UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,
IRVINE

# Blood and Snow: Military Death in Late Imperial Russia, 1904-1917

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in History

by

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**DEDICATION**

to my brother

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## List of Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| RGIA | Rossiiskii gosudarstvenyi istoricheskii arkhiv (Russian State Historical Archive) |
| RGVIA | Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi voenno-istoricheskii arkhiv (Russian State Military History Archive) |
| RGAMVF | Rossiisskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv morskoi-voennyi flot (Russian State Archives of the Navy) |
| TsGIA | Tsentralnyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Sankt-Petersburgska (Central State Historical Archives of St. Petersburg) |

## NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND DATES

Transliteration of Russian in the text and bibliographic references follows the Library of Congress system (omitting diacritics). For proper names in the text that appear very frequently in English-language scholarship, conventional spelling are used (e.g., Tolstoy instead of Tolstoi).

All dates are given according to the Julian calendar.

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## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Blood and Snow: Military Death in Late Imperial Russia 1904-1917

by

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Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, Irvine, 2021

Professor Susan K. Morrissey, Chair

This dissertation explores the implications of "dying for the motherland" in late imperial Russia. What did this mean at the turn of the twentieth century, when battlefields were being transformed by new technologies of war, the population was becoming increasingly urban and literate, and in a geopolitical entity that was as much imperial as it was national? While the vast majority of the scholarship on military death has revolved around the idea of the nation, my research on late imperial Russia foregrounds the critical role played by three other thematic factors: technology, modernity, and space.

Methodologically, I take the approach that the material remains of the dead soldiers, sailors, and aviators were not distinct from their representations but profoundly symbiotic. These two aspects reflected an intertwining of military and media, battlefield and home front, in ways that were central to the social and cultural history of the era. At this time, new technologies of destruction, new modes of communication, and new ideas about citizenship and personhood were challenging prior conceptions about what dying for Russia should mean. This process was fuelled by the media, which was grappling with the same world of novel ideas but also trying to understand how to market them to a mass audience. I argue that placing military death at the fulcrum of this interchange reveals a dynamic between the military and the media that the tsarist

government valiantly tried, but ultimately failed, to control. The military dead were conscripted posthumously to causes beyond the nation.

Using archival documents, printed materials, and visual sources, I adopt a spacious definition of military death that includes killing and dying, institutional and personal responses, and representations. The five chapters of my dissertation cover the Russo-Japanese War through the early years of the First World War. My work insists that matters of military death, most intimate and personal, not only map onto the broader ebbs and flows of cultural change and revolutionary ferment but offer some novel and critical insights into those processes.

# INTRODUCTION

In September 1913, nearly eight years to the day after the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) had formally ended, a woman who had been widowed during the conflict wrote into the Naval Ministry with a strange request.[1] The widow's name was Maria Lagidina, and her husband had been an officer on board the *Petropavlovsk*. The former flagship of the Pacific fleet had been an early casualty of the war, having collided with a Japanese mine on 13 April 1904. Maria was writing because she had learned in the newspapers that the sunken hull of the *Petropavlovsk* had recently been discovered by a Japanese diver, who had also uncovered some skeletons. Even if none of the human remains belonged to her husband, she still wanted to know if she could have something, *anything*, from the ship sent back to her in their place – she suggested that a piece of the hull might suffice. Maria Lagidina wrote into the Naval Ministry because she hoped that they would honor her wishes. With that action, the complex relationship between state, society, materiality, and the media in late imperial Russia coalesced for a moment around the crux of military death.

In this dissertation, I use the term "military death" as an analytic category that includes not only modes of killing, dying, and burial, but also institutional and personal responses, as well as representations, memories, and memorials. I argue that matters of military death, most intimate and yet also falling under the remit of the state, not only mapped onto the broader ebbs and flows of social, cultural, and political change during this era, but in certain circumstances also acted as an important crucible of transformation. This argument rests on the premise that the material remains of dead soldiers, sailors, and aviators were not something separate and distinct

[1] RGAVMF, f. 417, op. 2, d. 1804, l. 113.

from their representations. Together, they reflect an intertwining of military and media, battlefield and home front, in ways that were absolutely central to the social and cultural history of the era. The interaction between bodies and images, tangible substance and printed content, was lively and highly sensitive. Most of all, it was profoundly symbiotic. At this time, new technologies of destruction, new modes of communication, and new ideas about citizenship and personhood were challenging prior conceptions about what dying for Russia should mean. This process was fuelled by the media, which was grappling with the same world of novel ideas but also trying to understand how to market them to a mass audience.

Placing military death at the fulcrum of this interchange reveals a dynamic between the military and the media that the tsarist government valiantly tried, but ultimately failed, to control. It was a process that exposed a set of fault lines that crisscrossed Russian society but also unveiled and fostered new commonalities. After 1907, when the government had quelled the last remaining embers from the 1905 revolution and re-exerted control, there was a conscious and concerted attempt to use the military dead from the Russo-Japanese War to foster sentiments of national unity.[2] A commission was sent to the far east to record the burial sites and to consolidate the scattered graves into military cemeteries worthy of an appreciative and still clearly paternalistic modern government.[3] A naval church was built in the heart of St. Petersburg that, anticipating the pan-European movement that followed WWI, listed the names of every single man who had perished at the battle of Tsushima in May 1905 – the huge naval engagement that had destroyed Russia's navy and its last remaining hope for victory. Such efforts to control the

[2] Aaron J. Cohen, "Long Ago and Far Away: War Monuments, Public Relations, and the Memory of the Russo-Japanese War in Russia, 1907-14," *Russian Review* 69, no. 3 (July 1, 2010): 388-411, 390; Richard Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: From Alexander II to the Abdication of Nicholas II* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 414-415.
[3] L.V. Golubev and L. M. Bolkovitinov, *Doklad i otchet po obzoru kladbishch i mogil russkikh voinov v Manchzhurii* (St. Petersburg, 1909).

narrative and to conscript the dead for patriotic causes were undertaken in good faith, but the media worked in ways that denied the government the absolute storytelling power they craved.[4] The state-influenced fanfare that accompanied the opening of the memorial naval church, for example, placed much emphasis on the naming of the rank-and-file as a grand gesture conferring honor and recognizing sacrifice. However, it also unwittingly drew attention to a less advantageous fact: while space had been made for these men's individual names up on the engraved boards, the bodies of most rank-and-file were buried together in communal mass graves, thousands of miles away from Russia's capital cities. The presence of names also spoke to an even more profound absence of bodies: the spectre of physical obliteration that was to become the hallmark of twentieth century battlefields.

In order to explore the relationship between the symbolic power of the dead military body and their material afterlives, this dissertation takes a different approach to several historical commonplaces. The first, and most overt, has to do with the place of the Russo-Japanese War in the historical understanding of late imperial Russia. Although my chapters regularly extend over into WWI, the majority of this project deals with the earlier conflict and its aftermath. The Russo-Japanese war was a short war, but its impact was global. Both Russia and Japan, witnessing the other European powers lay claim to chunks of Chinese land through the second half of the nineteenth century, had developed imperial ambitions towards the Korean peninsula and the surrounding parts of Manchuria. For Russia, the most pressing issue was to gain access to a warm-water port that could be used year-round, as Vladivostok's harbor froze over during the winter. A secondary concern was the continued expansion of Russia's grand railway-building

[4] See also Wortman, *Scenarios of Power*, 481-502; Alison Rowley, *Open Letters: Russian Popular Culture and the Picture Postcard 1880-1922* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 136-170; Susan McCaffray, *The Winter Palace and the People: Staging and Consuming Russia's Monarchy, 1754–1917* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018), 93-114; Wayne Dowler, *Russia in 1913* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010), 233-271.

projects. In 1897, having been defeated by Japan in the 1894-5 Sino-Japanese War, China leased to Russia both Port Arthur, a city on the Liaodong Peninsula, as well as a strip of land for a railway that would link the harbor to Harbin. The tension this caused between Russia and Japan finally came to a head in February 1904, when Japan decided to try to take by force where diplomacy had failed. The war raged for eighteen months, and it drew witnesses and commentators from around the world. The state of communications technology meant that it could be watched, reported, and photographed on an international scale, and while most observers were not overtly concerned with this part of China, they were very interested in the first clash between two "modern" militaries since the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1. This interest was not misplaced. The Russo-Japanese War saw the debut of a host of military technologies that would become synonymous with the later European-wide conflagrations, particularly machine guns and trenches. The human tolls these new technologies exacted were on a different level to anything seen before – the most recent estimates put the total Russian death toll for the war between 420,000 and 620,000.[5] As the months progressed, the war became sensationalized for another reason: the "Asiatic" Japanese power, contrary to all expectations, was handily defeating the Russians on both land and sea.

It is conventional to see this war framed in relation to Russia's 1905 revolution, whereby the humiliating loss to Japan typically features as the short-term "spark" that set off the tinderbox of deep-set frustrations with the autocratic Russian government. In this narrative, attentions often shift from the battlefields of the far east to the streets of St. Petersburg on 9 January 1905, the infamous "Bloody Sunday" when tsarist troops opened fire on Father Gapon's peaceful petition

[5] John W. Steinberg, "Introduction," *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero,* vol. 2, eds., David Wolff and John W. Steinberg, (Leiden: Brill University Press, 2007), xx - xxi; Rotem Kowner, *Historical Dictionary of the Russo-Japanese War* (Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press, 2006), 80.

march to the Winter Palace.[6] This was months before the conflict officially ended in September 1905, though the writing of Russia's defeat was already indelibly inscribed upon the wall. While it is not my intention to downplay the cataclysmic nature of the political upheaval of 1905, I do invert the narrative priorities by considering the revolution in terms of how it impacted a broader and longer framing of the Russo-Japanese War. When the conflict is approached from the perspective of the military dead, the story starts at much the same place – with the first lethal shots – but it does not finish until far later. The work of burying, remembering, and memorializing did not stop when dignitaries put pen to paper formalizing the treaty in the far-off town of Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Indeed, critical processes were still underway in the far east when the First World War broke out in 1914. Up to this point, local governors and their subordinates were haggling hard with both the central ministries in St. Petersburg and local craftsman, trying to make good on promises to erect more memorials, establish fences around half-finished graveyards, and have enough left over for attendants to protect both bodies and gravestones from the ravages of animals and the weather.[7]

There are some important stakes to integrating the afterlives of the dead into the story of the Russo-Japanese War. Not only does it interrogate binary oppositions like wartime/peacetime and military/civil, but it opens up existing and influential revolution-spanning categories of analysis, such as Peter Holquist's thesis that the years 1914-1921 constituted a "continuum of crisis," to an alternative temporal and spatial frameworks.[8] The value of Holquist's formulation

[6] Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905: Russia in Disarray* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 91-92.
[7] RGIA, f. 552, op. 1, d. 261, l. 10, 180.
[8] Peter Holquist, *Making War, Forging Revolution: Russia's Continuum of Crisis, 1914–1921* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 3. In an article published the following year, Holquist does consider stretching the "continuum" back to 1905 – but starting post in this case is the revolution, not the Russo-Japanese War. In this broader configuration, a new Russian "Time of Troubles" raged from 1905-21, overlapping with a broader European "convulsion" from 1914 – 1921. Peter Holquist, "Violent Russia, Deadly Marxism? Russia in the Epoch of Violence, 1905-21," *Kritika* 4, no. 3 (Summer 2003): 627-652, 630.

is that he probes at the differences and overlaps between "war" and "crisis," the formal designation and the broader experience, and arrives at the conclusion that wars are better thought of as "fulcrums" – the middle chapters of larger stories. The bodies that remained in the far east after the Russo-Japanese War formally ended speak to an imperially inflected "continuum of (identity) crisis" that started in 1904 and bled all the way through to WWI. During the war they were material evidence of a humiliating defeat, but after the war they became (among other things) diplomatic pawns, and the reason Russian officials co-operated and clashed with the new Japanese overlords of the Korean peninsula. Each new attempt to put the Russian dead in order was accompanied by concerns about how these actions would look on the international stage, and whether ideas of dignity and civility could be used to recoup some degree of prestige.

This revised chronology serves an important role in reassessing how Russia's experience of death, war, and memory played out vis-à-vis the rest of Europe prior to the 1920s. Until relatively recently, the common consensus was that Russia was simply not part of the (western) European-wide memorialization movement that sprang up in the wake of WWI. The Bolshevik government, desperately occupied by their efforts to keep hold of power and more concerned with enacting the legitimacy of the October Revolution, refused to spend money or effort commemorating an illegitimate capitalist war. Although the work of Karen Petrone and Melissa Stockdale has solidly demonstrated that society mobilized around a range of memorialization initiatives during the First World War itself, these arguments have worked primarily to prove that Russia should be included within a western-centric mode of understanding.[9] At the heart of this scholarship is the presumption that collective memorials emerged, and specifically became

[9] Melissa K. Stockdale, "United in Gratitude: Honoring Soldiers and Defining the Nation in Russia's Great War," *Kritika* 7, no. 3 (Summer 2006): 459-85; Karen Petrone, *The Great War in Russian Memory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), introduction.

more inclusive in who they named, in parallel with western Europe's burgeoning democratic sentiments. The problem here is that it hitches the concept of "democracy" entirely to tangible political wagons like suffrage, and through that process ignores the concomitant shifts in attitudes and cultural sentiments that are, among other things, more inclusive of gender.[10] Adding in the Russo-Japanese War complicates and enriches this conversation, because, after 1905, state-led efforts at collective and inclusive remembrance occurred despite the absence of any sincere efforts to establish a representative electorate or strong democratic institutions. This implies that there was more than one path towards naming the rank-and-file, and reinforces the importance of looking at Russia's relationship with the west along the lines of "multiple modernities," rather than trying to shoehorn the Russian experience into a European one-size-fits-all.[11] The idea of "multiple modernities," as put forward by Shmuel Eisensadt, rests on a broad definition of modernity rooted in the development of a collective self-consciousness powerful enough to challenge established traditions, especially divine understandings of social hierarchy.

My second main divergence with the literature on war and memory concerns the spatial framing of the military dead.[12] One major intervention of this study is to interrogate the predominant assumption underpinning historical (and contemporary) interpretation that military

[10] Thomas J. Brown, *Civil War Monuments and the Militarization of America,* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 19.
[11] S. N. Eisenstadt, "Multiple Modernities," *Daedalus* 129, no. 1 (Winter, 2000): 1-29. For a compelling summary and a critique of the term, see Steve A. Smith, *Revolution and the People in Russia and China: A Comparative History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 5-7.
[12] Some of the most influential publications in the field include George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Antoine Prost, *Republican Identities in War and Peace: Representations of France in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries;*); Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1994); Alon Confino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method," *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 5 (Dec. 1997).

bodies are simply conscripted for the nation and are thus transparent in their historical meaning and significance. In pushing this line of inquiry, I do not claim that bodies were *not* conscripted for the nation at all, but rather that they were not *solely* conscripted within national frameworks. This prevailing myopia has limited our understanding of the complex power structures that surround the military dead, including the ways in which understandings of the nation itself were inflected by other key frameworks. Following on from an introductory chapter, which addresses how the overlapping temporalities set up the multiple incarnations of modernity, my remaining four chapters respectively consider military death within alternate spatialities: the colonial, imperial, transnational, and borderland.

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In a review article published in 1980, the French Marxist historian Michel Vovelle claimed that "the taboo on death is the latest fashion."[13] From Vovelle's perspective, death as a subject of academic study had claimed center stage across broad swathes of multiple disciplines, from the sciences through sociology to literature. One of the major catalysts was the publication of Philippe Ariès's magnum opus, *The Hour of Our Death*, which subjected the history of dying to a *long durée* perspective. Aries broke down European attitudes to death into chronological segments that were slowly changing but clearly discernable. Following the "familiar" death of the ancient world, a "spontaneous acceptance of destiny and nature, came the dominant motif of individual salvation during the Middle Ages."[14] The Enlightenment and Romantic eras then

[13] Michel Vovelle, "Rediscovery of Death Since 1960," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 447, no 1 (Jan., 1980): 89-99, 90.
[14] Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death* (New York: Vintage Books, 1982), 29.

focused more on the death of the loved one, with "death in exile" coming to prominence over the nineteenth century. This last iteration, framed by Victorian reticence regarding the body and its earthly functions, removed death from the home and outsourced it to the hospice. This retreat was a victory for science, according to Ariès, but also and more fundamentally a pyrrhic and self-inflicted wound of modernity for humanity more generally.[15]

A member of the Annales School, Ariès approaches death largely as an insentient historical force, retreating like a glacier away from its natural beatific origins and into society's shadows. Although historians have pushed back against this framework, emphasizing instead the critical role of localized forces, Ariès's overarching narrative whereby death became both desacralized, private, and – as per Vovelle's observation – "taboo," has proved to be enduring.[16] This approach dovetails nicely with the work of Michel Foucault, and in particular his emphasis on unveiling the subtle machinations of power and discipline.[17] For many of those who have followed in Foucault's wake, it seems that the subtler a machination of power, the more deserving it is of academic attention.[18] Despite the many achievements of this literature, it has effectively sidelined inquiries into the history of military death, which seems to have too obvious a system of values to be really interesting to the cultural historian. After all, men who die for

[15] Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death,* 28.
[16] For example, Vovelle ("Rediscovery of Death") highlights the importance of medical technology developments, an emphasis on the elderly as a demographic, and the rise of the hospital as influential factors in death's post-1960 resurgence.
[17] As Foucault famously writes on the early nineteenth century (from a perspective that does not consider the military), "a few decades saw the disappearance of the tortured, dismembered, amputated body […] exposed alive or dead to public view." Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Random House, 1979), 8.
[18] The literature is far too vast to cite here, but the following works that focus on Foucauldian iterations of biopolitics have been the most useful in fostering this line of thinking. Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Roger Cooter, "The Turn of the Body" in Roger Cooter with Claudia Stein, *Writing History in the Age of Biomedicine* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013); Alison Bashford, *Imperial Hygiene: A Critical History of Colonialism, Nationalism and Public Health* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990); David Arnold, *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth-Century India*, (Berkeley, 1993)..

their country do not do so under mysterious circumstances. Their bodies, often in numbers that belie ready comprehension, are evidence of noisy declarations of war. It is hard to find a demonstration of state power more blatant. In *Symbolic Exchange and Death,* Jean Baudrillard sums up this dismissive attitude towards military death, arguing that men who died for their country could never hope to command the attention of the public in the same way that famous murderers and bandits could.[19] This was because the fundamental reasoning behind the soldierly death was clear: one killed and died for the fatherland. Baudrillard thus constructs this soldierly death against another group populated by bandits and murderers, men who dealt in death in a way "which escapes the State monopoly." There was no such simple logic to explain the actions of these men who lived outside the law, and that riddle fundamentally sustains the enduring magnetic appeal of serial killers and renegades.

