “‘Always with Honour’: The Code of the White Russian Officers,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 41, no. 2 (June 1999): 121.

37. This language was common in the emigration as a whole. See the recollections in Michael Glenny and Norman Stone, eds., *The Other Russia* (New York, 1991).

good world war from the bad civil war.<sup>38</sup> The example of an officer named M. Rokotov illustrates how an imagined positive war experience could be an expression of military community, personal self-worth, and selective memory. In a 1939 article entitled “Nezabyvaemye gody” (Unforgettable years) for the popular weekly *Rubezh* (Harbin), Rokotov described how a chance mention of the war in a passing conversation between two strangers could spark an animated exchange of memories, and he explained to readers, using the language of military virtue, why the war was connected to pleasant personal memories: in combat “the best of humanity comes out: heroism, friendship, self-sacrifice.”<sup>39</sup> What Rokotov chose to forget shows that memory of the war could obliterate the negative experience of the revolution and civil war, for he literally could not write about the worsening situation in the army during 1917. “I don’t want to remember that,” he confessed. “Let every participant instead remember the war years with warm feelings until death. Much was difficult but much was also good. Everyone considered Russia great *then*, and the Russian army was the best army in the world.”<sup>40</sup> This language of intimacy intensified the link to a comfortable, if idealized, Russian past and distanced military émigrés from subsequent events. Stepun remembered that revulsion for the revolution and “warm, almost tender recollections [*vospominaniia*] of the war” were the main themes in the letters he received from former comrades-in-arms.<sup>41</sup> The memory of a personally positive war experience could allow officers and veterans to validate their self-esteem because it tied them to a worthy, honorable, non-Bolshevik Russian past.

World War I was evoked to mobilize the opinion of non-Russian hosts, especially in Entente countries like France and the United States. Military émigrés were always keen to uphold the loyalty, fidelity, and rightness of the Russian contribution to the Allied war effort. “Russia never ceased to shed its blood and to devote all its efforts to the common interests of the Entente powers,” explained the military historian and former imperial quartermaster general Iurii Danilov.<sup>42</sup> Immediately after the revolution this link served to push the Allies toward a more robust intervention in the civil war. The Socialist Revolutionary Vladimir Burtsev, for example, agitated in pamphlets, brochures, and the bilingual political newspaper *Cause commune/Obshchee delo* for a broad-based international coalition to fight Bolshevism, and he used anti-Germanism, not anticommunism, to urge the Allies to intervene decisively.<sup>43</sup> “Today as yesterday,” he wrote, “we support the alliance as it was in 1914 and consider its dissolution to be

38. A. I. Denikin, *Put' russkogo ofitsera* (Moscow, 1990), 257 (emphasis added).

39. M. Rokotov, “Nezabyvaemye gody,” *Rubezh*, no. 32 (5 August 1939): 14.

40. *Ibid.*, 18 (emphasis added).

41. Stepun, *Byvshee i nesbyvsheesia*, 279.

42. Youri [Iu. N.] Danilov, *La Russie dans la guerre mondiale (1914–1917)* (Paris, 1927), 552. Émigré military histories routinely reminded readers that Russian participation in the war had saved France on numerous occasions.

43. See the *Cause commune* headlines “William II, the Assassin of Nicholas II” (20 October 1918), “William II, Lenin’s Accomplice” (10 November 1918), “The Fall of Odessa, a Germano-Bolshevik Triumph” (14 April 1919), and “The Alliance of Bolshevism with German Imperialism” (12 August 1919).

a serious historical error.”<sup>44</sup> After the civil war, military émigrés recalled the wartime alliance to remind the French that their Russian guests deserved moral sympathy and financial support when both were in short supply.<sup>45</sup> In 1929 the Union of Russian Military Invalids Abroad emphasized the sacrifices Russians had made in the war in its official documents: “Russia lost six million men during the Great War: killed, dead, injured, and missing in common cause with the Allies.”<sup>46</sup> The alliance was again prominent when five thousand people supposedly viewed a film at the Lycée Nicolas II “supporting the deeds of Russian soldiers killed for having kept inalterable faith in France in spite of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk.”<sup>47</sup> In San Francisco the RVVV employed the Anglophone Russian word *vet-eran* specifically to “ease relations with American authorities and military circles.”<sup>48</sup> Military émigrés used the rhetoric of wartime alliance to make claims for support from their onetime allies, who shared the experience of the war but not the revolution or civil war with Russian exiles.

Finally, veterans’ organizations embedded World War I into their social work, a practice that linked the memory of the lost war to specific institutions. Scattered across the globe, often without property or steady sources of income, many émigrés faced a life of poverty and destitution, and they did not have easy access to government institutions, local charity organizations, or kin in host countries. Many writers evoked the war to support charities and solicit funding for various causes. The publisher of the literary anthology *Na Chuzhbine*, for example, promised in 1919 that “profit from the sale of this book will go to the eternal memory of Russian soldiers who died on foreign soil from 1914 to 1919.”<sup>49</sup> One memoirist exhorted his readers to think of the six thousand Russian invalids who led a half-starved existence in foreign lands: “Remember that, Russian people!”<sup>50</sup> Veterans’ organizations created a kind of honorable victimhood to mobilize material support for veterans, their dependents, and orphans. When the Union of Russian Military Invalids Abroad struggled to build a pension fund for its members, its directors asked potential donors to remember the people “whose deeds remain inscribed in bloody letters for eternity in the history of the world’s greatest tragedy” but who still lived in obscurity and poverty. “*Everything to help the veterans*,” went the appeal, “*the bearers of Russian honor and victims of the world war*.”<sup>51</sup> A fundraiser for an annual charity action “Day of the Invalid” monumentalized living

44. V. Bourtzeff, *Alliés, entendez-nous!* (Paris, 1920), 7.

45. On French hostility toward émigrés, see Hassell, *Russian Refugees*, 89; Glenny and Stone, eds., *Other Russia*, 264, 284.

46. See the title page of *La Fédération des Invalides Mutilés*.

47. Leaflet in ACCR, box 35.

48. *Obshchestvo russkikh veteranov*, 2. In 1934, the RVVV became a member of the United Veterans’ Council of California. More common Russian terms for “military veteran” were *uchastnik voiny*, *byushii uchastnik voiny*, or *invalid* (if disabled).

49. Osip Solomonovich Minor, *Na Chuzhbine: Sbornik proizvedenii russkikh voinov, 1914–1919* (Paris, 1919). The printing was 3,000.

50. See the last page of K. Popov, *Vospominaniia Kavkazskogo grenadera 1914–1920* (Belgrade, 1925).

51. Leaflet in the ACCR’s copy of *La Fédération des Invalides Mutilés* (emphasis in the original).

veterans when he felt inspired to “remind our readers that in the series of dreadful heritages of the Great War—that plague of mankind—there remain living monuments of it—the military invalids and disabled.”<sup>52</sup> World War I had created a large number of wounded Russian veterans, and it could, unlike the revolution or civil war, be used to appeal to non-Russian governments or neighbors who might be inclined to charity, especially in former allied states like France or the United States.