I came across this piece of Baudrillard's writing during the very early stages of researching this topic, and it has – by degrees – haunted, challenged, and inspired this dissertation. On the one hand, there is surely some substance backing up Baudrillard's glib disregard.[20] The literature on the history of death is rich and varied but, save for a small handful of notable exceptions and the outlying topic of commemoration in western Europe after WWI, military death has been largely ignored. Out of 600 pages, Ariès speaks of soldiers in six.[21] The most impressive riposte to *The Hour of Our Death* is Thomas Laqueur's *The Work of the Dead,* where he argues that death manifests historically through cycles of re-enchantment rather than in

[19] Jean Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death,* trans. Iain Hamilton Grant (New York: Sage, 1993), 175.
[20] The extensive (and wonderful) literature on banditry, crime, and hooliganism in Russia speaks to this. Joan Neuberger, *Hooliganism: Crime, Culture, and Power in St. Petersburg, 1900-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Jeffrey Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Culture 1861-1917* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 187; Stephen P. Frank, *Crime, Cultural Conflict, and Justice in Rural Russia, 1856-1914* (Berkeley: University of California, 1999), 302; and Louise McReynolds, *Murder Most Russian: True Crime and Punishment in Late Imperial Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012).
[21] Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death,* 547-551.

a linear process of disenchantment. However, Laqueur's treatment of wartime death likewise only takes up a small fraction of his overall space. And, for their part, traditional military histories have largely been content to leave the dead to linger on the page as statistics, as little more than evidence of tactical success or failure.

On the other hand, a year of archival research and three years of parsing through that evidence has left me convinced that there is much more to the story. When military bodies are approached and framed as curious and complex, they can also be excellent repositories for riddles. Indeed, it was satisfying to arrive at the conclusion that the biggest mystery was the one that lay at the heart of Baudrillard's accusations: modern military bodies do not inspire critical inquiry because they are all too easily explained by the catchall of "nationalism." To return to Maria Lagidina's request to the war ministry with which I opened this introduction, here was a woman who was mourning her husband in fraught and complicated ways that far exceed any blinkered notion of patriotic sacrifice. If her husband had died "for Russia," than he had done so off a tenuous piece of Russian coast thousands of miles away on the other side of the world. He had died in a place that was almost certainly very hard for a mourning relative to visit – indeed, it was a part of Russia that had just recently been connected to the Trans-Siberian railroad, which in turn had only been completed in the last decade of the nineteenth century thereby linking the far east to the more populated region west of the Ural Mountains. The *Petropavlovsk* had sunk near to Port Arthur, a parcel of land that had been leased to Russia by the Chinese government (to the great concertation of Japan) two years after the Sino-Japanese conflict of 1894-5. After the Russo-Japanese War, Russia's lease of Port Arthur was transferred over to the Japanese. As I explore in chapter 5, most of the remains that were discovered in the *Petropavlovsk's* watery tomb were buried in consecrated soil in Port Arthur. Though Maria Lagidina's husband was not

one of those men, her letter made it clear that if his body was recovered, then she wanted it back in St. Petersburg. Be it a corpse or a piece of ship that she requested in its place, burial in Port Arthur was not an acceptable solution to her.

Lagidina's reaction speaks to a far more complex set of spatial considerations, wound up around ideas of empire, the practicalities of colonial leases, and diplomatic tensions at the borderlands that do not provide solid ground for centering seemingly transparent considerations like "nation" or "home soil." Moreover, her request brings up other pertinent concerns. The set of letters pertaining to her case in the archive are testament to a growing military bureaucracy that was trying to cater to an increasing number of bereaved families who now had the means and methods to write and seek answers. When framing their requests, these families were able to draw on the information they had seen in the booming media industries of commercial newspapers and illustrated magazines; perhaps Maria would not have thought to ask for a piece of the ship had the *Petropavlovsk* not been one of the most photographed centerpieces during the pre-war fanfare. Put simply, rising levels of literacy and the availability of information through mass media altered attitudes towards the deceased on the part of both the state and society. The fact that Maria wanted a piece of the sunken ship in the place of his body is also indicative of a certain mindset; in this instance, where bodies ended and material culture began was not obvious. To wave away military death in late imperial Russia with a dismissive "they died for the motherland" is to miss out on all the broader implications of a moment when this web of modernity brought itself to bear.

Drew Gilpin Faust's *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* is a stunning exception to the general trend that has kept cultural studies and military death at arm's

length.[22] Faust's overarching argument is that men from the north and south died alike, holding onto similar narratives of a "good" demise that were centered upon family obligation and hopes of a restful afterlife. Faust demonstrates how it is possible to look at both how changing norms of society – literacy, medicine, ideas of government – altered death on the battlefield, and how death on such a massive scale altered society in turn. The American Civil War fundamentally reshaped perceptions about "who should die," linked the concept of sacrifice indelibly with the post-war American state, and, with the establishment of national cemeteries and pension systems, changed both the physical landscape and ideas of citizenship.

In addition to capturing multifaceted historical dynamics, *This Republic of Suffering* is a model of how to present research into military death with humanity, kindness, and dignity. However, the book is also an historiographical island: at no point does Faust explicitly situate herself relative to any other historical works. Any inspiration drawn from anthropologists or critical theorists of the body are likewise muted. This can perhaps be partly explained by the fact that Faust had a broader audience in mind than the strictly academic, and she succeeded admirably in this regard – *This Republic of Suffering* became a *New York Times* bestseller and spawned a PBS miniseries. Given that there is very little chance of this dissertation topping the *NYT* lists, politely but silently circumnavigating these insights is a less viable option.[23]

Since Phillipe Aries' opened the floodgates on studies of death, many historians have looked to anthropologists for inspiration as to how to move beyond his omnipotent

[22] Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Vintage Books, 2009).
[23] I thus cite here three of the most important theorists informing this dissertation, each of whom I will discuss further at relevant points: Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," trans. Libby Meintjes, *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (Winter 2003): 11-40; Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable* (New York: Verso, 2009); Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

characterizations.[24] If for Ariès' death was a force that imposed itself on society almost like a god, then the death that appears through many anthropologists' work is deeply integrated and grounded within the rhythms of that specific society. Robert Hertz, for example, a student of Émile Durkheim who is generally accredited with starting off the trend for anthropological research into death, argued that the funeral customs for the deceased were reflective of that persons' standing in a community.[25] In these anthropological studies, society produces the meanings of death through ritual, and these are then utilized in the emergence and maintenance of ideology.

First put forward in relation to death by the French ethnographer Arnold Van Gennep, liminality was used to refer to rites of transition, which fell between rites of separation and rites of incorporation in stage-altering moments of the life cycle like birth, marriage, and death.[26] Mary Douglas developed another set of key ideas, this time concerning the symbolic power of the boundary of the body, specifically pollution and taboo.[27] Marshall Sahlin's practice theory has also been very influential. In his study of Captain Cook's death in Hawaii, Sahlins put forward a theoretical system that was capable – within a limited time frame – of accommodating both the reproduction and transformation of social order.[28]

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[24] For example, Sharon T. Strocchia, *Death and Ritual in Renaissance Florence* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); Joseph Clarke, *Commemorating the Dead in Revolutionary France: Revolution and Remembrance, 1789-1799*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Lindsay Prior, *The Social Organisation of Death: Medical Discourses and Social Practices in Belfast*, (Macmillan, 1989). See also *The New Cultural History* ed. Lynn Hunt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989) 11, 52.
[25] Robert Hertz, "Contributions to the Study of the Collective Representations of Death," in *Death and the Right Hand*, trans. R. and C. Needham (Free Press: New York, 1960), 29-76.
[26] Arnold Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage,* trans. M. B. Vizedon and G. L. Caffe (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 11.
[27] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 2002).
[28] Marshall D. Sahlins, *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities: Structure in the Early History of the Sandwich Islands Kingdom*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1981), 7-8; William H. Sewell Jr, *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (University of Chicago Press, 2009).

From a historian's perspective, the enduring issue with these anthropological lenses is that they foreground synchronic analysis, operating within systems that are largely resistant to significant passages of time. Nevertheless, they provide a powerful blueprint for framing bodies as potent symbols of power and for thinking through how that power is then instrumentalized. As Craig Koslofsky writes in his study of death during the German Reformation, it is unthinkable to work through the central tension of death and its agencies – balancing out "the *impact* of death on individuals and societies, and the attitudes and responses to this shifting demographic force" with "a society's *use* of death as an opportunity to represent or reconstruct the social order through ritual" – without accommodating these insights.[29] In this dissertation, I take the approach that there is a trade-off to be had, where it is possible to be inspired by these insights regarding the power of the material, so long as you are willing to sacrifice the argumentative neatness and investment that accompanies the (problematically) closed-off and almost timeless worlds of classic anthropological studies. To give one example: A body buried in dirty clothing, without a proper coffin or the presence of a priest, was a symbolical affront in 1917 in ways that it was not in 1904.[30] By 1917, soldiers saw instances like these as a cause for protest. A host of changing contexts had altered this ritual, destabilizing it away from a moment of mourning, but in ways that were so broad and tangled that comprehensively cataloguing these changes would be both impossible and probably quite boring. Framed from a certain angle, this unwieldiness is not a problem so much as it *is* the argument: military death during Russia's late imperial era was something that the government tried, but failed, to control.

[29] Craig Koslofsky, *The Reformation of the Dead: Death and Ritual in Early Modern Germany, c.1450-1700*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 5.
[30] RGVIA, f. 2170, op. 1, d. 13, l. 240.

Turning to look more specifically at the Russian historiography, studies on death cultures have for the most part focused on peasant culture and attitudes. These works, anthropologically inspired and more interested in continuity than change, have tended to emphasis the "traditional" and "timeless" elements that were preserved in a ritualistic resin strong enough to survive through to the Soviet era.[31] For example, Elizabeth Warner recounts a peasant widow's moving lament for her husband who was killed during the Russo-Japanese War. Warner argues that the widow's sorrow stemmed from the fact he did not die in his bed, but with "cold mother earth/ for his pillow" and "for his blanket/ Weapons and a heavy kit-bag."[32] The war disrupted the natural death that should have been, a death that was intimate and domestic. This aspect was clearly a legitimate source of sadness for the widow, and it is important to bear in mind how long-standing ideas of "good" and "bad" deaths informed feelings and practices. Yet, to look at military death solely from this perspective fixes it within an ahistorical Manichean paradigm whereby death of natural causes in the village was "good," and all others – sudden, away from home, premature – were "bad." This could hold true for any war at any time. Yet the weapons in this unfortunate man's kit bag were not the same killing instruments that soldiers would have taken to face

[31] Elizabeth Warner and Svetlana Adonyeva, *We Remember, We Love, We Grieve: Mortuary and Memorial Practice in Contemporary Russia* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2021), introduction. It is worth mentioning a separate conversation concerning the nature and depth of the chasm between "official" Russian Orthodox rites of death and more traditional practices in the peasant world. A body of scholarship advanced the idea that this was a system of *dvoeverie* (dual belief); for an overview and critique of this concept, see Eve Levin, "*Dvoeverie* and Popular Religion," in *Seeking God: The Recovery of Religious Identity in Orthodox Russia, Ukraine and Georgia*, ed. Stephen K. Batalden (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1993). Christine Worobec and Faith Wigzell, in contrast, have argued for a far more syncretic relationship. While this debate is instructive as far as peasant practices are concerned, it does not really consider the impact of these changes. Faith Wigzell, "Reading the Map of Heaven and Hell in Russian Popular Orthodoxy: Examining the Usefulness of the Concepts of *Dvoeverie* and Binary Oppositions," *Forum for Anthropology and Culture*, no.2 (2005): 346-68. Christine D. Worobec, "Death Ritual among Russian and Ukrainian Peasants: Linkages between the Living and Dead," in *Cultures in Flux,* ed. Mark D. Steinberg and Stephen P. Frank (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), 11-34.

[32] Elizabeth A. Warner, "Russian Peasant Beliefs and Practices Concerning Death and the Supernatural Collected in Novosokol'niki Region, Pskov Province, Russia, 1995. Part II: Death in Natural Circumstances," *Folklore* 111, no. 1 (2000): 255–81, 255-256.

Napoleon in 1812, or to the Crimea in 1853.[33] Advances in technology and medicine meant that deaths on the battlefield altered significantly over a relatively short span of years – the rise in destructive capabilities was paralleled by breakthroughs in sanitation and sterilization, which meant that the Russo-Japanese War was the first conflict where both sides lost more men on the battlefield than they did to diseases that ravaged behind the lines.[34] They altered the home front, too. While it was certainly the case that families wished they could bury their loved ones in the local cemetery during the Russo-Japanese War, they did have new tools at their disposal. By 1904, literacy levels were rising sharply. More and more people were able to leverage this education to write to a government that now possessed a level of bureaucracy sufficient to answer inquiries and thus provide a new sort of peace of mind. In some cases, men did not return home, but photographs of them – or their graves – were able to make the journey in their place. As I explore in particular depth in chapters one and four, the rise of a late imperial information nexus very much transformed – and dynamically so – the patchwork fields of meaning that distinguished a "good" death from a "bad" death. It did so by inserting a new polarization into that field: knowing. This information nexus was comprised of aspects that can be measured such as literacy, newspapers, postal services, and transportation networks, but also more subtle and subjective cultural forces like ideas of honor, self-worth, and individualism.

This method of stressing the importance of historical contingency in the study of death shifts the geographical focus away from the timeless village and splits it between two other

[33] Steve Smith made an important corrective to this timeless approach, arguing that "the resources of peasant culture were manifold and contradictory, eminently capable of absorbing new elements; of combining old and new elements in syncretic forms that were perfectly rational in their own terms even if they made little sense to outsiders; of revitalizing older elements that had lain dormant in order to cope with new tasks." See his "Heavenly Letters and Tales of the Forest: 'Superstition' against Bolshevism," *Forum for Anthropology and Culture*, no. 2 (2006), 316-39, esp. 317.

[34] Justin Barr, "Military Medicine of the Russo-Japanese War and Its Influence on the Modernization of the US Army Medical Department," *US Army Medical Department Journal* 3, no. 18 (December 2016): 118-128, 119.

locales: the battlefields and the cities. This brings my dissertation into conversation with the broad, exciting, and closely intertwined historiographical schools of modernity and the media. By concentrating on the *exchange* (e.g., of bodies, information, money) between the arenas of war and urban space, I position the city as a site of negotiation and process, in addition to its more common framing as a site of text and representation. The battle over where, how, and to what narrative ends the dead would be conscripted was waged through the physical gestures like the capital's memorials and state funerals, but also on the pages of illustrated magazines and newspapers that were sold on street corners.

The iteration of city-as-text is clearly important, because it was in the urban centres that stories and images of the dead primarily circulated and where public opinions on the matter were formed.[35] Viewed through a text-based lens, historians have presented the modern city as a site of excitement and fear, albeit with varying weightings. Julie Buckler paints Russia' capital as place where an eclectic architecture encouraged eclectic thought, while for Mark Steinberg, the mood was more defined by a near-unremitting darkness: "urban writers in *fin de siècle* Petersburg mostly dwelled on the dread."[36] From Alexander Pushkin's *Bronze Horseman* to Andrei Bely's *Petersburg* and even Anastasiia Verbitskaia's *Keys to Happiness,* a common feature across these studies is that acclaimed and/or popular literary works provide cultural

[35] A key debate in regard to public opinion concerns the existence of a Russian "middle-class." Edith W. Clowes, Samuel D. Kassow, and James L. West, eds., *Between Tsar and People* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), 22; Louise McReynolds, *The News under Russia's Old Regime: The Development of a Mass-Circulation Press* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1991), 12. See also the more recent literature on civil society in Russia, Joseph Bradley, *Voluntary Associations in Tsarist Russia: Science, Patriotism, and Civil Society*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

[36] Julie A. Buckler, *Mapping St. Petersburg: Imperial Text and Cityscape* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), chapter 1; and Mark D. Steinberg, *Petersburg Fin de Siècle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 8. For other important studies of the Russian and Soviet city, see Daniel R. Brower, *The Russian City Between Tradition and Modernity, 1850-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Katerina Clark, *Moscow, the Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931–1941* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011); Katerina Clark, *Petersburg, Crucible of Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).

historians with a key access point to city life at a given moment in time.[37] Building on this premise, I have also tried to use war stories to explore certain aspects of the modern city, but more insistently to frame them as conduits between urban space and the battlefield. Leonid Andreev's dystopian novella *The Red Laugh* or short stories about aviators were articulating particular visions about the modern war experience, but they were also part of the same world where decisions were made regarding the literal upkeep of the dead bodies those wars produced. My goal here is to delve beneath the propagandistic surface of those studies of war and media, which, due to the exaggerated nature of the genre, tend to divorce artistic content from some of the more complicated dynamics that were occurring on the ground.[38] This has been particularly problematic for the Russo-Japanese War, where much attention has understandably been levelled at Russia's racist depictions of the Japanese. [39] While Russian propaganda was indeed very dependent on a xenophobic "yellow peril" message, this has obscured other colonial relationships – that were also deeply racist – between both sides and the local Chinese population they were looking to subject to foreign rule.

Of course, historians of the modern city (and beyond) have also insisted that words were tied to tangible realities and political anxieties. Some of the most influential works on this dissertation have been those that use bodies as a grounding mechanism to this end during the late

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[37] See Katerina Clark's use of *Petersburg* and *The Bronze Horseman* as a framing device in her *Petersburg*, 3-6. Laura Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siecle Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994). Louise McReynolds, "Reading the Russian Romance: What did the Keys to Happiness Unlock?" *Journal of Popular Culture* 31, no. 4 (March 1998), 95-108.

[38] Stephen M. Norris, *A War of Images: Russian Popular Prints, Wartime Culture, and National Identity, 1812-1945* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006); Hubertus Jahn, *Patriotic Culture in Russia during World War I* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995); and Richard Stites, "Days and Nights in Wartime Russia, Cultural Life, 1914-1917" in Aviel Roshwald and Richard Stites, eds., *European Culture in the Great War: The Arts, Entertainment and Propaganda, 1914–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 8-31.

[39] Norris, *A War of Images,* chapter 6; Rosamund Bartlett, "Japonisme and Japanophobia: The Russo-Japanese War in Russian Cultural Consciousness," *Russian Review* 67, no. 1 (January 2008): 8–33, 10; Richard Stites, "Russian Representations of the Japanese Enemy"; and Tatiana Filippova, "Images of the Foe in the Russian Satirical Press," in *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero,* ed. John W. Steinberg et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 395-410; 411-424.

imperial era: Laura Engelstein's study of sex, Joan Neuberger's on hooligans and Susan Morrissey's on suicide.[40] Not only do these works bring together the corporeal and the media in complex and nuanced ways, they do as a means of exploring the sorts of agency that historical subjects could wield despite being dispossessed of power in the most direct sense – either because they were female, working-class, or dead. For Neuberger, the critical point is that Petersburg's *fin de siècle* hooligans possessed a self-conscious awareness of their own theatricality. As such, although the press writing about their acts of petty (and not-so-petty) vandalism certainly helped to reconceptualize the idea of urban public space, this media was reacting *to* the hooligans as much as they were creating that spectre through text. Morrissey argues that by the early twentieth century, suicide in modern Russia had the capacity to become a profoundly political act informed by discourses of sovereignty and autonomous personhood. These men and women had their bodies and they had their words, but these words were mediated out into society via the press in different ways depending on the context, or the genre, of the suicide in question.

One of my goals in these following chapters is to construct a bridge between these investigations into the body, society, and culture and the literature on late imperial Russian modernity which tends to revolve around iterations of the modernist state or specific professional institutions.[41] This second group, united in their efforts to trace the distinguishing attributes of "Bolshevik" modernity back into decades preceding 1917, productively combine grand political visions with everyday bureaucratic concerns (such as personnel and funding), but do not

[40] In addition to Engelstein, *Keys to Happiness* and Neuberger, *Hooliganism*, see Susan K. Morrissey, *Suicide and the Body Politic in Imperial Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
[41] Daniel Beer, *Renovating Russia: The Human Sciences and the Fate of Liberal Modernity, 1880-1930* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008); D. Hoffmann and Y. Kotsonis, eds., *Russian Modernity: Politics, Knowledge and Practices, 1800-1950* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), introduction and part III.

generally consider the pushback or challenges that were mustered from culture or society. In this dissertation I take the view that there were multiple genres of military death, with each different genre assigning different weightings to various actors (the dead, the state, society, the relatives). I have a primary cast of state actors that includes local government men and appointees from royal commissions who oversaw burials, ordered disinfectants, negotiated repatriations, and erected monuments and memorials. These men have names that stand out because they reoccur throughout the correspondences, although most are not politically famous. Behind them is a shadow list – a chorus – of administrative staff who worked for the government and the military and who handled the petitions for information that flooded in from relatives, doled out pensions, and complied lists of the deceased. While I touch upon the soldiers, sailors, and aviators who wrote about death from an intimate and personal perspective where I can, my source base is primarily comprised of two components. The first is archival documents, largely taken from military and state archives, that detail out the processes regarding the military dead. The second set is published materials, and specifically books, magazines, and newspapers from the period in question. One of my major takeaways from these aforementioned works on the body and the media (and especially Morrissey) is that a powerful way to give credence and voice to the non-state, non-archival actors is to take the literary world that surrounded them seriously – the references they made were important, and what they were reading mattered.[42]

Shifting over to the battlefield, this dissertation contributes to the growing movement to expand and complicate military histories beyond the conventional top-down focus on battles,

[42] For an excellent article on the overlaps between fiction and military sensibilities, see Jan Plamper, "Fear: Soldiers and Emotion in Early Twentieth-Century Russian Military Psychology," *Slavic Review* 68, no. 2 (2009): 259–83. See also Irina Sirotkina, *Diagnosing Literary Genius: A Cultural History of Psychiatry in Russia, 1880-1930* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002)

generals, tactics, and political events.[43] Like much of the scholarship that has emerged since archival access became easier to obtain in the 1990s, I insist that Russia's two late imperial wars were not local events, but rather conflicts that had imperial and global ramifications.[44] Unlike many of the newer works, I look at how the military dead were treated as a set of material remains in conjunction with artistic and subjective portrayals and thereby seek to bring considerations of state bureaucracy and processes into conversation with cultural spheres of analysis.[45]

In doing so, I build off some excellent studies that have made the most of this state-based space. Joshua Sanborn's *Drafting the Russian Nation* is a standout in how it explores the tensions between the lofty ideals that were entertained by those who were reforming the Russian Army on the eve of WWI and the social-political realities. While the policymakers dreamed of forging an army of "citizen-soldiers" along the Prussian model, Sanborn charts the strife that ensued as these hopes dashed against the rocks of "a country with only a weakly and unofficially developed notion of "'citizenship'," and with massive degrees of social and ethnic diversity.[46] *A*

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[43] Bruce Menning, *Bayonets before Bullets: The Imperial Russian Army, 1861–1914* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992); William Fuller, *Civil–Military Conflict in Imperial Russia, 1881–1914* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985); David Alan Rich, *The Tsar's Colonels: Professionalism, Strategy, and Subversion in Late Imperial Russia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); Norman Stone, *The Eastern Front, 1914–1917* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975); and Graydon A. Tunstall, *Blood on the Snow: The Carpathian Winter War of 1915* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2010). A major exception to this generalization is a study that focuses much more on the soldiers themselves; see Allan K. Wildman, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army,* 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980–85).

[44] Bruce W. Menning et al., eds., *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero,* 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2006); Mark von Hagen, "The Limits of Reform: The Multiethnic Imperial Army confronts Nationalism, 1874-1917," in *Reforming the Tsar's Army: Military Innovation in Imperial Russia from Peter the Great to the Revolution*, eds. David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye and Bruce Menning (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2004), 34-55; Joshua A. Sanborn, *Imperial Apocalypse: The Great War and the Destruction of the Russian Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Michael A. Reynolds, *Shattering Empires: The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires, 1908–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[45] Peter Gatrell, *Russia's First World War: A Social and Economic History* (Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2005); Peter Gatrell, *Government, Industry, and Rearmament in Russia, 1900–1914: The Last Argument of Tsarism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Eric J. Lohr, *Nationalizing the Russian Empire: The Campaign against Enemy Aliens during World War I* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

[46] Joshua Sanborn, *Drafting the Russian Nation: Military Conscription, Total War, and Mass Politics, 1905-1925* (DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003), 4.

*Whole Empire Walking,* Peter Gattrell's study of refugees expands the concepts of "mobilization" and "total war" to include how communities reacted to situations in the absence of state presence.[47] Peter Holquist's diverse and sophisticated body of work likewise takes military-based policies as starting points, establishes the threads of reasoning that informed those policies, and then analyzes the changes and consequences as they played out.[48] More so than these studies, I argue that considering the war's broader cultural output – printed materials, mass circulation press, images – is not only important for arriving at a more robust understanding of how the conflicts were interpreted and appraised by Russian population, but also critically impacted both the conduct of the wars themselves and their aftermaths. For example, in the years leading up to the Russo-Japanese War the newly revised International Laws of War received a lot of attention. As I document in Chapter 2, the dehumanizing depictions of the local populations of Mongolia and Manchuria in Russia's illustrated press predated, permitted, and reinforced the actions that the Russian army conducted in the region by specifically emphasizing the aspects of these "bandit" groups (e.g. those lacking insignia) that would place them outside the protection of international law.

Chapter 1 sets out the broad context for the dissertation within the framework of the modern. Using Benedict Anderson's famous writings on nationalism as a jumping off point, I ask what men believed they were dying for when they died for "Russia." After covering the state of the battlefields and funerals throughout the Russo-Japanese War and WWI, and tracing the

[47] Peter Gatrell, *A Whole Empire Walking: Refugees in Russia during World War I* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1999).
[48] In addition to Holquist, *Making War, Forging Revolution*, see Peter Holquist, "The Politics and Practice of the Russian Occupation of Armenia, 1915–February 1917," in *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire,* ed. Ronald Grigor Suny, Fatma Müge Göçek, and Norman M. Naimark (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 151–74; and his "To Count, to Extract, and to Exterminate: Population Statistics and Population Politics in Late Imperial Russia and Soviet Russia," in *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin,* ed. Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).

growing unease surrounding the prospect that some men, but not others, should be resigned to "die silently," I turn the idea of "dying for the motherland" back on itself. If these soldiers died for the motherland, then what did that motherland look like? How was it changing in the first decade of the twentieth century? Amidst these shifting battlefield and urban modernities, I argue that other identities emerged in addition to a national one. Some were rooted in class, some owed to a literate, urban experience, and others were forged during times of war in the face of new and modern horrors.

In chapter 2, I focus on the bodies of Manchurian bandits – referred to by the Russians as the *khunkhuzy* – who were caught up in the fighting during the Russo-Japanese War. Drawing on Achille Mbembe's theory of necropolitics and Judith Butler's ideas about "loseable" populations, I argue that the Laws of War penned by Europe's great powers in the nineteenth century helped to sanction the brutal and dehumanizing treatment of these bandits' bodies – both in reality and as represented in the press. In doing so, I show how particular colonial dimensions to the Russo-Japanese War have been critically overlooked in the prevailing scholarship.

The third chapter looks at the repatriations that took place after the Russo-Japanese War. The conflict was fought almost exclusively on non-Russian land: men did not die, and they were not buried, in home soil. Engaging with the wave of "new imperial" Russian historiography, I use the movements of these bodies (and the debates surrounding them) to analyze spatial understandings of Russia's far east, specifically in regard to its position as both "Russia" and the imperial periphery. When the coffers were depleted and the government distracted by internal revolutionary turmoil (1905-7), other identities, such as class and celebrity, also brought themselves to bear when it came to determining whose bodies were worthy of repatriation.

Chapter four is devoted to the relationship between death and the emergence of the aviator as an icon of mass culture. Looking at mass media and material culture (specifically new kinds of gravestones), I posit that representations of death rendered these early pilots as much late imperial celebrities as they were military men, with a fame that was rooted in the influence of the occult and new ideas about machines as much as their willingness to sacrifice themselves for God and Tsar. Inspired by David Nye's concept of the technological sublime, I argue that while Russia's aviators were considered to be national heroes, they also presented as part of a broader and transnational cohort of pilots, bound together by visions of technology and modernity. Across Europe, these men were buried in ways that reflected some startling new ideas: in graveyards, traditional crosses were replaced with propellers over the bodies of aviators.

The fifth and final chapter takes on the narrative of remembrance from a fresh perspective by looking at when, where, and how the names of the rank-and-file were inscribed on war memorials. This phenomenon speaks to some critical emotional and administrative aspects of turn-of-the century modernity: the sense that *all* the military dead were deserving of memorialization, and the bureaucratic machinery required to translate that belief over into praxis. I argue that within this naming processes there were two key methods through which the state attempted to exert narrative control. The first was geographical: in Russia, the naming of the rank-and-file did not occur overnight, but in a deliberately piecemeal fashion. Many of the first monuments to all Russian soldiers were erected in geographically precarious areas, at imperial borderlands where allegiances were deemed to be shaky. The second has to do with opportunities that accompanied the obligations of a modern state's administration. By focusing on the stacks of paperwork that accompanied the government's efforts to make sure the right names were

inscribed, I argue that this same process also provided new opportunities for the state to conduct surveillance over their veterans.

Although the edges do not match up perfectly, chapters two through five follow a rough chronological order. And, though I was not explicitly aware of it as I wrote them – I may have been subconsciously mirroring Drew Gilpin Faust's structuring technique in *This Republic of Suffering* (if so, then in this case imitation is indeed the greatest form of flattery) – thematically they also mirror the stages through which the military death passed. Chapter two is mostly concerned with killing and dying. Chapter three concentrates on organizing, moving, and caring. Chapter four looks at burying, and celebratory funerals that took place in the immediate aftermath of aviator's deaths. The final chapter looks at the longer and slower dimensions of memorializing.

## CHAPTER ONE

### "YOU DON'T KNOW ALL, BROTHER": MILITARY DEATH AND THE LATE IMPERIAL MOTHERLAND

"Dying for the homeland" is a trope that seems to transcend time and space, and – at least at first glance – appears to make a lot of self-contained sense. Indeed, the "colossal sacrifices" that the motherland can demand has provided the foundation for some of the most celebrated historical investigations. For Benedict Anderson, it is precisely the relationship between death and the homeland that demonstrates the sheer strength of the nation-based imagined community; "it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die."[1]

In late imperial Russia, when military men (and a few women[2]) died, some of the most prominent voices claimed these deaths, then vindicated and mobilized them in the name of the motherland (*rodina*). Much of the printed press rationalized death on the battlefield in this way, as did soldiers and sailors in their diaries and letters. Across both late imperial wars, commercial newspapers framed death as "service to the Tsar and Motherland."[3] Losses were reported with phrases like, "[we] honor the memory of the heroes who fell for the Tsar and the fatherland."[4]

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[1] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 2006), 7.

[2] Women who died while serving as nurses were numerically few, but they were celebrated enthusiastically in the press. See for example *Letopis voiny s Iaponiei*, no. 33 (21 Oct 1904), 5. During WWI, Russian nurses (known as sisters of mercy) often died from illness or after being exposed to poisonous gasses, and these were written about in the Russian Red Cross periodical, *Vestnik Krasnogo Kresta*. Laurie S. Stoff, "Russia's Sisters of Mercy of World War I: The Wartime Nursing Experience," in *The Military Experience* eds. Anthony Heywood, Boris Kolonitskii, John Steinberg, and Laurie Stoff (Bloomington: Slavica, 2019), 265-290, 282.

[3] "Nashi voennyi transport," *Vestnik man'chzhurskoi armii,* no. 66 (12 Oct 1904): 2.

[4] *Russkoe Slovo*, no. 195 (26 August 1914): 2. While motherland (*rodina*) appears more often in the context of death and sacrifice, *otechestvo,* fatherland, is also common. As Melissa Stockdale has noted, though differences can be found in the implications embedded within the terms motherland and fatherland, (the fatherland more "official," the motherland more intimate, linked with one's specific place of birth as much as the national entity), in this context

Religious journals published exhortations such as, "let us remember the heroes who took the martyr's crown for their motherland."[5] This idea was impressively all-encompassing: not only were men's death retroactively positioned as a sacrifice for the motherland, but their deaths were also anticipated as they went to war. At the outbreak of WWI, the new flurry of patriotic magazines were full of stories that enthusiastically promoted the glory in dying for the *rodina*. Such publications were awash with statements from servicemen like, "we are going to die for the truth (*pravda*), for the Faith, for the Motherland, for the Tsar!"[6] Many memoirists drew the link between death and the motherland a similarly emphatic and straightforward belief. Believing that soldiers had died for the "Faith and for the Motherland" in the Russo-Japanese War, Major General K. I. Druzhinin expressed a degree of personal regret that "fate wanted to spare my head," so noble was the cause for which his comrades had given their lives. "Sometimes," he admitted, "I even did everything I could to find a glorious end for myself on the fields of Manchuria."[7] Father Srebrianskii, a priest in the Manchurian campaign, described the men "who, with their blood and death, have impressed their loyalty to duty, and their love for the Tsar and motherland" as "very, very gratifying."[8]

But stare long enough at the surface of this epistemological blanket, and some distinctive patterns start to emerge. In one short story in *Vernost'* (*Faithfulness*), a weekly magazine aimed at Russian soldiers that referred to itself as a "military-national patriotic" publication, a priest

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they are essentially interchangeable. Take, for example, this sentence where they function as synonyms "Our fathers and grandfathers gave us great covenants of love for the Motherland and showed us the way to its greatness. They gave us a strong, mighty Russia, created by their self-sacrifice and love. Can't we, just like them, sacrifice our lives and stand up for Faith, Tsar and Fatherland in complete unanimity?" "Kak umiraiut geroi," *Vernost,* no. 285 (3 March 1916): 38. Melissa K. Stockdale, "What is a Fatherland? Changing Notions of Duty, Rights, and Belonging in Russia," *Space, Place, and Power in Modern Russia: Essays in the New Spatial History*, eds. Mark Bassin, Christopher Ely, Melissa K. Stockdale (Northern Illinois University Press: DeKalb: 2010), 23-48, 82.

[5] *Blagoveshchenskie eparkhial'nye vedomosti,* no. 12-13 (30 June 1909):142.

[6] "Slava v vyshnikh Bogy!" *Vernost',* no. 298 (25 Dec 1916), 4.

[7] K. I. Druzhinin, *Vospominaniia o Russko-iaponskoi voine 1904-1905*, (St. Petersburg,1909), 20.

[8] V. Srebrianskii, *Dnevnik iz vremen Russko-iaponskoi voiny* (Moscow, 1912), 218.

comforts a dying soldier by asking if there is anything he would like to be sent home after he passes. The soldier declines, replying "I don't have a home… I have a homeland."[9] In a way that reflects the pinnacle of Anderson's "imagined community," this fictional soldier's love of an *abstracted homeland* is put forward as the ultimate way of modelling heroism. For the dying soldier, this vision trumped the affection he bore towards any specific geographic locality. The printed press – especially publications that courted a military audience – pushed the notion that there was a hierarchy of ways to sacrifice oneself for the motherland, where perishing for the idea of "Russia" was preferable to dying for any real place. This ideational understanding of the motherland was especially prevalent during the Russo-Japanese War, when mortal affection was expressed for a home that was understood to somehow be further away. A dying soldier in the magazine *Dnevnik voiny* (*Soldier's Diary)* found himself "feverishly dreaming of the idyllic valleys of his distant homeland," before reprimanding himself for being too sentimental, and affirming his conviction that it was sufficient to die for the cause.[10] Diaries tell a slightly more human, nuanced story: sister of mercy Smirnova wrote in her diary about how dear the idea of the motherland was to the dying men charged to her care, and how they longed to make it home before succumbing to their wounds.[11]

Stare even longer, and stray threads also swim into view. The concept of the motherland as a worthy – and even ultimate – reason for death was not entirely universal. Even the most jingoistic publications mused on the fact that dying for the motherland could mean different things for different groups of people. In 1916 (when the war had decidedly turned against Russia on the eastern front), *Vernost'* printed an extract from the works of A. Kruglov entitled,

[9] "Kak umiraiut geroi," *Vernost'*, no. 285 (1 March 1916): 40.
[10] "Osady Port-Artura," *Dnevnik voiny*, no. 5 (10 June 1904): 37.
[11] P. Smirnova, *Zapiski sestry miloserdiia iz poezdki na Dal'nii Vostok 1904*-1905 (Moscow, 1912), 59.