Russian military émigrés thus organized the memory of World War I for a variety of reasons: to create a worthy, if idealized, war experience; to recreate the wartime alliance; and to support veterans and their organizations around the world. They found it difficult, however, to insert this memory into the broader culture of the surrounding non-Russian societies and nonmilitary Russian émigrés, who did not need, did not want, or could not afford to remember the lost war. The assertion by the Union of Russian Military Invalids in Shanghai that “there is hardly any need of reminding what Russia has sacrificed during the war” belied the fact that the need to support disabled veterans existed and that they were reminding readers about it.<sup>53</sup> Pilgrimages to military cemeteries in Champagne and other White military rituals were attempts to build a distinctive Russian memory of the war, but these practices were not easy to create or maintain. “Due to the care of the French, the cemetery is clean and handsome,” wrote one Russian officer after a pilgrimage to a cemetery in Champagne in 1929, “but there is and will be nothing that gives the cemetery a Russian character—a memorial with an Orthodox Cross and eternal flame—unless we Russian people do it ourselves.”<sup>54</sup> It took years to raise money to build the Orthodox chapel at St.-Hilaire-le-Grand (which was finally finished in 1937). L. Buchinskaia, the spouse of a White general, complained in 1939 that Russians had never honored their army properly in the past and were still indifferent as other countries created a “cult” of their war heroes.<sup>55</sup> Émigré memory of the war was linked to military culture, and its expression was limited because Russia Abroad did not have the national or local governments, formal military institutions, or financial resources necessary to create, organize, and impose that memory on a large scale.

The Soviets also remembered World War I, but the Soviet memory of the war was very different from émigré commemoration. Memoirs and fiction from major participants, Russian and foreign, were published in the 1920s, and Soviet memoirists continued to produce books on World War I in the 1930s, but the most conspicuous place where the war appeared was in official newspaper commemorations of the first of August. While Russian military émigrés organized the memory of World War I to overcome the divisions that separated them from a desirable past, their hosts, and each other, Soviet press commemorations divided the Soviet

52. *The Invalid's Friend* (January 1933): 4.

53. *Ibid.*, 3.

54. *Vestnik soiuza ofitserov uchastnikov voiny*, 1929, no. 5:17 (emphasis in the original).

55. L. Buchinskaia, preface to Iu. F. Buchinskii, *Tannenbergskaia katastrofa* (Sofia, 1939).

Union from the Russian past and separated it from the non-Soviet present. The USSR was something new, better, and, above all, different in world history, and World War I, because it was part of the non-Soviet imperialist world, was a past that could not be memorialized. Yet the press needed an image of imperialist war to demonstrate the existence of a present danger to the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s, and it used the specter of the world war to focus readers on the need to defend socialism, fulfill official policies, and celebrate Soviet accomplishments. Paradoxically, therefore, Soviet newspapers did not often recall a specific past in their commemorations of the first of August, and writers and publicists developed a language in which the First World Imperialist War became an ahistorical symbol of imperialist and, later, fascist, war. Different from the émigré tendency to locate the memory of the war in an honorable Russian past and speak of its history in the present, this type of remembrance recognized the existence of the war and invoked its formal image, but the Soviets did not (or could not) talk about the Russian war experience or other historical details that might contradict the Soviet view of history and create a theoretically untenable connection between imperial Russia and Soviet Russia.

A myth of the war experience existed in Soviet public discourse to demonstrate this fundamental rupture with the Russian past: World War I was an international imperialist war that the Bolsheviks had converted into a class war during the October revolution and the civil war. The official press did not waver from this Leninist line. *Pravda* declared in 1918 that “a ‘People’s’ [*obshchenatsional’naia*] war is an *imperialist* war,” while a columnist for *Krasnaia zvezda* argued in 1939 that “only Lenin and the Bolshevik Party exposed the secret of the imperialist war,” as an “unavoidable stage” of capitalism.<sup>56</sup> The First World Imperialist War, as the Soviets called it before 1941, was the product of an expansionary capitalist world that could not by definition include the USSR and its leaders. This separation was made clear in such statements as “only one party remained true to the great banner of revolutionary internationalism. . . . Only one party led the working class to fight the imperialist war. That was the party of the Bolsheviks, the party of Lenin and Stalin,” “at the beginning of the war ten years ago we communists were alone in the literal sense of the word,” and “the Bolsheviks were the only revolutionary party in the world that opposed the predatory war.”<sup>57</sup> This myth of the war as an imperialist, class-based, and international conflict covered up alternative explanations that might deny the Soviet view of history and the government’s legitimacy as a revolutionary regime (such as the competing myth of the German-Bolshevik plot), and it relieved Soviet Russia of moral, financial, and diplomatic responsibility for imperial Russia’s participation in the brutal conflict. “Tsarism,” wrote one columnist in 1939, “conducted the war in

56. *Pravda*, 1 August 1918, 1 (emphasis in the original); *Krasnaia zvezda*, 1 August 1939, 2.