"Thoughts on war and the military." Kruglov's essay pointed out that there was a very important difference between the heroes whose names "would be entered on the tablets of history, and who would live in posterity," and the "other heroes, the unknown, the rank-and-file, the nameless – the masses who push forward with the noted heroes, and under their leadership die silently for their homeland, for their faith, and for their Sovereign." This latter group did not go to war "to kill, but to die." Making this point almost gently, Kruglov embedded it into a broader argument that it was essential for all Russians to understand the extent of the sacrifices being made. Other men, courting different audiences, minced their words far less. F. I. Shikuts served in the Russo-Japanese War as an orderly and published his diary upon returning home in 1909.[12] He wrote about "dying silently" with unabashed sardonic spite. For him, the homeland might have been what motivated dewy-eyed young recruits, but it was a fallacy. It was those who went into battle with "hope" – hope of staying alive, hope of returning home, hope that death was indeed heroic – that were so often the ones killed by "some insignificant fragment of a shell." He goes into detail to illustrate these sorts of fates: these men would fall down on top of the corpses of their friends, before their bodies were buried by others in turn. In this utterly grim scenario, Shikuts' motherland is nothing more than a foil for the banality of industrialized death. Whatever the "homeland" was, it would not mourn the death of the rank-and-file. These men's deaths would be "*ne zametna*," unnoticed and imperceptible, to all but their immediate family.[13] For him, the relationship between these men and the motherland was very much a one-way street – nothing more than a promise that failed to deliver. At a time when industrialized warfare demanded ever

[12] F. I. Shikuts, *Dnevnik soldata v Russko-iaponskuiu voinu* (St Petersburg 1909), 65. Accessible here: http://militera.lib.ru/db/shikuts_fi/index.html
[13] Shikuts, *Dnevnik soldata,* 65.

greater numbers of cannon-fodder, an increasing percent of that cannon-fodder were riling at the prospect of "dying silently."

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Dying for the motherland was a powerful idea, but it was not a perfect idea. This chapter explores how it was a dynamic and finely attuned historical process, and I argue that the collision of military death and modernity gave rise to a multitude of collective identities, thus complicating the presumption that dying for the motherland can be rationalized vis-à-vis a singular nationalist lens. Benedict Anderson's straightforward union of military death and the nation might make a lot of sense from a sweeping glance, but a closer look reveals it to be an alliance that risks simplifying and ossifying both phenomena. I place the statement "they died for the motherland" under the microscope and ask: *okay – but what did that late imperial motherland look like*? How does that presumptive monopoly over death *work* when we substitute in more complex iterations – iterations that reflected the multifaceted experience of modernity, and in particular new technologies and the rise of new class-based sensibilities?

To pick away at the seams of the motherland, to historicize it, does involve a certain amount of dethroning. Yet it is one thing to demonstrate that there is more to the motherland than meets the darting eye; another to keep in mind that the vast majority of military men and the general public did invest heavily in the idea that soldiers did die for their country. From the Russo-Japanese War through the First World War, images and ideas of Holy Russia, the Tsar as the Little Father, the *narod* (Russian people), bygone military heroes, and Slavophilism all

provided credence to this notion.[14] The point here is not to deny the power of the motherland, but to approach it as something that was in flux, as an unstable conglomeration of layers and identities that gave rise to new alliances and fracture lines. One access point to this sort of instability can be seen when we consider the *rodina,* the Russian term for homeland or motherland. *Rodina* could either connote the nation, or the more specific location of one's native birthplace (e.g. a town or village). We can see soldiers grappling with this dual meaning in the earlier excerpts, and during the early twentieth century the tensions between a local identity and a nation-based "Russian" sense of belonging were being fostered and fueled by new sorts of reading, novel modes of expression, and the development of a transport and communications infrastructure that knitted the rural and the urban ever closer. These pressures were further exemplified by the fact that the Russian motherland was an amalgam as imperial as it was national. It had long been the policy of the tsarist government to ensure that recruits were assigned to regiments far away from their own home areas, and this imperative was enforced even more strongly when the home area in question was ethnically non-Russian.[15] The sweeping reforms to the military that took place in 1874 under the auspices of Dmitrii Miliutin operated under the principle that while it was desirous to bring the peoples of the periphery into the military because it would help to inculcate a sense of "Russianness," local realities meant that universal service would have to be rolled out slowly and in a way that was specifically tailored to the area and group in question.[16] When the Russo-Japanese War made it abundantly clear that future conflicts would demand unprecedented levels of mass mobilization, this process was

[14] Richard Stites, "Days and Nights in Wartime Russia: Cultural Life, 1914-1917," in *European Culture in the Great War: The Arts, Entertainment, and Propaganda, 1914-1918* eds. Aviel Roshhwald and Richard Stites (Cambridge: Cambridge 1999), 8-31; 23.
[15] Joshua A. Sanborn, *Drafting the Russian Nation: Military Conscription, Total War, and Mass Politics, 1905–1925* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2002), 68.
[16] Robert F. Baumann, "Universal Service Reform and Russia's Imperial Dilemma," *War & Society* 4, no. 2 (September 1, 1986): 31–49, 32.

accelerated considerably by further reforms in 1912, although it was determined that such recruits would not be able to serve in special units comprised of one ethnicity.[17] During WWI, approximately 25% of military units were non-ethnic Russians (a category that included Ukrainian and Belarusian).[18]

The ways in which these imperial spatial tensions played out amidst the dynamics of military death is explored further in other chapters. Here, my primary concern is to explore how the battlefields of the early twentieth century enabled other imagined communities to come to the fore. Both in reality and in representation, the nightmarish trench-ridden and barbed-wired landscapes provided a platform whereby newer collective identities could emerge within the *rodina* and jostle up against the idea for space and influence. I pay particular attention to a set of imagined communities, located both at the battlefronts and the urban centers, that coalesced around the imperative to *know what happened* to the military dead. Some of these affective identities were not long lasting; a group of people who waited at train stations for news of the war. Others were linked through discourses of medicine and sanitation. At their sharpest iterations, these were affective networks rooted in ideas of class, structured around ideas of honor and the body, and with the potential to manifest politically via protest and munity. In these pointed moments, we can see the history of military death interacting with late imperial Russia's overarching revolutionary narratives.

I argue that these particular forms of community and social identity rooted in knowing were formed in the *interchange* between the modern ideas that percolated through the urban

[17] Sanborn, 74. See also Mark von Hagen, "The Great War and the Mobilization of Ethnicity in the Russian Empire," in *Post-Soviet Political Order: Conflict and State Building*, ed. Barnett R. Rubin and Jack Snyder (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 34–5.
[18] David R. Stone, *The Russian Army in the Great War: The Eastern Front, 1914-1917* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2015), 36.

centers and the mortal experience of the battlefields. The rest of this chapter is structured in a way that reflects these divisions and spatialities. The first part looks at the city, and the second focuses on the experience of the frontlines, but both consider the connective tissues – both physical conduits and overarching ideas – that linked the two together. The third section addresses the sorts of communities that arose out of the differences between the representation and the reality. To provide narrative support, I look at the city and the theaters of war through two case-study prisms: Leonid Andreev's *Red Laugh*, and the exploits of an enterprising individual, Vasilii Povorinskii, who offered up his services as a corpse-finder on the battlefields of both Manchuria and Galicia.

My approach to class-based identity, like nationalism, during this era of revolutionary upheaval is also intended to capture the complexities. Here, my line of thinking is indebted to Steve Smith's recent work. Smith elegantly handles the vast amount of historiographical material on the subject by putting forward "capitalist modernity" as an analytic framework to complement the previous works that have been more singularly focused on the construction of class consciousness. The communal bonds that Smith investigates are messier and more fluctuating; in his own words, he sets out to explore the "multiplicity of transformations in social identity that cannot be captured by a single-minded focus on class identity."[19] While Smith looks for these transformations within peasants who moved from the countryside to the cities, I follow the men whose journeys were also diverted to the battlefronts.

These were important detours, as Russia's two late imperial wars led to cataclysmic political revolutions. The tsarist autocracy was brought to its knees in 1905, and Nicholas II was forced to cede some of his autocratic power and allow an elected body, the Duma, to claim

[19] Steve A. Smith, *Revolution and the People in Russia and China: A Comparative History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 5.

political authority. In February 1917, the Romanov dynasty was swept away for good. These were, however, not straightforward detours. This chapter explores many factors that were at play simultaneously, factors that interwove and reinforced each other at certain points, but were also independently conditioned. For instance, the desire *to know* what had happened to the rank and file entered a new phase of intensity during the late imperial era: the age where families would accept their loved ones "dying silently" with a similarly mute reticence was coming to an end. Both increasing literacy rates and mass photography played a critical part in fueling and satisfying this desire, and these fundamentally altered how military death was presented, organized, and communicated. For example, the tsarist government generally forbid any printed images of the Russian dead in the mainstream newspapers. On a rare exception, the illustrated journal *Iskry* (*Sparks*) published an evocative photograph of some dead soldiers from the Russo-Japanese War neatly lined up on the ground, awaiting burial in a brotherly (mass) grave [figure 1]. Soldiers surround the dead men, heads bowed in respect – but they also frame a living man,


*Figure 1: Recording the names of the killed.* Iskry*, no. 22 (5 June 1905): 171.*

who sits on the ground with a pen and clipboard. He is the subject of the caption, which we might reasonably interpret as the justification for printing an image of uniformed Russian corpses: "recording the names of the killed" (*zapis' familii ubityhk*).[20] Here was evidence that chronicling was taking place: though families might be shorn of their loved ones, there was peace of mind to be had rendered and printed in ink.

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The *Red Laugh* is often classified as an "anti-war" novella, along a similar vein to Tolstoy's *Bethink Yourselves* or foreign works like Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.[21] Literary critics also emphasize the "modern" aspects to the *Red Laugh*, especially its symbolist and expressionist aspects.[22] It is, in the words of Barry P. Scherr, "a relentless portrayal of madness and chaos."[23] Its subtitle, "Fragments of a Discovered Manuscript," is an appropriate reflection of both its non-linear narrative and its rendering of the characters themselves as fragments, more ciphers for that madness and chaos than recognizable human figures. The novella captures the cacophony of sound – booms and the crashes, disrupted voices and thoughts – characteristic of a modern industrial war. In a disjointed manner, it follows a protagonist through the Russo-Japanese War, and his subsequent sorry rehabilitation back home in Moscow after he gets seriously injured. Beyond the fact that it deals directly with the conflict,

[20] *Iskry,* no. 22 (5 June 1905): 171.
[21] Frank Jacob, *The Russo-Japanese War and its Shaping of the Twentieth Century* (Routledge: New York, 2018), 75.
[22] Edith Clowes, "The Mute Body: Leonid Andreev's Abject Realism." in *Russian Writers and the Fin De Siècle: The Twilight of Realism,* eds. Katherine Bowers and Ani Kokobobo, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); 233–48.
[23] For an account of the war's literary output, see Barry P. Scherr, "The Russo-Japanese War and the Russian Literary Imagination," in *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective,* eds. John W. Steinberg, Bruce W. Menning, David Schimmelpennick van der Oye, David Wolff and Shinji Yokote (Leiden: Brill, 2005) 425-446.

the *Red Laugh*'s genesis and themes makes it a useful gateway to consider how aspects of late imperial urban modernity, specifically those defined by the intertwined forces of rising literacy, the embrace of mass culture, and disorientation brought themselves to bear on war and death. Though these sites played host to the tangible – the bodies of dead heroes were carried through the streets of Petersburg before they were arrayed in state, buried, and memorialized – in this space the melange of words created meaningful links between war, death, and the homeland. It is here that we see the emergence of the alternative urban imagined community located at the interstices between the desire to know, new avenues of knowing, and the deluge of information.

For starters, the *Red Laugh* was penned in reaction to *words written about* the Russo-Japanese War. This was a problem for some of Andreev's literary comrades: Vikentii Verasaev, who had spent time out in the far east working as a doctor, charged that it was "unrepresentative," because Andreev had not visited the front.[24] Maxim Gorky found the level of detail that some characters were able to recount implausible.[25] Andreev had not witnessed the carnage at Mukden (90,000 casualties, and nearly 9,000 dead), nor had he witnessed the near annihilation of the Russian Navy off the straights of Tsushima. Rather, the *Red Laugh* was based entirely on journalistic coverage that filtered back to St. Petersburg. There is no arguing with Verasaev on this point: The *Red Laugh* is not much use to people who are looking for a novelist's "first-hand" take on the war itself. But the fact that Andreev's novella exists tells us just how much the landscape of information had changed in the years since the Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878), where it is comparatively inconceivable that Leo Tolstoy could have penned his *Sevastopol Sketches* had he not physically been there.

[24] Scherr, "The Russo-Japanese War and the Russian Literary Imagination," 427-428.
[25] Stephen C. Hutchings, "Semantic Contagion, Internalisations and Collapse of Difference in the Short Stories of Leonid Andreyev," *New Zealand Slavonic Journal* (1992), 75-79, 77.

Andreev was able to write his account of the war from a desk in St. Petersburg because the volume of newspapers had increased precipitously since the previous conflict, reflecting the growth of literacy through Russia's adult population.[26] Between 1860 and 1900, the number of Russian-language monthly periodicals had increased three-fold, and the number of dailies and biweeklies nearly ten-fold.[27] Specific journals, such as the illustrated weekly *Niva*, underwent incredible booms. In 1870, its first year, chalked up a circulation of 9,000. By the start of twentieth century, this number had soared to 200,000. Newspapers proudly announced the presence of their men on the ground, and journalists were presented to the public as intimately close to the action. The war correspondent of *Birzhevyi vedmostei*, the *Stock Market Gazette*, was pictured ready for action in the 3 March 1905 issue. The caption, "in position," is a clear riff on


*Figure 2: War correspondent for the Stock Market Gazette, A. Mikhailov, in position.* Birzhevye vedomosti*, no. 8698 (3 March 1905), 4.*

[26] Jeffrey Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature 1861-1917* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), xv.
[27] Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, 112-113.

militarized language and indicates that the war correspondent was willing to put himself in harm's way for the sake of the story [figure 2].[28]

As such, Andreev's story reflects certain shifts in sentiment and urban experience that accompanied the spread of literacy and printed matter. The population of St. Petersburg and Moscow had doubled in latter half of the nineteenth century, and the rate of industrialization increased substantially in the 1890s.[29] While much of the *Red Laugh* reads like a terrifying dystopia, its key themes have been taken seriously in some notable scholarly quarters. For example, Peter Fritzsche makes a powerful argument that turn-of-the century urban centers like Berlin and St. Petersburg were as much "city as text" as they were "city as place," where new ways of living existed in a tangled symbiosis with new ways of reading and writing.[30] In one direction, the urban social fabric, a chaos of bodies and things uprooted from traditional kinship ties, was devoted to the printed word and its potential for "narrational order"; in the other, texts picked up the gauntlet and sought to reflect and interpret these shifting fissures. Crucially, within Frietzsche's precocious modern dynamic, the spike in mass literacy rendered the newspaper the most "indispensable" element of this textual stratum.[31] At the same time, "mass-circulation newspapers posed the real possibility that readers would be left to cobble together a worldview from a variety of unauthoritative sources."[32] While the increased number of news sources enabled readers to demonstrate "a growing sense of individualism by exercising their freedom of choice," in the words of Louise McReynolds, it also meant that multiple interpretations of the Russo-Japanese War were being put forward onto the urban boulevard. [33] Against this backdrop,

[28] *Birzhevye vedomosti*, no. 8698 (3 March 1905), 4.
[29] Louise McReynolds, *The News Under the Old Regime:* The Development of a Mass-Circulation Press (Princeton, 1991), 55.
[30] Peter Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin:1900* (Harvard, 1990), 1.
[31] Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin,* 4.
[32] Fritzsche *Reading Berlin,* 178.
[33] McReynolds, *The News Under the Old Regime,* 124.

the inability of Andreev's protagonist to write a singular narrative of the war in its aftermath presents as the sheer deluge of information bleeding into the mental and physical trauma inflicted by the war itself.

The *Red Laugh* directly engages with both the desire to know and the explosion of the press in several different ways. The brother of the protagonist, who did not go to fight, spends his days walking the streets, visiting the train stations ("I go there every morning now"), making "investigations," and waiting for the newspapers to hit the stands. Yet when his anticipation is rewarded, he does not find comfort, but perceives this information as though it is a straitjacket, disrupting time and arresting the senses:

> Where can one fly to?" he asked, shrugging his shoulders. "Every day, at about the same hour, the papers close the circuit and all of mankind gets a shock. This simultaneousness of feelings, tears, thoughts, suffering, and horror deprives me of all stay, and I am like a chip of wood tossing about on the waves […] I am forcibly torn away from all that is habitual, and there is one terrible moment every morning, when I seem to hang in the air over the black abyss of insanity. And I shall fall into it, I must fall into it. You don't know all, brother. You don't read the papers.[34]

In a very unsubtle way, Andreev is making the argument that experiencing the reports was part and parcel of the modern war experience. The language of fear and removal from "all that is habitual" is something that should belong to the deployed soldier, but, in this scenario, physical safety is no longer the guarantor of psychological safety. At another point in the story, the

[34] Leonid Andreyev, *The Red Laugh* (Dedalus 1989)*,* 105-106.

protagonist seeks out reports of an incident – a terrible episode of friendly fire – that had left him with amputated legs. He was looking to the newspaper press to help him understand what had gone wrong, but was confronted instead with a further lack of clarity: "very soon everybody forgot about the incident, forgot about it to such an extent that it was spoken of as a real battle and in that sense many accounts were written and sent to the papers in good faith."[35] Here, Andreev melds together the second-hand trauma of reading about the war in print with a second theme: the disconcerting capacity for this multitude of newspapers to perform as propaganda vehicles. As the brother remarks at one point, "the papers clamour for fresh troops and more blood every day, and I am beginning to understand less and less what it all means."[36]

This moment constitutes a check and balance against one of Benedict Anderson's most vital ingredients in a nation-encompassing imagined community: the growth of a newspaper consuming public. Anderson asks his readers to consider "modern man," who has substituted his morning prayers for a morning perusal of the daily paper. This is a form of profound communion, where "each communicant is well aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion."[37] Whereas Anderson's hypothetical man finds solid ground through this process, Andreev's corollaries are undone in this wartime scenario where some of these newspapers tell known lies, and taken together they do not tell a straight story.

This sense of overwhelming volume experienced by the brother in Andreev's story was, in part, because newspapers were effectively writing both about and for the rank-and-file. These

[35] Andreyev, *The Red Laugh,* 74.
[36] Andreyev, *The Red Laugh,* 129.
[37] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 35.

subtler types of collective identity, one rooted in the text-based construction of a character type and the other in a working class and peasant audience, were critical to the idea that an ever-expanding section of the population would rail at the idea that their loved ones should "die silently," and take steps to find their peace of mind. Literacy within the Russian army had increased precipitously in the years leading up to the First World War. Rates among new recruits to the army had surged upwards by a factor of three, from 21% in 1874 to 68% in 1913.[38] This reflected both the general need for reading as industrial working opportunities burgeoned after emancipation, and its increasing necessity within the army itself.[39] The army's role in encouraging literacy among its recruits was stop-start, pulled between the demands of new communication and weapons technology on the one hand, and the perceived political dangers on the other.[40] For example, when the 1874 reforms were introduced the prior policy of life-long recruitment was scrapped in favor of a service term of six years, but this was reduced to four years if one could produce an education certificate. Mandatory literacy lessons for recruits were dropped during the 1880s, then reinstituted (but only for the infantry) in 1902.[41]

The desirability of literate troops remained a topic of hot debate throughout the late imperial period. During the Russo-Japanese War itself, one contributor to *Russkii invalid* (*The Russian Veteran*) argued that literacy was far from the most important thing when it came to the training of troops. Men could be trained to hit targets by *showing*, and the most decisive factor was the quality of the superior in charge of the training. He wrote, "if even everyone is literate,

[38] Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read,* 3.
[39] On the military reforms enacted by Dmitrii Miluitin, see John W. Steinberg, *All the Tsar's Men: Russia's General Staff and the Fate of the Empire 1898-1914* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2010), 11-20.
[40] General Vannovskii, who replaced Miliutin, believed that "education was positively harmful." John Bushnell, "Peasants in Uniform: The Tsarist Army as a Peasant Society," *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (Summer, 1980): 565-576, 566.
[41] Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read,* 22.

and things are done carelessly, then good results cannot be expected."[42] Nonetheless, the increasingly literate world was reflecting back in print an increasingly diverse range of people who were dying for it, and the rank-and-file were slowly becoming the stars of their own sad stories. Privates in the army were generally featured in print in one of three ways through the Russo-Japanese War: stories devoted to their pluckiness, demonstrations of subservience and loyalty to the higher ranks, and lists of the imprisoned and dead. Often times, as they carried NCOs to safety, performed feats of bravery behind enemy lines, or assumed command of a battalion that had lost all of its officers, and valiantly dug in until dawn, the privates remained unnamed.[43] There was slightly more equality to be found in notices of death. When lists of POWs or the dead were listed, they were generally organized alphabetically, rather than by rank. Although the portraits in the illustrated magazines were nearly the sole preserve of the officer class, there were times when the fates of the rank-and-file contained as much information as the others – hence we know that Private Stobskii died from a blood infection on 10 September 1904.[44] Relatives of privates were also making themselves known by writing into publications in hopes of attaining information. These were far less common than information requests that accompanied searches for officers, and also far less descriptive – but they existed. For example, in April 1905 the following plea was sent out in the advertisements section: "we ask you to inform the editors of the *Bulletin of the Manchurian Army* whether the private Yosef Grits in the 5th company of the 1st Siberian Regiment is healthy."[45]

[42] *Russkii Invalid,* no. 43 (25 Feb 1905): 8.
[43] See, for example, *Vestnik man'chzhurskoi armii,* Z. D. Vol'skii, "pokhodnaia lavka," no. 23 (25 July 1904): 2; Telegrammy," no. 85 (31 October 1904): 3; "Telegrammy," no. 41 (6 September 1904): 1.
[44] "Spisok russkikh voenno-plennykh, umershikh v Iaponii," *Vestnik man'chzhurskoi armii*, no. 43 (10 September 1904): 2.
[45] *Vestnik man'chzhurskoi armii*, no. 22 (16 April 1905): 2.

The last salient point to take from the *Red Laugh* vignette has to do with the role played by the railways in Russia's two late imperial wars. One of the quintessential markers of modernity, the capacity for trains to condense down time and space were central to the protagonist's experience of action out at the front. The novel's dream state quality owes a lot to the fact that he spends a lot of time riding on them, falling asleep and waking up somewhere entirely new. The rate at which they brought news from the front was also an integral aspect of the urban experience of war, and the brother's perpetual search for information revolves around the train station. He visits the terminal daily, where he picks up snippets of information, and can directly witnesses the injured and broken men that are being brought from the far east. At one point, he catches a glimpse of a "whole carriage full of our mad soldiers." This train pauses and shunts onto another line without opening its doors, but the terrified brother was able to see "several faces through the windows."[46] The train window becomes a gap in the veil separating the civil world and the military. Beyond such symbolic qualities, the railway networks that existed by the late nineteenth century altered the nature and the course of the conflicts considerably. One of the major differences between the Russo-Japanese War and the First World War was that logistically the former was predominantly the story of one railway line, the Trans-Siberian, while the latter took place amidst Russia's densest network. When the war broke out in 1904, the fact that only single line of the Trans-Siberian existed meant that although troops, supplies, and news could move at an unprecedented rate, they were doing so in frustrating bouts of fits and starts. There had been 125,000 Russian military personnel in the far east before the war broke out; by the end, an additional 1.3 million had been transported.[47] The railway was able

[46] Andreyev, *The Red Laugh,* 74.
[47] Patriekeeff and Manning, 67.

to transport 20,000 men a month, and it would take a shipment of supplies fifty days to get to Mukden from St. Petersburg.[48]

Andreev's novella captures something of the sense that by 1904-05, dying in a military uniform was looking rather different in print, and everyday life away from the front was being meaningfully impacted by the circulation of that news. The sorts of people who were shown to be laying down their lives was changing, and the people who cared about their loved ones were finding new public ways make their anxieties known. This specific type of expanding urban-based citizenship, forged around the desire to know and the actions taken to that end, has meaningful overlaps with another sort of community that has been well-served by the historical literature: the emergence of a public sphere. For historians of western Europe, the idea of a public sphere has been whittled around the work of philosopher Jurgen Habermas, who posited that the rise of a civil society – groupings of individuals who came together to debate and critically assess matters of politics and policy – was critical to the emergence of a liberal democracy.[49] Russianists have grappled with the extent to which these ideas can be applied to an autocratic polity, and what alterations need to be made through that transition process, but the outcomes of these debates have been fruitful. Joseph Bradley's assessment of the vibrant world of voluntary associations in late imperial Russia, and his definition of "civic society" rooted in the idea that these people acted as if these groupings "had meaning," has been particularly

[48] Menning, 154. Valerie Kivelson and Ronald Suny make an excellent point about this contradictory nature that railways played in relation to the political stability of the Russian empire in its twilight decades. While Russia's railway network, which was the second longest in the world in 1900 (albeit not as concentrated as its far smaller western European rivals), was a "state project built for state purposes," railways could just as easily transport subversive nationalist literature as they could troops to suppress uprisings, or peasants to resettle the vast eastern taiga. Russia's empires, 237-238.
[49] Jurgen Habermas, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere,* trans. Robert Burger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989).

influential in this regard.[50] For Bradley, the critical point was not so much the fundamental nature of the political superstructure, but the fact that people were willing to seize the initiative in ways that brought them into contact with the state. While we cannot speak of any sort of formal grouping for families who wanted answers, people who gathered at train stations, or those who avidly consumed the news, they were certainly behaving in ways that held the state to account.

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There were certainly individuals who took it upon themselves to be the link between the state and this society that was thirsty for knowledge. In September 1914, mere months into the hostilities, Muscovite Vasilii Povorinskii petitioned the Commander in Chief of the South-Western Front. He was seeking permission for himself, along with a three-man team, to "go to war, in order to pick up the bodies of the fallen high ranks (*vysshikh chinov*) of the army and preserve them for delivery back to their homeland."[51] The official tasked with relaying Povorinskii's request noted that in the war against Japan, Povorinskii had been issued with a certificate from the Chief Military Medical Board in August 1904 that allowed him access to the theaters of war for the same purpose. There had been two critical caveats: Povorinskii could only transport the bodies home from the far east at the end of the war after the fighting had ceased,

[50] Rather than assess whether or not Russia can straightforwardly adopt these western paradigms, Bradley argues that the Russian experience can help further develop these paradigms: "if the capacity of citizenship could sprout on the inhospitable ground of autocratic rule, could the Russian experience… enrich theories of civil society?" Joseph Bradley, "Subjects into Citizens: Societies, Civil Society, and Autocracy in Tsarist Russia," *American Historical Review* 107, No. 4 (October 2002): 1094-1123, 1120-1122. See also Edith W. Clowes, Samuel D. Kassow, and James L. West "introduction," in Edith W. Clowes, Samuel D. Kassow, and James L. West, eds., *Between Tsar and People* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1991), 3-14.
[51] RGVIA, f. 2003, op. 2, d. 690, l. 121.

and he was forbidden to "conserve the corpses of persons who had died from infectious diseases." To ensure that the men he "preserved (*konservirovannie*)" for delivery back home had not been stricken down by disease, he had to obtain a separate permission from the army physician for the unit to which each individual had belonged. Nikolai Ivanov, the Commander-in-Chief in 1914, had no objections. Povorinskii was provided with a certificate and told to report to Major General Dublianskii.

In April 1915, Povorinskii submitted another request. In addition to his corpse-harvesting enterprise, he saw an opportunity to meet a much broader demand. He asked if he might "collect information" regarding which towns, villages, and cities throughout Russia and Galicia had buried soldiers who had fallen in battle. Povorinskii was a skilled petitioner. He provided both a plan of action, and an example. His plan was to record three key details: whether the soldier was buried alone or in a fraternal grave; whether the grave was on the battlefield or in the local town cemetery; and whether the grave had a cross and a first and last name inscribed. To illustrate the need for his services, he proffered the city of Kiev, where there were four cemeteries with a total of about ten thousand graves. "It would be nice," he wrote, for relatives to be able to visit Kiev, to know which grave they needed to find, and to have the option of erecting tombstones. Since the outbreak of the war, Povorinskii had done more than locate bodies to be sent home. He had also been authorized by the department to perpetuate the memory of soldiers, to search around Lviv, and to transport bodies to the cemetery. He had relocated 128 soldiers, of whom just five had been officers. Through both of these initiatives, Povorinskii was expanding his repertoire to serve families beyond those whose loved ones had held the higher ranks. It turned out that this petition was somewhat futile, but not problematically so. The General Lieutenant explained that

there was no "official permission" to be given when it came to "compiling lists of buried soldiers" because it was just "common business."

The simple existence of Povorinskii's enterprise, and especially its shift in direction after the outbreak of the war, highlights some of the same aspects that the *Red Laugh* does as to how military death was being adapted to serve the particular social, cultural, and political conditions of late imperial Russia. Although no explicit mentions of his motivations survive in the archive, they are not too hard to surmise: the archival files of the correspondences of the general staff are filled with letters from relatives begging for information.[52] However, there were aspects of Povorinskii's WWI enterprise that reflected some important differences between the Russo-Japanese War and the later European conflict. Despite the presence of the Trans-Siberian railway line, it was largely presumed in the years following the 1904-1905 conflict that it would be beyond the capacity for most relatives to physically visit the graves of their loved ones out in the far east. A book published in 1938 by the Harbin Spiritual Mission on the history of these "forgotten graves," for example, strongly indicated that the cemeteries on the Korean peninsula were never designed with facilitating such trips in mind.[53] WWI, on the other hand, took place in the western regions where Russia's railway network was at its most dense, and Povorinskii explicitly referred to the potential for loved ones to travel to urban hubs like Kiev in the aftermath of the war.[54] The desire to know was being formed and tempered around infrastructure as much as it was by literacy and ideas of what a life was worth.

[52] There are lots in RGVIA, f. 2003, op. 2, d. 690.
[53] *Zabytie mogily* (Harbin, 1938), 1-2.
[54] Frithjof Benjamin Schenk, "Mastering Imperial Space? The Ambivalent Impact of Railway Building in Tsarist Russia," in Jörn Leonard, Ulrike von Hirschhausen eds. *Comparing Empires: Encounters and Transfers in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 60-77, 66.

Povorinskii was positioning himself to profit off these sentiments, and to fulfil a demonstrated need for peace of mind that, in both late imperial wars, was increasingly being rendered in petitions as well as in newspapers. In a particularly evocative example, the mother of Mikhail Egorov wrote on 23 September 1914 requesting news "about the fate of my son." She knew that Mikhail had volunteered at the war's outbreak and had been in East Prussia with General Samsonov's army in August. She knew from the newspaper reports that these early battles had been bloody. But she did not know how to pray for her son, and she couched her entreaty around the harrowing state of this limbo. "This appeal is caused… by the need to raise a prayer to the Lord God about the repose of the soul in the event of the death of my son, and to thereby alleviate my mental suffering from the oppression of the unknown."[55] For Mikhail's mother, dying for the motherland was now a process that demanded a resolution, and her request combined the more traditional language of religion with newer sensibilities about what a government owed its citizens. The conditions of the First World War, with its larger scale and relatively close proximity to the more concentrated populations of European Russia, further advanced the new forms of community that were rising up around the desire to obtain information.

This demand for knowledge was aided and abetted by the rise of photography and photojournalism, the handmaiden to the boom in newspaper circulation. The ability to publish photographs was predicated on two key technological elements: the adoption of the halftone printing technique by newspapers, and the development of new cameras which were small enough to be hand-held (without tripods) and able to take images fast enough to capture action.[56]

[55] RGVIA, f. 2003, op. 2, d. 690, l. 105.

[56] Another essential development was the introduction of new emulsions, specifically fast gelatin dry plates, towards the end of the nineteenth century. It was this innovation that, in the words of Keller, "opened up the realm of movement and action to photography." Ulrich Keller, "Photojournalism around 1900: The Institutionalization of a

On the international stage, the Russo-Japanese War was "the first armed conflict to be treated as a pure spectacle for the entertainment of an uninvolved mass audience."[57] This war also featured, in a way that the American Civil War or the Crimean did not, enough corporate interests that the photojournalist felt compelled to put himself in harm's way for the sake of the shot. Soon, for a war picture to be credible and marketable, it had to have a sense of immediacy about it.[58]

The introduction of photography to a broad audience not only changed how war was reported and provided another access point for information, it also altered how death was communicated and organised. Much has been written on photography, death, and the technologically manufactured spindles of intimacy connecting the two. Perhaps the most famous is Roland Barthes' essay in *Camera Lucida* on the loss of his mother and the barbed solace he found in the replication of her image.[59] Thomas Laqueur phrases this quality beautifully: photographs "subsist in the present perfect conditional," and it is this attribute that explains how "images of the dead wound the hearts of the living."[60] Less attention has been paid to how photography more literally altered practices of mourning at both a personal and a state level. When Nikita Soloviev died on 12 April 1905, for example, he was buried in a mass grave in Shanghai. Soloviev had been part of a field hospital division, attached to the 4th Eastern Siberian Rifles, and his grave in Shanghai was over four thousand miles away (as the crow flies) from his home in Tambov province. Years later, in October 1910, The Naval Headquarters sent through a

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Mass Medium," in *Shadow and Substance: Essays on the History of Photography,* ed. Kathleen Collins (Bloomfield Hills, MI: Amorphous Press, 1990), 285, 288. See also Louise McReynolds, "Imperial Russia's Newspaper Reporters: Profile of a Society in Transition, 1865–1914," *Slavonic and East European Review* 68, no. 2 (April 1990): 277–93, 278.

[57] Keller, "Photojournalism around 1900," 295.

[58] Christopher Stolarski, "Another Way of Telling the News: The Rise of Photojournalism in Russia, 1900-1914," *Kritika*, Vol. 12, no. 3 (Summer 2011), 561-590, 572.

[59] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York, 1981).

[60] Thomas Laqueur, *The Work of the Dead: A Cultural History of Mortal Remains* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015) 440, 442

note to the military commander of the Tambov Province requesting that a photograph of the monument be forwarded to Soloviev's next of kin.[61] For Soloviev's relatives, the photograph was intended to condense distance and provide relief to relatives for whom it was difficult to visit the graves in person.

This particular initiative came from the state, but private citizens also found themselves bearing photographic witness to graves. In October 1913, Mr. Freud, a German photograph-correspondent with the *Illustrated Review*, had taken eight photographs of a funeral of a Russian sailor. The photographer asked that they be delivered to the relatives of the deceased, and that he be notified when they had found their way there.[62] Curiously, the photographer did not know the name of the sailor whose committal to the earth he captured with his camera, but he requested three things take place: that the name of the deceased sailor be found; that the photographs be delivered to his family; and that he be notified when all this had been completed. The Imperial Headquarters at Livadia on the Crimea hastened to fulfil his wishes and sent on the request to the Baltic Fleet Headquarters.[63] Freud's actions, like Povorinskii's, reflect the fact that the communities that coalesced around the desire to know were being mirrored by others that saw themselves as responsible for providing information. The fact that Freud was German indicates that these ties were not forged so much a sense of a shared national identity as they were by the perceived magic and immediacy of the photographic medium.