57. *Krasnaia zvezda*, 1 August 1939, 1; *Pravda*, 1 August 1924, 4; *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, 1 August 1939, 1.

complete agreement with the Russian bourgeoisie and in its own imperialist interests.”<sup>58</sup> The idea of the First World Imperialist War, moreover, communicated a constant sense of danger from without that could be used to justify the sacrifices that Soviet people were making under communist rule, for, according to the myth, imperialism was an integral part of international capitalism. In Soviet society militarism had the good civil war and its antithesis: the bad imperialist world war.<sup>59</sup>

Soviet press commemorations of the beginning of World War I did not recall a specific Russian war experience, which, when defined as imperialist, could not be Soviet. In articles, cartoons, and commentaries there were few depictions of the actions of individuals, the details of battles, the suffering of soldiers or civilians, or the experience of Russia and the Russians. Commentaries in 1924 and 1926 entitled “Pomni o voine” (Remember the war) did not ask readers to recall the specifics of the war, the suffering of individual soldiers, or the Russian war experience but to recollect the imperialist nature of war.<sup>60</sup> The international character of articles in 1924 (and in other years) represented the ties that bound the working class in all nations, and they decoupled the commemoration of the war from a specific Russian past, as did the lists of war casualties that embedded Russian dead among the total losses for all countries. The targets of antiwar demonstrations in 1924 were the same enemies of 1914: the bourgeoisie and their “lackeys,” the European Social Democrats.<sup>61</sup> In 1929 *Pravda* made almost no mention of the actual war in four full pages that marked the fifteenth anniversary, a characteristic that continued in the early 1930s, when Soviet newspapers on 1 August were filled instead with descriptions of the world economic crisis, tirades against the enemies of the Soviet Union, and reminders of the evils of war. A photomontage of a massive graveyard in 1934 was not a specific Russian graveyard but a generic image of imperialist war, as the caption made clear: “Millions of victims—billions of profits.”<sup>62</sup> This use of montage—the merger of pictures of several real places to construct an imaginary place—itself served to make the image all the more abstract. Readers were given no details of the war because the historical World War I was part of an imperialist, capitalist past that could not be celebrated as a formative experience or legitimizing event in Soviet Russia, a role played instead by the revolution and the civil war.<sup>63</sup> Imperial Russia was “old tsarist Russia,” the “bulwark of world reaction and the main obstacle of world revolution” where defeatism had been fully justified.<sup>64</sup>

The first of August was thus a symbol of an abstract idea (“imperialist war”), not a sign that referred to a specific historical event (“World

58. *Pravda*, 1 August 1939, 5.

59. O. Iu. Nikonova, “Instrumentalizatsiia voennogo opyta v SSSR v mezhoennoi period,” in I. V. Narskii and O. Iu. Nikonova, eds., *Chelovek i voina*, 395.

60. *Pravda*, 1 August 1924, 4; 1 August 1926, 1.

61. *Pravda*, 1 August 1924, 3–4.

62. *Pravda*, 1 August 1934, 2.

63. Orlovsky, “Velikaia voina i rossiiskaia pamiat’,” 54.

64. *Pravda*, 1 August 1924, 4; 1 August 1929, 4.

War I"). Soviet public discourse was generally designed to display an official version of reality that demonstrated the success of the Soviet system and the correctness of the Soviet worldview, and the language of the press, especially in the 1930s, compressed space (foreign and domestic) and time (past, present, and future) into a "near mystical account of Soviet life."<sup>65</sup> This tendency to relate everything to an officially presented Soviet reality was true of World War I commemorations. Typical was the author who began a 1937 article with a reference to the war but then immediately displaced the narrative to a contemporary context: "Today is the twenty-third year from the moment of the beginning of the First World Imperialist War. This anniversary takes place simultaneously with new, still 'localized' wars that have been undertaken by the Italian and German aggressors. In the Far East Japanese imperialism has already conducted a six-year war against China, and just recently we are witnesses to new acts of Japanese aggression. The danger of a new general war is near."<sup>66</sup> The past was shifted to the present in newspaper commemorations through "then and now" comparisons, constant intimations that a new war was imminent, phrases such as "twenty years after the war" or "after thirty years," and the use of "today" or "now" in sentences like "the great world war began twenty years ago. Today, as then, imperialism plans to throw humanity into the abyss of war."<sup>67</sup> The writer who published a poem entitled "Comrade, Do Not Forget" in 1938 did not ask readers to remember the past but to think of the present: "Comrade, do not forget: we are surrounded by the enemy."<sup>68</sup> The commemoration of the war in the press, ironically, resembled the older type of collective memory, which Nora describes as "all-powerful, sweeping, un-self-conscious, and inherently present-minded—a memory without a past that eternally recycles a heritage, relegating ancestral yesterdays to the undifferentiated time of heroes, inceptions, and myth."<sup>69</sup> Like modern collective memory, however, the Soviet memory of the war was not spontaneous but orchestrated to serve specific political purposes.

This type of Soviet war commemoration persisted because the press needed a negative representation of war and international conflict to explain the stress of Stalinist economic and social transformation but could not evoke the historical experience of imperial Russia. Press coverage of 1 August as International Antiwar Day, when readers were exhorted to fight "for peace and democracy, against war and fascism,"<sup>70</sup> intensified as the convulsions of collectivization and crash industrialization swept the country. The tendency to focus on the present, to display International

65. Jeffrey Brooks, *Thank you, Comrade Stalin! Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War* (Princeton, 2000), 79, 150; Vladimir Shlapentokh, *Soviet Public Opinion and Ideology: Mythology and Pragmatism in Interaction* (New York, 1986), 27; Andrei Sinyavsky, *Soviet Civilization: A Cultural History* (New York, 1990), 210.

66. *Pravda*, 1 August 1937, 4.

67. *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 1 August 1934, 1.

68. *Krasnaia zvezda*, 1 August 1938, 2.

69. Nora, "General Introduction," 2.

70. *Krasnaia zvezda*, 1 August 1938, 1.

Antiwar Day as a day of anti-imperialist propaganda, enemy baiting, and calls for mobilization instead of a remembrance of the historical world war, overwhelmed Soviet newspaper space in 1929 and 1934.<sup>71</sup> The four slogans for 1 August 1929 in *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, for example, were “against imperialism,” “against fascism,” “against Social Democracy,” and “for the defense of the Soviet Union.”<sup>72</sup> A banner headline in *Pravda* shows how a commemoration that was ostensibly about the outbreak of World War I was designed to mobilize action against a contemporary threat: “To counter the butchers of the bourgeoisie and the bloody dogs of Social Democracy, the revolutionary proletarians demonstrate today against the warmongers, in defense of the USSR, for the international proletarian revolution.”<sup>73</sup> The war and Stalinist transformation could merge. “Not for nothing does the day of industrialization (6 August) this year come almost immediately after the first of August,” wrote *Pravda* in 1929. “That is a symbol!”<sup>74</sup> Rather than a day to remember the war, 1 August was a day to justify the sacrifices being made by the Soviet people in the drive to mobilize and restructure Soviet life, to remind readers of the looming second imperialist war, and to identify the Soviet Union’s enemies. “The first of August,” declared *Izvestiia*, “should become a day for mobilizing proletarian forces against war and for proletarian revolution.”<sup>75</sup> The unprecedented amount of space devoted to the First World Imperialist War in the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* is understandable, for that huge article, filled with details about World War I (but always emphasizing its international and imperialist nature), also concerned the domestic and international situation in the 1930s.<sup>76</sup>