There were some other potent moments of overlap between the independent trends in photography and military death. Photography was becoming easier, cheaper, and thereby more accessible as a method of providing peace of mind. This coincided with the turn of the twentieth

[61] RGAMVF, f.417, op. 4., d. 6034., l. 336.
[62] RGVAMF, f. 417, op. 2, d. 1807, l. 165, 211.
[63] RGVAMF, f. 417, op. 2, d. 1807, l. 165.

century when, to borrow another turn of phrase from Laqueur, "the days of the complacent erasure of the names of the ordinary dead had passed." It was the South African Boer War (1899-1902) that first saw the military, but to a greater extent civil society, mobilize around preserving the graves of the rank-and-file. The Loyal Woman's Guild campaigned and raised funds to care for the graves, and this involved photographing them and sending "the pictures to relatives so that they could imagine where their sons were buried."[64]

Throughout WWI, Russia's wartime bureaucracy struggled to keep up with the societal demand that the dead be buried well. As early as 13 September 1914, messages were being sent into the head of the district staff that circulated rumors of poor burial. One memo chastised that "according to the information available in Pinsk, not enough attention is being paid to the burial of the deceased." There was issue with both "the choice of burial grounds and the manner of burial." Another report declared that the bodies had not been cleaned before they were buried.[65] At the same time, efforts were made to catalogue the graves, and the men who lay inside. By August 1915, the General Staff was releasing bulletins on a monthly basis. Some – though not all – of these reports had photographs of the graveyards attached.[66]

The affective community within the Russian motherland that was bound together by a desire to know what happened to the military dead was closely related to another grouping of people that were united through grief and mourning. Memorial practices were also changing because of the introduction of photography. In October of 1910, a circular was issued by the Sevastopol Headquarters on behalf of Olga Konstaninova, the honorary chairwoman of the

[64] Thomas Laqueur, *The Work of the Dead,* 458. It was during WWI that states started to integrate photography as official practice. For the British, in 1916 a policy was introduced to gather together scattered bodies, to reinter, map, and photograph them.
[65] RGVIA, f. 2003, op. 2, d. 690, l. 60.
[66] RGVIA, f. 2185, op. 1, d. 1135, l. 1.

committee tasked with constructing a memorial temple. This temple (which forms the backbone of chapter 5) was designed to commemorate the seamen who had perished during the Russo-Japanese War. Because most of these men had been lost beneath the waves, the architects of *Savior-on-the-Waters* described it from the outset as an as "imaginary tomb." On the surface, it was a house for names, not for bodies. But the technology of photography muddied these waters. Princess Olga's circular reached out to "relatives and friends of the deceased naval officers and lower ranks," and asked that they send in "photographic cards (*fotographicheskie kartochki)*." These photographs would be collected and stored in the museum, which was to be housed within the temple.[67] The collection of these photographs in one space, with the sailors alongside the higher ranks, speaks to the emergence of an imagined community that, though grounded in the idea of sacrifice for the nation, was becoming more equitable than the traditional military graveyards that tended to enforce a strict separation between officers and non-officers. The basement of *Savior-on-the-Waters* functioned like a test case for future arrangements of the dead; a sanitised necropolis that demanded little upkeep.

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As much as these communities that coalesced around knowledge, mourning, and equitable treatment were fed by ideas and technologies of representation, they were also formed by the experience of the soldiers out on battlefield – and, on occasion, rebellious groupings came out of the chasm that separated the reality from the depiction. There are broader historiographical implications to consider here, because all too often military history is treated as a world apart, a

[67] RGAMVF, f.417, op. 4, d. 6034, l. 333.

bookstore section unto itself. The home front and the battlefront were separated by some important factors, but they were also symbiotic spaces that are mutually constituted. This is evident in the different ways that honor and class collided. Away from the fighting, the demand for information concerning the rank-and-file, and the belief that their names were worth printing and recording, their graves worth photographing and sending thousands of miles away, reflected a belief that this information had a value. These ideas pushed up against the concept of the motherland, forcing it to change; it was no longer enough to die in a Russian uniform, the army and the state was now expected to care enough about that death to register it. For the members of the armed forces, this expressed itself more forcefully through a concern for the bodies themselves. And problems – in the form of dissatisfaction and protest – erupted when the reality of modern warfare did not permit the sort of care for the dead that had been promised in images like "Recording the Names of the Dead" at the start of this chapter.

In this regard, what Povorinskii and his small team were (and were not) permitted to do reveals much about the tangible realities of these late imperial wars. The fact that his team were explicitly forbidden from the battlefields during the Russo-Japanese War is, in the first instance, indicative of the dangers that awaited on these modern battlefields with their new technologies. The scale of the Russo-Japanese War was, at the time, incredible. During the battle of Nanshan, one of the war's earlier engagements, the victorious Japanese army under General Oku unleashed over 34,000 shells at the Russian forces. This battle took place over a single day (26 May 1904), but this was more than had been used during the entire Sino-Japanese War a decade prior.[68] Three big land battles followed Nanshan. The first was Liaoyang, which took place between 25 August and 3 September 1904. In terms of total numbers, this was the second largest land battle

[68] Rotem Kowner, *Historical Dictionary of the Russo-Japanese War* (Oxford: Scarecrow, 2006), 251.

to have ever taken place up to that point in time.[69] The second was at Sha-ho, from 10-17 October. The outcome was indecisive, although the Russians were forced to retreat, vanquishing their hopes of breaking the Japanese siege of Port Arthur. The largest, longest, and final battle of the war took place at Mukden, where the casualties on both sides exceeded 50,000 (this included 20,000 dead on the Russian side, and 16,000 on the Japanese).[70] At sea, after half of Russia's Pacific Fleet had been picked off by Japanese mines and submarines and the other half neutered in blockade, the decision was made to send the Baltic Fleet all the way around the world to provide some much-needed support. Having made the trip, almost the entire squadron was annihilated off the straights of Tsushima. Six out of the eight battleships were sunk, and nearly 5,000 Russian sailors died to Japan's 100.[71] Most recent estimates put the total Russian death toll for the war between 420,000 and 620,000.[72] The story of Russia in the First World War is slightly more familiar and even more devastating. It was, from a bird's eye perspective, "an unrelieved catastrophe culminating in ignominious collapse"[73] Despite initial successes against the Austrians in Galicia, by the middle of 1915 the Russians had been pushed back into their own territory. In total, the war claimed over 9,000,000 Russian lives (a number that is hotly contested).[74]

Although the casualty numbers of the First World War were utterly unprecedented, much of the technology that destroyed these bodies was very similar to the sorts that had debuted in the far east ten years prior. In his account of the Russian army between the Crimean and First World

[69] The largest was at Sedan in 1870. Kowner, *Historical Dictionary,* 206.
[70] Jacob, *The Russo-Japanese War,* 11.
[71] This battle was the last time (to date) that a naval engagement determined the outcome of a major war.
[72] Kowner, *Historical Dictionary*, 80.
[73] David R. Stone, *The Russian Army in the Great War: The Eastern Front, 1914-1917* (University of Kansas Press, 2015), 3.
[74] G. F Krivosheev, *Rossiia i SSSR v voinakh XX veka: poteri vooruzhennykh sil: statisticheskoe issledovanie* (Moscow 2001), tables 52 & 56. Accessible here: http://lib.ru/MEMUARY/1939-1945/KRIWOSHEEW/poteri.txt

Wars, Bruce Menning describes one of the battles that comprised the huge – and ultimately successful – Japanese assault on the Russian fortress of Port Arthur in 1904. On the night of 10 August, General Nogi sent seven Japanese battalions to breach the Russian line. Menning writes "Russian searchlights played across the sector, and the rattle of machine-gun and rifle fire mixed with explosions of artillery shells to turn the landscape into what one observer called a mad artist's version of hell."[75] This was an altogether new way of describing war. When barbed-wire, telephone communications, trenches, mines, and torpedoes are added to this litany of technological debuts, the "mad artist's version of hell" that was the modern battlefield emerges as even more complete.

The impact of these technologies come to life in emotional accounts like the one penned by B. Adamovich. A junior officer in one of the regiments of the Warsaw garrison when he was sent to the officer reserves of the Manchurian army, Adamovich wrote there for *Voennyi sbornik (The Military Chronicle*, published by the Ministry of War), in the form of strikingly frank diary excerpts that spanned from the outbreak of hostilities all the way through to 1910. On 19 August 1904, he witnessed the "incessant firefight" for the village of Sakhutun from a surrounding ridge, standing just beyond the range of the Japanese guns that fired down upon the village. For two whole hours the earth shook as the guns roared. The street in front of the dressing station where he was stationed filled with the bloodied and wounded. His reflection of these events is as poignant as the description of the night itself. He wrote*: "*I am not able to convey everything that passed before my eyes. It was a dream. I was far beyond any normal sort of calm and clear understanding, and this mixture of blood, groans, corpses, tranquility and despair — it wrecked my consciousness, and it is only thanks to the terrible notes in my book that I can now restore

[75] Bruce W. Menning, *Bayonets Before Bullets: The Imperial Russian Army,* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 167.

individual scenes or sketches."[76] This was the moment, he wrote, when he believed that had come to understand the phrase, "horrors of war" (uchasy voiny).

One of the most talked about advances were the new explosives. At the turn of the twentieth century, gunpowder technology was evolving quickly, and innovations derived from picric acid were all the rage. In the 1890s the French had developed melinite, while the British army conceived lyddite. Around the same time, the Japanese naval engineer Shimose Masachika invented a version that created more blast power than any of the others, and with significantly less smoke.[77] The Russian press wrote about "*shimoz*" with an almost mystical horror, deploying obscure phrases like "we will not speak about the shimoz… there is no defending against it."[78] In a diary, the soldier Shikuts described them with anthropomorphic adjectives like "howl," "roar," and "crackle" – words that were not dissimilar to the spectral beasts of war that haunt Andreev's surreal novella.[79] The Russian army had good reason to be afraid of this weapon: while the Japanese 75mm field and mountain cannons could shoot *shimoz* that would obliterate the Russian shelters, the Russian equivalent was not capable of piercing similar Japanese fortifications.

In his memoirs, the surgeon E. Pavlov wrote about the effect that *shimoz* had on the body. He recounts a story that, while grounded in clinical interest, also strongly reflects the terrible

[76] *Voennyi sbornik,* no. 8 (August 1905), 165.
[77] Kowner, *Historical Dictionary,* 353.
[78] Shtabs-kapitan Zheimo, "20-i vostochno-sibirskii strelkovyi polk v boiakh s 28 sentiabria po 3 oktiabria 1904 g.," *Vestnik man'chzhurskoi armii* no. 86 (1 November 1904), 2.
[79] Shikuts, *Dnevnik soldata,* 30.


*Figure 3: "Shards of Battlefield Shimoz," Pavlov, Na dal'nem vostoke, 85.*

strangeness of the splinters made by the superior Japanese weapon. The high explosives caused very "particular wounds," he wrote, because the shrapnel they produced was "very sharp, irregularly toothed, even hooked […] like serrated knives."[80] And these "particular wounds" were horrible. While the explosives gave off a massive amount of firepower, their corporeal signature was the sheer number of shrapnel injuries inflicted on a single person. Pavlov, a man who frankly comes across as decidedly wanting in both moral stature and bedside comportment, went so far as to complain that in one case, it "was almost annoying to count the number of wounds received."[81] Pavlov supplements his written observations on the *shimoz* with two accompanying images. The first [figure 3] showed the vast range of shrapnel fragment sizes, of which the very largest was nearly 22cm in length. The second was another photograph, which

[80] E. Pavlov, *Na dal'nem vostoke v 1905 godu: iz nabliudenii vo vremia voiny s Iaponiei* (St. Petersburg, 1907), 86.
[81] Pavlov, *Na dal'nem vostoke,* 85.

showed an injured man whose body has been ripped apart across the belly by such fragments. At the very end of his memoir, Pavlov notes that Russia was not even able to count the real damage inflicted by this particular weapon. Surrender on the battlefield meant that it was impossible to confront this monster with numbers: it was impossible to ascertain how many men had actually died from *shimoz*, as the wounds were very often fatal and the constant retreat of Kuropatkin's armies made it hard to inspect the corpses.[82]

These new realities of war - the death tolls, the disorientation, the weapons that tore through flesh and left men not only dead but unrecognisable – all existed in tension with the imperative to record names. Private documents like these are filled with terrors that evoke Andreev's surreal picture of the war, and they did not align with the majority of the published materials that sought to sell a more reassuring impression. Cameras were generally either only able or permitted to tread – and publishers were subsequently only permitted to print – into places where the impression could be conveyed that the state was caring for the men who had laid down their lives in her name. This was one of the most explicit ways in which "dying for the motherland" could be seen as a lopsided, if not outrightly flawed concept – the men who died for Russia were shown being taken care of by the state only when those bodies were in an appropriate state. This is not to say that the dead were not treated with kindness and care when it was possible to do so, but that the full impact of modern battlefields were not openly spoken about either. Some men were simply obliterated beyond any hopes of adequate recovery, effectively vaporized by the new technologies of destruction like the *shimoz*. Implicit allusions to these horrible premonitions of absence appeared in the illustrated magazines that circulated back in the cities, where images of mounted machine guns, bombs, exploding ships and barbed-wire

[82] Pavlov, *Na dal'nem vostoke,* 395.

defenses were rendered with increasingly impressive levels of clarity. This dislocation between the ideal and the hinted-at darker possibilities amplified the desire to know what happened to loved ones and fueled the demand for enterprises like Povorinskii's. For the men at the front who were experiencing the horrors of war themselves, the differences between the best- and worst-case scenarios were vast.

After battles, it was customary to collect the fallen (sometimes at great personal danger) and bury them together in fraternal graves (*bratskaia mogila*). The honor system at the moral heart of the Laws of War were at their strictest when it came to caring for the dead, and personal and public judgement was passed in instances where it seemed that one side had not extended appropriate courtesy to the other. This was the case after one of the many Japanese assaults on Port Arthur, when the Japanese accused the Russians of not providing a window of ceasefire to enable them to retrieve their dead and cremate them, as was their custom.[83] In a diary entry from 29 December 1904, regimental priest Father Srebrianskii gives some insight into what small-scale funerals looked like for troops on the move. He received a note from the Colonel of a regiment asking him to "pay the last Christian debt" to three common soldiers (Colonel Stakhovich was very clear that they were rank-and-file) who had died the previous day. Srebrianskii donned his robes and hurried to the other side of the village where the regiment was stationed. From the details and tone of the priest's description, it is not too difficult to discern where wartime burials diverted from their more peaceful counterparts. He was disturbed by the state of the bodies, tautly observing that both their bodies and their clothes were not clean but had been left bloody. One man did not have a head. He was both resigned and impressed at how the troops responded to the pressures imposed by the harsh environment and their time

[83] RGIA, f. 552, op. 1, d. 250, l. 16.

constraints. Although the ground was frozen solid and shoveling was hard, the comrades of the dead men "did not want to leave the corpses unburied and overcame everything" to ready the grave. There was a strong showing for the burial service, where he was joined by many soldiers, officers, and the regimental commander. Some kneeled, and others cried. This quiet and respectful reprieve did not last long; as soon as his service ended, the dead were "hastily buried," a small cross was placed atop the mound of earth, and the regiment mounted their horses and moved off.[84] The rough contours of this process are corroborated by other reports and images, including those taken by foreign correspondents and published abroad, where there was more leeway to depict the Russian dead outside the control of government censors. The New York-based firm Underwood and Underwood took a series of stereographs from the war, including three images below [Figures 4-6]. They show a priest in regalia leading prayers over the dead, the digging of mass graves, and the sorts of crosses that were erected to mark the presence of the graces – rudimentary, without clearly inscribed names, but neat and orderly.

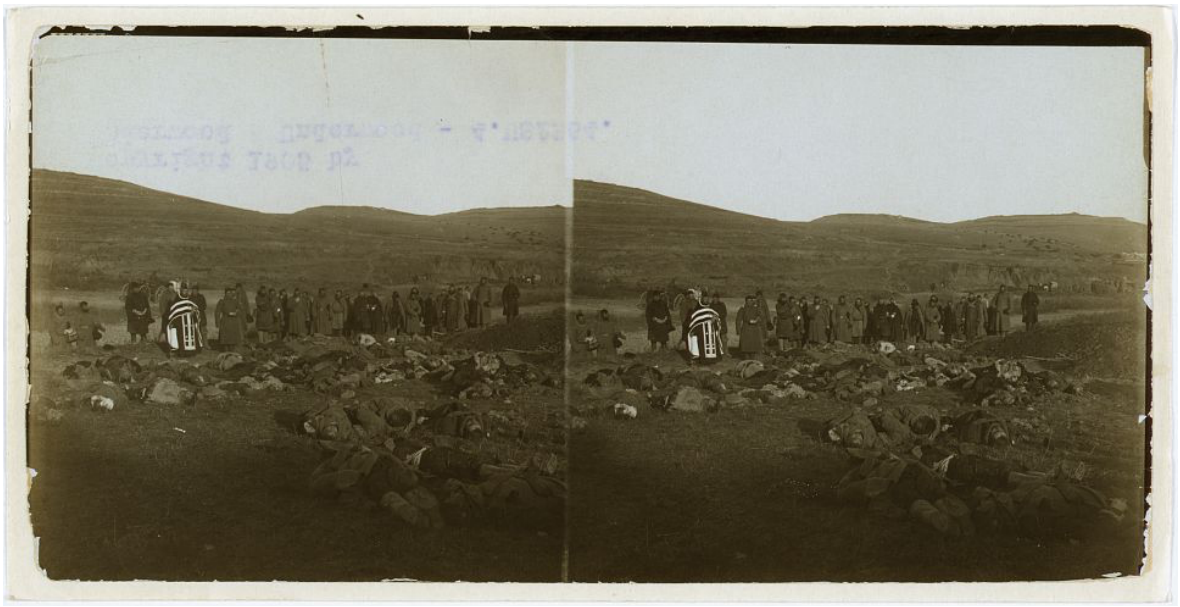

*Figure 4: Priest and soldiers praying over bodies of Russian soldiers awaiting burial on a hill, Port Arthur. Lüshun China, ca. 1905. New York.: Underwood & Underwood. Photograph. https://www.loc.gov/item/2005678328/.*

[84] V. Srebrianskii, *Dnevnik iz vremen Russko-Iaposnkoi voiny* (Moscow, 1912), 204.