The link between an ahistorical memory of the war, Stalinist mobilization, and a denial of imperial Russian history becomes apparent in the changes that the presentation of World War I underwent in the late 1930s. Historical details crept into 1 August commemorations as the initial stress from Stalinist transformation faded and Soviet culture became more open to the Russian past. In 1934 *Pravda* published a map of the war and a chronology of events, while *Izvestiia* ran excerpts from fiction and remembrances of famous international authors.<sup>77</sup> Large multipage anniver-

71. *Pravda* rarely had more than an article or two devoted to the anniversary before 1929, except for 1924 (one and a half pages). In 1929 the paper had four full pages, in 1930 one page, in 1934 five pages, and in other years several commemorative articles. The coverage in other newspapers followed similar patterns: *Komsomol'skaia pravda* devoted five pages to the issue in 1929 and 1934, while *Izvestiia* had four pages and six pages, respectively.

72. *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 1 August 1929, 1.

73. *Pravda*, 1 August 1929, 1 (emphasis in the original).

74. *Ibid.*, 4.

75. *Izvestiia*, 1 August 1929, 1 (emphasis in the original).

76. The coverage of World War I in the 1930s was much greater than comparative historical experiences in all other editions of the encyclopedia. In the first edition, the civil war received 18 pages (vol. 18, 1930), the October revolution 20 pages (vol. 43, 1939), the Fatherland War of 1812 6 pages (vol. 43, 1939), but the article on the “First World Imperialist War” extended over 124 pages (vol. 44, 1939). The second edition, published in the 1950s, had 34, 21, 5, and 6 pages for each entry, respectively, while the third edition in the 1970s had 13, 13, 2, and 11 pages.

77. *Pravda*, 1 August 1934, 2; *Izvestiia*, 1 August 1934, 5–6.

sary editions went away after 1934, when a new trope surfaced, one that labeled 1 August as a “lesson of history” where historical details sometimes appeared (if in a limited way).<sup>78</sup> In 1939 one article in the army newspaper *Krasnaia zvezda* even extolled the heroism of ordinary Russian soldiers in World War I.<sup>79</sup> Space for history opened wider during World War II as the country mobilized to fight a people’s war. The First World Imperialist War suddenly became World War I, the enemy was no longer international imperialism but German imperialism, and commemorative articles outlined the commonalities between past German behavior and Nazi expansionism.<sup>80</sup> One writer in 1942 linked the Soviet army to the Russian army in an article that emphasized the military importance of the Russian front in World War I: “the Red Army, having carried away the rich experience of Russian arms and enriched it in new battles, is heroically enduring the concentrated blow of the fascist swarms.”<sup>81</sup> Despite the partial turn to history when conditions allowed it, World War I remained more useful for its symbolic function than its historical content, and World War II, an indisputable part of the Soviet experience with no links to a non-Soviet past, eventually became the war that was memorialized in the USSR. In official discourse after 1945, 1 August again became a symbol, but one that represented a gentler, and more general, lesson about the evils of war.<sup>82</sup>

As in many parts of Europe, the Russian memory of the war served as a means for mobilization, but that memory was divided between Soviet and émigré cultures, where it had different meanings, sites of memory, and symbolic expressions. Military émigrés used the war to remember, selectively, their honorable behavior during the war. They organized the memory of the Great War to join the émigré present to a non-Soviet Russian past, Russia Abroad to host countries such as France and the United States, and the widely dispersed parts of the émigré military community to each other. To remember the war meant to remember that a worthy Russia existed, but it also meant to forget the lost war, traumatic revolution, and the difficulty of life in emigration. In the Soviet Union, on the other hand, the myth of the First World Imperialist War separated the USSR from the imperial Russian past and the hostile capitalist present. The war’s memory was not evoked to recall actual historical events for personal or public reasons; it instead represented and demonstrated the Soviet version of contemporary reality as a struggle between the Soviet Union and imperialist aggressors. This Soviet memory emerged from the need to recall the past war for use in the present and, at the same time, to deny connections between the war experience and Soviet Russia. The conflict over

78. *Pravda*, 1 August 1935, 3; *Izvestiia*, 1 August 1939, 4.