*Figure 5: Burying the Russians killed in the desperate fighting on 203 Metre Hill in besieged Port Arthur. Lüshun China, ca. 1905. New York.: Underwood & Underwood. Photograph. https://www.loc.gov/resource/ppmsca.07940/*

*Figure 6: The fearful price of war -- Russian bodies awaiting burial -- near a fort at Port Arthur. Lüshun China, ca. 1905. New York.: Underwood & Underwood. Photograph. https://www.loc.gov/resource/ppmsca.07941/.*

There are two notable communities that arose in Russia's late imperial wars from the dislocation between the ideal and photographed military death, and the disrupted and chaotic horrors that

occurred when the new weaponries were unleashed or supply chains broke down. The first was professional: at the forefront of the world of the body, weaponry, and identification were the medics. The second were soldiers who considered "bad" burials to be a cause for open protest against the military hierarchy.

There were some consequential differences between the Russo-Japanese War and the First World War with regards to who had jurisdiction over the dead. The military embarked on far-reaching reforms after the humiliating defeat to the Japanese, and these included some new dictates on what priests and doctors were expected to do. In 1907, a new manual was printed for naval priests that explicitly stated that they should take more of an active role during combat situations: "During battles, the priest should be with the wounded, provide them with possible benefits and comfort, and take confession from the dying who wish to do so."[85] These instructions were then updated again in July 1914, when the first All-Russian Congress of Army and Navy Chaplains took place in St. Petersburg. The instruction booklet that came out of this conference gave military priests more explicit responsibilities than their forerunners. In the words of Aleksandr Senin, "Chaplains at the front were now required to assist doctors in bandaging the wounded, to organize the removal of the dead and wounded soldiers from the field of battle, to look after the maintenance of military graves and cemeteries, [and] to notify the relatives of the dead."[86]

There are a couple of salient takeaways here. The first is that in certain situations, priests were placed in subservient roles to doctors. The second is that despite the chaplains being assigned responsibility in matters of cleaning up the battlefield and maintaining the graveyards,

[85] RGAVMF, f. 417, op. 6, d. 684, l. 1.
[86] Aleksandr Senin, "Russian Army Chaplains During World War I," *Russian Studies in History* vol. 33, no. 2 (Fall 1993) 43-52, 46.

there is evidence to suggest that when the First World War came around, control in these areas was also given over to those with medical credentials. For example, it was not until 4 April 1915 that a resolution was passed on the recommendation of the Chief of the Sanitary Unit for the armies of the Southwestern Front laying out a "streamlined" version as to how the battlefields were to be cleaned up and organized. Detachments were to be formed, and they would be responsible for removing not only dead soldiers, but also animals, from the battlefield. These teams, "guided by the sanitary instructions of the divisional doctors," were to make the final call regarding the "choice of places and method of burial." Instructions were also given stating that some teams must be at HQ, in case of the corps advancing, and also laid out the transfer of responsibilities to the civil authorities in the case of retreat; here, it was up to the sanitary division to notify the local governor about what needed to be done about both human and animal remains.[87]

By 1915, a new system of priorities was gradually making itself known. When Povorinskii received the go-ahead to retrieve corpses from the field of battle, the overwhelming majority of stipulations had to do with sanitary considerations. At no time did religious concerns enter the picture from the perspective of the military hierarchies, but Povorinskii had been issued stern orders in 1904 that he was "absolutely forbidden" to transport home any corpse that had died from infectious disease because his method of preservation was not suitable or up to the forensic standards of the day. The embargo placed on Povorinskii is indicative as to how ideas of infection and healthcare had changed the face of military-medical practice in the years since the Crimean War, where Russia had lost an incredible 27% of all mobilized men to illness. By the Russo-Turkish War, the number had come down to 11%, but the American observer Colonel

[87] RGVIA, f. 2134, op. 2, d. 839, l. 3.

Wellesley nonetheless described the state of the Russian camps as "absolutely innocent of all sanitary arrangements."[88] In the aftermath of the Russo-Turkish war, the official reports submitted to the War Ministry debated the efficacy of the smallpox vaccine, asked questions about hygiene ("which infectious patients can be placed on sanitary trains without causing harm to others?") and intensely compared the epidemic experiences of other military forces.[89]

In the war against France in 1870-71, Prussia had shown what was possible when only 1.5% of their mobilized men had died from disease. During the Russo-Japanese War the Russians had their numbers up to a comparative standard, and – for the first time in modern warfare – both sides were able to claim that they lost more men to combat than they had to disease.[90] This time around, the American medical attaché Valery Harvad announced with confidence that this conflict had inaugurated "a new epoch in military hygiene by demonstrating the possibility, even in a war of great magnitude, to keep the rates of disease much below what had always been considered the irreductible minimum."[91] At the forefront of this effort were doctors who were carving out their own knowledge-based approach to war. Although the battles around him were going badly, there are pages within the surgeon Pavlov's memoir of the Russo-Japanese War that brim with pride as he reeled off the "instruments and various devices" surrounding his hospital in Harbin that represented "the latest word in surgery." The dressings were antiseptic, the operating laboratory contained sterilization boxes in multiple sizes, and the hospital had its own disinfection steam chamber. Doctors "only" performed operations in rubber

[88] F. A. Wellesley, *With the Russians in Peace and War: Recollections of a Military Attaché* (Nash, 1905), 268.
[89] N. I. Kozlov, *Voenno-Meditsinskii otchet za voinu s Turtsieio 1877-78 ch. 1: Otdel administrativnyi* (St. Petersburg, 1885), 152-153.
[90] Justin Barr, "Military Medicine of the Russo-Japanese War and Its Influence on the Modernization of the US Army Medical Department," *US Army Medical Department Journal* No. 16, Vol. 3, (Oct 2016):118-128, 119.
[91] Valery Havard, *Manual of Military Hygiene for the Military Services of the United States,* (New York, W. Wood and company, 1909), 7. http://archive.org/details/b21359854.

gloves. Pavlov's institution included two portable Dekker barracks (one of which was intended only for infectious diseases), and a laboratory for bacterial research.[92] While the communities I have considered thus far in this chapter were bound together by strife and mourning, here was another knowledge-based community that, though also forged through death, violence, and the military, was more affirmative and ascendant.

Even less rosier reports still managed to convey the importance of sanitation and germs. Vikentii Verasaev's memoirs – the same Verasaev who was unhappy with Andreev's literary representation – are largely characterized by the exasperation he felt regarding the limitations under which Russia's military doctors were forced to operate. He was particularly critical of the fact that the top military-medical positions were reserved for army men rather than doctors.[93] Thus he saved some of his most scathing wit for General Trepov, decrying the man as a "complete ignoramus" in the "business of medicine," an ignoramus, moreover, who insisted on doling out unsolicited advice. Among a host of other missteps, Trepov had thus failed to grasp the stakes of keeping infected men separate from non-inflected men. Verasaev paints scenario after scenario mocking a system that seemed to prioritize paper over substance. While these serve to skewer the general aptitude of Russia's imperial army, they also reaffirmed the importance of these new medical ideas. In a regiment where typhoid fever (the largest cause of disease and death in the Russian army during the war) had developed, Verasaev reported an exchange where a senior doctor asked his junior whether a proper disinfection had taken place. Ignoring the reality that "we don't have any disinfectants!", the senior doctor proceeded to

[92] Pavlov, *Na dal'nem vostoke,* 111.
[93] V. V. Verasaev, *Zapiski vracha: Na iaponskoi voine* (Moscow, 1986), 382-383. At one point, Verasaev remarks with considerable sarcasm that the Japanese put "famous medical professors […] in charge of the medical and sanitary affairs of the army." It is somewhat ironic that though Verasaev *was* present in the far east, the literary quality of his writing make his memoirs read as somewhat unrealistic.

browbeat the junior into writing up a report that confirmed a disinfection had taken place.[94] Completing the Gogolian tableaux of absurdist bureaucrats, Verasaev's very next paragraph depicts the doctors on the receiving end of the reports sipping tea and slyly joking about their veracity.

This medical community that accorded such a high station to disinfecting reflected a series of critical discoveries. By the late 1880s, the germ theory and accompanying notions of disinfection proposed by Louis Pasteur, Joseph Lister and Robert Koch (among others) had emerged triumphant over the previous belief that infections were caused by miasma, where infections were borne by particles in the air that rose from the ground.[95] In the words of Kari Nixon, "germ theory moved the crosshairs of disease prevention from cleansing diseased spaces to cleansing or avoiding diseased people."[96] Reflecting the changing sentiments, when the Military-Medical administration was overhauled between 1908 and 1910 as part of the sweeping reforms that all branches of the armed forces were subject to in the wake of their humiliating defeat, all titles were changed from "military medical" to "military-sanitary." To quote John Hutchinson, the reforms were centered around the "chief lesson learned in the east, that sanitary needs required as much attention as medicine and surgery."[97] By 1912, thick journals like *Voennyi mir* were advocating that localized sanitary studies of military districts should be

[94] Verasaev, *Zapiski vracha,* 388.
[95] See Charlotte Henze on the how these debates played out in Russia, chapter 4. Charlotte E. Henze, *Disease, Health Care and Government in Late Imperial Russia: Life and Death on the Volga, 1823-1914*, (Routledge, 2011).
[96] Kari Nixon, *Kept from All Contagion: Germ Theory, Disease, and the Dilemma of Human Contact in Late Nineteenth-Century Literature* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2020), 3.
[97] John F. Hutchinson, *Politics and Public Health in Revolutionary Russia, 1890-1918* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 110.

undertaken so that doctors would be best equipped to safeguard any troops stationed there during mobilization and war.[98]

The successes that took place within the fields of science and medicine were clearly meaningful. But while far fewer men were dying from disease during wartime after the turn of the twentieth century, other areas of managing the dead were not quite keeping pace with this rate of improvement. All the meticulous attention to statistical detail inaugurated by the revolution in sanitation did not translate over into accurate or standardized records of the dead. Reports listing casualties were, in the words of Pavlov, "not developed according to any specific system," but on the basis of "a variety of documents" that had been sent from military units and hospitals. He was disconcerted by the fact that he had read a report that did not list any dead men, yet he knew for certain that the nearby cemeteries contained graves that listed several bodies from an unknown regiment. He had seen these graves with his own eyes, and he found that this disconnect made him second guess his faith in his superiors and the statistical system they managed.[99] There were only so many Povorinskii's, and oversights like the one Pavlov witnessed clearly had an impact on the people at the home front who were clamoring for information, and on the men themselves. As I explore further in chapter 5, it was also the case that patience regarding Russia's practice of using fraternal graves was starting to wear thin. During the First World War, this was still considered to be the official common practice; in 1916, the military doctor E. Dombrovskii published a short manual on military hygiene in times

[98] V. Zaglukhenskii et al. "Sanitarno-takticheskoe issledovanie Moscovskogo voennogo okruga.," *Voennyi mir*, no. 5 (May 1912):37 – 101, 37.
[99] Pavlov, *Na dal'nem vostoke,* 366.

of war. His instructions on encountering unburied corpses in trenches were clear: they should be immediately removed and taken out to the place designated for the fraternal grave and buried.[100]

The notes that the army produced to catalogue the dead told a slightly more complicated story. These notes were occasionally so detailed as to contain maps of the burial grounds, and though the fraternal graves were most common, they did often exist in tandem with individual graves (*odinochnaia mogila*).[101] For the most part, the notebooks are full of overwhelmingly brief and generic statements that testified everything was in good order, but sometimes inscriptions were transcribed that were highly personalized, emotive, and with enough geographic details to provide a unique identification. For example, the notebook from August 1915 contained records of the following inscription:

> Here is buried a sapper of the 2nd sapper battalion of the 2nd engineer company Ilya Nikiforov who died on 10 December 1915 while working to fortify positions
> His service started in 1914, Vileisk province, Diskin district, Gergeli village.
>
> Dear comrade sapper!
> Peace be upon you.
> From your sapper comrades.[102]

There are many reasons ascribed to the spate of mutinies that helped to bring about the end of Russia's participation in WWI: shortages of supplies, suspicions of treason, and the

[100] E. Dombrovskii, *Kratkii kurs voennoi gigeny* (St. Petersburg, 1916), 74.
[101] E.g. RGVIA, f. 2144, op. 1, d. 986, l. 57.
[102] RGVIA, f. 2185, op. 1, d. 1135, l. 62; other sappers were buried in fraternal graves, such as Alexander Golubev, who died on the night of 26 November 1916. RGVIA, f. 2144, op. 1, d. 986, l. 69.

deleterious effects of the upended authority structure after the first February revolution.[103] In the autumn of 1917, after three long years of conflict against Austria-Hungary and Germany and six months of post-revolutionary political mobilization, burial practices were also a sore spot. The last form of community that rose up around the military dead occurred when the camaraderie and class-based affection evident in the epitaph to the sapper was not honored by the military hierarchies. In September 1917, a report was sent to the General Staff of the Russian Caucus Army describing "two cases of funerals […] that caused the indignation of a crowd of soldiers." In the first case, a dead soldier had been brought to a cemetery in a coffin. But before his body was placed in the earth, he was removed from the coffin, which was then taken away to ferry the next poor soul. A nearby group of soldiers noticed this and accosted the senior administrator, where "in sharp language [they] demanded that the deceased be dug from the ground and buried in a coffin." In the second case, another set of soldiers had complained that the dead had been dressed for burial in dirty clothes and sewn into soiled matting. This report was followed up by an order denouncing "such attitudes towards the dead" as "completely unacceptable," and citing a critical short supply of wooden boards as the cause of the casket problem. Insisting that the most glaring abuse – the reuse of coffins – would soon be rectified, it also specified that the deceased should be "dressed in clean white" and "invariably accompanied by priests to the grave," who were to stay beside the dead until they were buried. Here, in the final months before the Bolshevik revolution, the military hierarchies acknowledged that they had a responsibility to not simply bury and record the men who died fighting for Russia, but to bury them in a fashion that met the standards which would be fit to print.

[103] Allan K. Wildman, *The End of the Imperial Army,* vol. 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 116-117.

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Although this act of revolt took place within an army whose discipline was disintegrating across the board, the authorities sided with the rank-and-file and agreed that their grievances surrounding the dead were legitimate. Through the previous decade, the increasing imperative to know what had happened to the dead had translated over into the adjacent sphere of honoring the bodies themselves. During this era, the rising resistance to the idea that men should be destined to "die silently" complicates the idea that the military dead were unproblematic because of their automatic equivalence with the motherland. The presumption that they died for Russia was meaningful, but shifting ideas, technologies, and methods of communication could be utilized to fulfill this demand for noise. These calls to action produced new sorts of communities that, although some were short-lived, were able to alter the trope of "dying for the motherland" such that the rank-and-file were treated in ways that were previously reserved for the higher ranks.

In this chapter, I have argued that much of the potency of these communities owed to the fact that they were forged in the interchange between the urban home front and the crucibles of war, between military and society. As modernity brought these two worlds closer together, they also made certain gaps apparent. The difference between the sorts of death that the government readily showed and the reality of what was happening prompted a set of actions: distressed family members sought out knowledge about their loved ones in army newspapers that were increasingly catering to the rank-and-file, and the prospect of relatives visiting graves in the aftermath of conflicts influenced how men like Povorinskii organized and disseminated information.

## CHAPTER TWO

### FEAR AND LOATHING IN THE FAR EAST: BANDITS, LAW, AND THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR

Like other popular illustrated journals of the era, *Niva* deployed a "special correspondent" to the far east to send back reports from the field during the Russo-Japanese War. In the issue published on February 5, 1905, the journalist Vladimir Taburin described the following adventure. In December of the previous year, he had met with a Lieutenant Colonel at a train station and proceeded to join his detachment on an expedition along the river Liao to hunt down a group of so-called *khunkhuzy*. Although most of these bandits successfully evaded the Russian troops by fleeing over the border to Mongolia, one straggler was apprehended. Preparations were well underway for the bandit to be hanged, when the Brigade Commander ordered a last-minute reprieve: "the Russians did not come here to fight with Chinese… Russians are not violent. Any *khunkhuz* who is conscious of his guilt and drops his weapon will be forgiven. I release you to your freedom. Go and tell these words to your companions."[1] This resolution took Taburin by surprise.

While this story shimmers with cliched morality on its surface, dipping below reveals some striking absurdities, the most egregious being the Russian commander's claim to "non-violence." Not only was Russia in the midst of fighting a brutal war (or, as was clear by November 1904, losing a brutal war), but Russian forces had been fiercely engaging with Chinese bandits at their far eastern border for years. What sort of edifice was capable of supporting this paradox? According to Judith Butler, "non-violence" is more claim than

[1] V. Taburin, "Na Voine," *Niva,* no. 5 (5 Feb 1905): 89-95.

principle; it is "an address or an appeal." The pressing point thus becomes "under what conditions are we responsive to such a claim, what makes it possible to accept the claim when it arrives, or, rather, what provides for the arrival of the claim at all?"[2] Some part of the answer can be gleaned from Taburin's tale. Permissible and legitimate forms of violence – the conditions, presumably, for "not violent" – depended on certain targets (the Chinese bandits), occurred in certain spaces (Mongolia), and were calculated relative to the projected behavior of the "official" enemy (the Japanese). In this instance, a combination of the Commander's staged benevolence and supposed long-sighted tactical approach towards the bandit problem saved the *khunkhuz* from summary execution. Taburin's shock suggests that he did not just consider it well within Russia's rights to exact the death sentence, but that it would have been the typical course of action.

Taburin's experience was indeed exceptional. The *khunkhuzy* stand at the center of this story, and specifically the manner in which their bodies appeared in the pages of Russia's printed media.[3] Throughout the nineteen months of the conflict (February 1904 to September 1905), it was not unusual for correspondents to note that Russia was, in fact, fighting two wars – one against the Japanese and another against the *khunkhuzy*. Although the two groups were sometimes considered in tandem, with the Manchurian bandits regularly accused (not without due cause) of acting as Japanese spies, these two foes were framed in deeply contrasting ways. In short, the bodies of locals caught up in the fighting in Manchuria and Mongolia were not accorded the same levels of respect as the "official" Japanese enemy. Images and stories of

[2] Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable* (New York: Verso, 2009), 165.
[3] I use *khunkhuzy* (singular: *khunkhuz*), the transliteration of the Russian, but some publications use the terms honghuzi or hung-hutz.