79. *Krasnaia zvezda*, 1 August 1939, 3.

80. *Pravda*, 1 August 1942, 4; 2 August 1942, 4; 31 July 1944, 4.

81. *Pravda*, 31 July 1942, 4.

82. *Pravda*, 1 August 1954, 3–4; 1 August 1964, 3. There is a sharp drop after 1941 in the number of books related to World War I in the collections of the Institute of Scientific Information of Social Sciences of the Russian Academy of Sciences. From 1923 to 1941, between 15 and 25 books per year were added to the collection, while before 1923 and after 1941 the yearly increase in the collection numbered in the low single digits. See *Pervaiia mirovaia voina: Ukazatel' literatury 1914–1993 gg.* (Moscow, 1994).

the military cemetery at St.-Hilaire-le-Grand was thus rooted in different memories and different types of memory. Émigrés wanted to protect a site of memory for “their” Russian war that had been a part of their culture for decades, while the Soviet delegation was more interested in turning someone else’s war into a symbol of anti-fascism in the present, even though it meant forgetting that the objects of their commemoration were possible collaborators.

After decades of Soviet public forgetting, individual Russians today scarcely remember World War I as an important event in modern history. In a recent poll, 23 percent of 1,500 people questioned cited World War II as the “event of the century,” 9 percent named the flight of Iurii Gagarin, and another 9 percent the revolution of 1917, whereas World War I was not mentioned (although 3 percent did suggest the creation of the internet and 1 percent the 2000 U.S. elections).<sup>83</sup> Even when Catherine Merridale asked Russians in personal interviews to name the three most deadly wars in the twentieth century, almost no one thought of World War I, and her prompting about the conflict that killed almost two million Russian people elicited expressions of surprise—“Oh, that!”<sup>84</sup> Some local governments, military buffs, and nationalist organizations have conducted small war commemorations, including holding a memorial service and constructing a monument for German soldiers who fell near Kaliningrad, battle reenactments in Pushkin (Tsarskoe selo), and a recent procession in Moscow to commemorate the eighty-fifth anniversary of the 1916 Brusilov Offensive.<sup>85</sup> Russia today does not yet have a consistent public memory about many aspects of the country’s past; new memory and new memorials are created from the shards of the old, and these are often contested by political forces and the general public alike.<sup>86</sup> So it remains with World War I as well.

The case of one memorial, however, shows how a Russian memory divided in the twentieth century can come together in the new Russia. The chapel “Primireniia narodov” (Reconciling the nations), located on the site of the former All-Russian War Cemetery in the Moscow suburb of Sokol, is the most important attempt yet to create a physical monument

83. The poll was conducted by the Fond “Obshchestvennoe mnenie” (Public Opinion Foundation) in the year 2000. A copy of the report can be found in A. S. Petrova, *Chem zapomnitsia rossiianam XX vek*, 21 December 2000, available at <http://www.fom.ru/reports/frames/of005101.html> (last consulted 13 August 2002).

84. Merridale, *Night of Stone*, 100.

85. For examples of these commemorations, see a news report from the Baltic News Service cited on the website “Otkroetsia memorial nemetskim soldatam, pogibshim v pervoi mirovoi voine,” 14 July 1998, available at <http://stats.enet.ru/win/digitalKenig/news/bns/980714/3.html> (last consulted 13 August 2002); a website of the Russian reenactment club “Group North” (Poiskovyi i voenno-istoricheskii klub “Gruppa Sever”), Tsarskoe selo, 2001, available at <http://grsever.narod.ru/Phushkin.html> [*sic*] (last consulted 22 February 2002); and a report from the Russian press agency ITAR-TASS cited in the online Orthodox magazine pravoslavie.ru, *Panikhida i krestnyi khod v Moskve posviashchenny pamiati geroev Brusilovskogo proryva*, 10 June 2001, available at <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/news/010611/04.htm> (last consulted 13 August 2002).

86. See Kathleen E. Smith, *Mythmaking in the New Russia: Politics and Memory during the Yeltsin Era* (Ithaca, 2002).

devoted to World War I in Russia. Representatives from the Moscow mayor's office, the federal government, the army, foreign embassies, military clubs, and Orthodox organizations were all on hand to attend its dedication in 1998. Like other commemorative projects involving the war, this memorial exhibits many aspects of émigré military commemorative practice: the prominence of religion and the Orthodox Church, an emphasis on non-Soviet Russian symbols, the valorization of the imperial and White Russian armies, and the inclusion of Russia's allies, characteristics that Soviet war commemorations never had. A stone monument, for example, is dedicated to the "soldiers, officers, and generals of Russia, Serbia, Belgium, France, England, and the U.S.A. who fell in the war of 1914–1919," while the military history club *Dobrovol'cheskii korpus* (Volunteer Corps) helped organize the dedication ceremony. Yet a prayer in memory of the "millions of victims of the two world wars and the civil war" and a religious service "to save Russia and the entire world from new world and local wars and new fratricidal civil conflicts" were also held at the memorial's dedication, sentiments that echoed the Soviet presentation of World War I as an antiwar symbol, which the war never was in the emigration.<sup>87</sup> "Reconciling the Nations" retains past commemorative practices around the war but brings them together to create something new.

Like all public memory, the memorialization of World War I is about creating the present as much as remembering the past. Today most Russians want their country to become a recognized part of the broader European cultural community. The dedication of "Reconciling the Nations" on 8 November 1998 linked Russia openly to European commemoration of the Great War for the first time since 1917. "The eightieth anniversary of the end of World War I," wrote an organizer, "is officially observed from the eighth to the eleventh of November 1998 in all the countries that fought during the war."<sup>88</sup> Participation in a common European culture, may, as in this case, include the importation of new, non-Russian conventions into Russia, for émigrés and Soviets never celebrated the Armistice of 11 November 1918, a date that remained an important part of the British, North American, and French memory of the war.<sup>89</sup> The ceremony dedicating the chapel "Reconciling the Nations" also presented the memory of World War I as a way to heal political divisions in present-day Russia, especially with the inclusion of Red and White victims of the civil war, calls for peace at home and abroad, and the rejection of extreme anti-Bolshevik rhetoric that emphasizes irreconcilability with the Soviet past. The eighth of November itself was symbolic as the day following Russia's Day of Accord and Reconciliation, a holiday created by Boris El'tsin's government to replace Revolution Day while not alienating those who still wanted a holiday on 7 November. Like much in contemporary Russia, it

87. For information on "Reconciling the Nations," see the report in the Russian Orthodox journal *Rus' derzhavnata*, 1998, no. 11–12 located on the web: Ianis Bremzis, *Khram-chasovnia "Primireniia Narodov,"* available at <http://www.mrezha.ru/rde/55/26.html> (last consulted 13 August 2002).

88. *Ibid.*

89. War commemorations in Pushkin have also taken place on 11 November.

is too early to tell whether attempts to create a new public memory for World War I will succeed; “Reconciling the Nations” has suffered periodic vandalism since 1998.<sup>90</sup> Yet the Great War’s recent incarnation as a combination of Soviet, émigré, and European memory tells us, in a small way, that Russia’s new sites of memory can potentially help overcome Russia’s divided memory by combining the Soviet legacy, the non-Soviet past, and the values and needs of the present.

90. See a news story from the press agency “Prima” cited on the website of the Russian nongovernmental organization [tolerance.ngo.ru](http://tolerance.ngo.ru): Arkhiv novostei, April 2001, available at <http://tolerance.ngo.ru/news/archive.php?Year=01&Month=april> (last consulted 13 August 2002).