*khunkhuzy* deaths were recounted in lurid and bloody details that, on the whole, exceeded the more restrained manner in which Japanese fatalities were reported and recounted.

This chapter excavates these discrepancies to make three core claims. First, the on-the-ground colonial consequences to the Russo-Japanese war have been underserved in the historiography.[4] While the imperial dimensions to this war are readily acknowledged – that these two powers came to blows over their competing desire to control the Manchurian peninsula for geopolitical and economic boon – the colonial processes underpinning this agenda are far less apparent. As a site where such conquering ambition interwove perniciously with gratuitous violence, the body of the *khunkhuz* offers a route of rectification. Second, the Conventions on the laws of war played an important role in sanctioning the differential treatment and subsequent media representation of the "official" (Japanese) and "unofficial" (Chinese bandits) combatants in Russia's far east.[5] As the lack of any due process concerning the *khunkhuzy* demonstrates, the dictates of "just war" – which nominally forbade summary execution – did not apply equally to

[4] The war is, overwhelmingly, presented in the literature as an event that punctuated "a world caught up in imperial ambition." Valerie Kivelson and Ronald Suny, *Russia's Empires* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 240. The colonial dimensions have been eclipsed by the overwhelming emphasis on Russia and Japan's bi-lateral engagement, and the fact that the "eastern" power came to sensationally defeat the "western." The war's seminal historical works very much present this conflict as bilateral: Ian Nish, *The Origins of the Russo-Japanese War* (London: Routledge, 1985) 2; R. M. Connaughton, *The War of the Rising Sun and Tumbling Bear: A Military History of the Russo-Japanese War 1904-5* (London: Routledge, 1988). While the centenary brought renewed attention to the conflict, the key debates largely hinged around how the war should be positioned vis-à-vis WWI. *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective. World War Zero* Vol. 1, ed. John W. Steinberg et al., History of Warfare Vol. 29 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2005); *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective. World War Zero* Vol. 2, ed. David Wolff et al., History of Warfare Vol. 29 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2006); Rotem Kowner, "Between a colonial clash and World War Zero: The impact of the Russo-Japanese War in a global perspective" in *The Impact of the Russo-Japanese War* (London: Routledge, 2007). To the extent that colonial dimensions were reconsidered, attention centered overwhelmingly on the ways that Japanese victory had inspired colonial resistance across Asia. See Frank Jacobs, *The Russo-Japanese War and its Shaping of the Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 2017), 46.

[5] Alexander Gillespie, *The History of the Laws of War: Volume I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 65; Fritz Kalshoven and Liesbeth Zegveld, *Constraints of the Waging of War: An Introduction to International Humanitarian Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 11. For more general studies on the evolution of the laws of war, see Lawrence Keeley, *War Before Civilisation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Doyne Dawson, *The First Armies* (London: Cassell, 2001); *From Just War to Modern Peace Ethics*, eds. Heinz-Gerhard Justenhoven and William A. Barberini, Jr. (Berlin: de Grutyer, 2012).

all actors in the conflict zones. Finally, Russia's burgeoning mass media covered the conflict in a way that gave credence to the idea that the bodies of Chinese bandits were colonialist collateral. As such, I argue that the Russo-Japanese War – the first, famously, to be watched, reported, and photographed on an international scale[6] – reveals a set of latent connections between the public sphere and the laws of war that helped to both inform and shape military conduct.[7]

Although the name has deeper roots, the arrival of the *khunkhuzy* on the radar of Russian government officials and the media alike was closely tied up with Russia's expansion into the far east, specifically in regards to the extensive railway building program and the Boxer Rebellion.[8] During the late nineteenth century, the Russian state was pushing ahead with plans to lay down the trans-Siberian railway network that would link Vladivostok, the major Pacific port, with Moscow and Petersburg in the west. Before this had been completed, work had also started on an additional line – the South Manchuria Railway – that cut through China, linking the town of Harbin with Port Arthur. Somewhat tenuously, Russia had been granted access to this land after the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-5, and agents of the government first ran up against the

[6] For the international dimension of the Russo-Japanese War, see Christopher Stolarski, "Another Way of Telling the News: The Rise of Photojournalism in Russia, 1900-1914," *Kritika*, vol. 12, no. 3 (Summer 2011): 561-590, 571; Jon D. Carlson, "Postcards and Propaganda: Cartographic Postcards as Soft News Images of the Russo-Japanese War," *Political Communication,* vol. 26, no. 2 (May 2009): 212-237. On the global impact of the war, see Frank Jacobs, *The Russo-Japanese War and its Shaping of the Twentieth Century* (Routledge, 2017), 5-7.

[7] The definitive work on the press during the Russo-Japanese War is Louise McReynolds' chapter "The Journalism of Imperialism: The Russo-Japanese War," in *The News under Russia's Old Regime,* 168-197. See also Charles Ruud, *Fighting Words: Imperial Censorship and the Russian Press, 1804-1906* (University of Toronto, 2009), Christopher Stolarski, *The Rise of Photojournalism in Russia and the Soviet Union, 1900-1931* (PhD. Diss. John Hopkins, 2013); Stephen M. Norris, *A War of Images: Russian Popular Prints, Wartime Culture, and National Identity 1812-1945* (DeKalb, 2006), 107-134.

[8] The root of "khunkhuzy" comes from "red-beard." Some sources argue – perhaps not entirely seriously – that this was because Chinese highwaymen used to "attach huge red artificial beards" as a disguise. For example, "Deiatel'nost' khunkhuzov v Man'chzhurii," *Voennyi sbornik*, no. 1 (Jan. 1908): 35. S. S. Poliatus, *Iapontsy, koreitsy, i khunkhuzy: Ocherki iz zhizni aziatov Daln'iago Vostoka* (Odessa: 1904), 7. On the threat the bandits posed to the railways, see Felix Patrikeeff and Harry Shukman, *Railways and the Russo-Japanese War: Transporting War* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2007), 69. The secondary literature that deals explicitly with the *khunkhuzy* is scarce in both English and Russian language sources. The only recent monograph in Russian argues that in 1906, right at the end of the war, there were 30,000 in total. Dmitrii Viktorovich Ershov, *Khunkhuzy: neob"iavlennaia voina: etnicheskii banditizm na Dal'nem Vostoke* (Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf, 2010), 10.

*khunkhuzy* during the railway-building process. The militarization of the railways was, in large part, due to the need to defend materials from this local threat.[9]

As for the *khunkhuzy* themselves, Phil Billingsley argues in his comprehensive study of Chinese banditry that the "red beards" emerged at the borderlands of Manchuria as a form of "aggressive defense" and a "means of survival." With local warlords tussling for control against (Russian) foreign imperialists, and with a series mountain ranges that made for poor farming conditions but excellent hideouts, both politics and geography supported a "comprehensive system of militant village-protection groups."[10] These groups thrived during times of war, when their familiarity with weapons was coveted and the upending of power structures provided room to maneuver. As such, the *khunkhuzy* "fought bitterly" in the three wars around the turn of the twentieth century – the Sino-Japanese war, the Boxer interventions, and the Russo-Japanese War.[11]

Russian authorities in the far east tended to characterize the *khunkhuzy* as ex-Chinese militia, describing them primarily as "bandits" (*razboiniki*) who roved around in "gangs" (*banda*, *shaika*).[12] Depending on the context, in the years preceding the war both journalists and scholars of the far east tended to describe the *khunkhuzy* as pathetically "lonely (even in their own environment)," easy prey for the intoxicating menaces of opium, hashish, and idleness, or as a

[9] Victor Zatsepine, "The Blagoveshchensk Massacre of 1900: The Sino-Russian War and Global Imperialism," in Norman Smith and James Flath, eds. *Beyond Suffering: Recounting War in Modern China* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011), 107–129, 115.
[10] Phil Billingsley, *Bandits in Republican China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 6, 194.
[11] Billingsley, *Bandits,* 195.
[12] As I am working with Russian-language sources, the information available to me on the *khunkhuzy* has been whittled around the narrow chute of colonization. The representations of the *khunkhuzy* in text and image were penned by perpetrators of violence, replete with the top-down power to ascribe names and qualities, and those representations were then deployed for Russia's own narrative and political ends. Clawing back any real degree of agency for the *khunkhuzy* is regrettably beyond the scope of this chapter. I have tried to heed Billingsley's exhortation that "bandits, in the end, were people caught up in a grim situation and reacting to it as appropriately as they could." Billingsley, *Bandits, xiv.*

distinctly effectual rabble, typified by a wanton bloodlust and a plundering instinct for Russia's critical transport and communications technology.[13] While some descriptions of the bandits were heavily racialized, others emphasized their diversity; in such cases, the common denominator typically involved a run-in with the law. One article opined that the bandit gangs were comprised "of any rabble craving easy money." Among this number were "runaways from prison," "deserters," and "people who are hiding from the persecution of officials."[14] Finally, the Russian press regularly described the bandit groups as "partisans" (*partizany*). At a time when the European powers were asserting themselves across the world and coming up against forces who were fighting the better armed bearers of "civilization," this was becoming a particularly loaded term. As one article on the *khunkhuzy* stated bluntly: "everyone knows how difficult it is to fight them [partisans]."[15] More to the point, recent European conferences on the laws of war had instrumentalized the idea of what it meant to be an irregular combatant; by 1904, "partisan" had come to acquire a meaningful existence in the spheres of legal terminology and lawful consequence. The Hague Convention of 1899 made it explicit that partisan forces did not qualify for protections.[16]

My investigation into how the dual forces of international law and mass media provided a vehicle for the deadly manifestation of this coloniality is heavily indebted to Achille Mbembe's

[13] I. V. Derevianko*, 'Belye piatna" russko-iaponskoi voiny* (Moscow: Iauza, 2005), 23; and "Materialy i istorii osady kreposti Port-Artur. (Dnevnik inzhener-shtabs-kapitan V. V Sakharova)," *Voennyi sbornik*, no.1 (Jan. 1907): 219.
[14] "Deiatel'nost' khunkhuzov," 35.
[15] "Deiatel'nost' khunkhuzov," 36.
[16] The 1899 and 1907 conferences laid out the four criteria that combatants needed to meet to qualify for legal protections: military command, distinctive signs, open arms, and adherence to the laws and customs of war. Although the term "partisan" did not enter the official legal parlance until the Geneva conventions of 1949, it was commonly used before this point as a synonym for "irregular forces" or "guerilla war" (indeed, guerilla translates to *partizan* in Russian). W. Thomas Mallison and Sally V. Mallison, "The Juridical Status of Irregular Combatants under the International Humanitarian Law of Armed Conflict," *9 Case W. Res Journal of International Law. 39* (1977) volume 9 issue 1: 39-78, 59.

concept of necropolitics. Pushing back against the idea that sovereignty is rooted in the capacity for the citizen to act autonomously, Mbembe argues that "the ultimate expression of sovereignty resides… in the power and the capacity to dictate who may live and who must die."[17] For Mbembe, the idea of autonomous actors is far too indebted to western ideals of rational democracy; it is the categories of life and death, "less abstract and more tactile," that provide the better benchmark when considering more global contexts.[18] Mbembe identifies two different sorts of war – the European and the colonial – and argues that they are accompanied by different sorts of death. Looking at the distinctions between Japanese and *khunkhuzy* bodies in both military operations and media reportage, I argue that two such wars did indeed take place between 1904-1905.[19] On one side was Russia's fight with Japan. Judging by the coverage of dead bodies in the pages of the popular press, these two powers largely conducted a "legitimate" war that presumed one another's sovereign status and civilized state.[20] On the other side was Russia's fight against the bandits of Manchuria, which corresponds to a war in colonial space, where the imperative to honor "civilized" ways of killing was suspended. In the opening anecdote, the commander could claim "non-violence" because the bandits fell outside the laws of war, but he could also assume the sovereign right to perform non-violence and thus make the call between life and death.[21] Mbembe's work is overwhelmingly a treatise on the concept of

[17] Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," trans. Libby Meintjes, *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (Winter 2003): 11-40, 11; for the original context, see Michel Foucault*, The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Volume 1* (London: Penguin, 1976), 135–161.
[18] Mbembe, "Necropolitics," 14.
[19] Designating Japan and Russia as "European" is clearly far from straightforward, but both countries had been present at the conferences where the laws of war were penned and were concerned about spreading ideas of civilization at the expense of "weaker" powers. See also Will Smiley, *From Slaves to Prisoners of War: The Ottoman Empire, Russia, and International Law* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2018), 223-224.
[20] There is a large body of literature on Japan's stature as an "exception" to supposed Asian backwardness. Weighing up the merits of such a debate is beyond the scope of this chapter, but see, for example, S. N. Eisenstadt, "Multiple Modernities," *Daedalus* 129, no. 1 (Winter 2000): 1-29,15.
[21] This distinction is supported both by the laws of war and contemporary European authors and interpreters. In the words of Will Smiley, "European powers argued that treaty rules were only binding when their enemies had signed

sovereignty, and, insofar as he considers the expression of that sovereignty, he does so by looking at the tactics of occupational militaries and differences in applications of the law. He alludes to the role played by narrative in this process, but in abstracted and vague terms: "the colonial state derives its fundamental claim of sovereignty and legitimacy from the authority of its own particular narrative of history and identity."[22] This observation presents a compelling invitation: how did the mass media, alongside and supplemental to the laws of war, work to express that narrative power?

In asking these questions, I not only seek to integrate the Russo-Japanese War more intimately within Russia's own histories of colonial violence, which have primarily been concentrated on the Caucasus and Central Asia, but to also make a point about the importance of centering the body when looking at the phenomena of colonial violence more broadly.[23] Russia lost this war, bringing all expansionary plans to an abrupt halt. While this might have obscured the colonial violence in the historical literature, defeat obviously did not undo that violence. As such, the Russian-Japanese War encourages us to broaden the search for instances of colonial

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the same treaty," a justification that worked to exonerate behaviour in colonial contexts. Smiley, *From Slaves to Prisoners,* 225.

[22] Mbembe, "Necropolitics," 27.

[23] Much of the work on Russia as a colonizing polity searches for answers in the aftermath of conquest itself, amidst the critical mundanities of governance and policy. See, for example, Jeff Sahadeo, *Russian Colonial Society in Tashkent, 1865-1923* (Indiana, 2010). Studies that focus on the more overt violence of these expansions often underscore the parallels that were drawn between areas that were deemed ripe for subjugation and the respective dominions of the French and the British. Part of this process involved representing the inhabitants of those geographic fringes as groups of people to whom, in the words of Andreas Kappeler, "Russia had to bring the blessings of European civilization." Andreas Kappeler, *The Russian Empire: A Multi-Ethnic History* (London: Routledge, 2001), 171. See also *Russia's Orient: Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700-1917*, eds. Daniel Brower and E. Lazzerini (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997); Nicholas B. Breyfogle, *Heretics and Colonizers: Forging Russia's Empire in the South Caucasus* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011); Alexander Morrison, "Introduction," *The Central Asian Revolt of 1916: A Collapsing Empire in the Age of War and Revolution* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019); Peter Holquist, "To Count, to Extract, and to Exterminate. Population Statistics and Population Politics in Late Imperial and Soviet Russia," *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin,* eds. Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 111-144.

violences to include such moments of failure; in these cases, the evidence was corporeal. In the far east, colonial violence was wielded in (unfulfilled) anticipation of colonial control.

The first section of this chapter considers the various elements that underpinned the different treatment of Japanese and *khunkhuzy* bodies: the laws of war, their indebtedness to European-based notions of "civilization," and the fractious historical context of the Sino-Russian border. The second turns to the contrasting representations of the bandits and the Japanese in the pages of Russia's media. The final section concludes by drawing out the historiographical implications of integrating the *khunkhuzy* into the narratives of the Russo-Japanese War.

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That the decision of the Commander in Taburin's story – to let the captured bandit go free – was highly unusual is confirmed by the swells of printed material covering the Russo-Japanese War. The levels of violence that were deemed acceptable in the fight against banditry had been solidly laid in the years preceding the conflict. In 1909, *Voennyi sbornik* (*Military Journal*) published the recollections of Nikokai Tretiakov, commander of the 5th East Siberian Rifle Regiment, who had spent five years out in the far east prior to the war. Tretiakov recalled that *khunkhuzy* activity had been particularly intense in the summer of 1903; "guarding the railway tracks" from the *khunkhuzy* had been the regiment's primary task, while the hunting detachments "were always in battles with the robbers."[24] In these years preceding the war, Tretiakov portrayed the local official channels that existed to deal with the *khunkhuzy* as utterly ineffective due to a combination of intimidation, misdirection, and deference. To his mind, the

[24] "5-i Vostochno-Sibireskii strelkovyi polk na Kindzhou i v Arture," *Voennyi sbornik*, no. 1 (Jan. 1909): 55-56.

"entire population" of Manchuria had been "levied by tribute," and the local police chiefs were consequently unable to report the actions of the *khunkhuzy* up to their superiors. Within this lacuna of authoritative repercussions, Tretiakov conceived the role of his regiment in terms of enforcing order, and they "willingly took all possible measures" against the bandit threat.

Tretiakov's testimony indicates that Manchuria was well established as a disorderly geographical space before the outbreak of war in 1904. Under such conditions, there was no obligation for Russia to stay its hand; far from infringing on China's sovereign rights, regiments like Tretiakov's could claim that they were acting under the banner of benevolent and paternalistic aid. Two overlapping background stories thus explain why the *khunkhuz* body could be treated in such a way during the Russo-Japanese War: the colonial presuppositions that were deftly woven into the elemental matrix of the laws of war, and the historical circumstances that invited their jagged and uneven keenness upon this borderland region.

During the latter half of the nineteenth century, the laws of war – rooted in the principles of "just war," which held that combative violence should (and, more importantly, could) be subject to certain limits – started to be internationally codified. The most important of these conferences were held in Geneva (1864), St. Petersburg (1868) and The Hague (1899 and 1907), where the participating plenipotentiaries – at the invitation of Russia – sanctioned the establishment of the Red Cross, placed limits on weaponry, and debated appropriate modes of comportment.[25] By 1904, the major precepts of "just war" had been rendered indelible in documents that bore the signatures of Europe's major dignitaries.[26] They were also evoked

[25] Richard Baxter, "Human Rights in War", *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 31, No. 2 (Nov. 1977): 4-13, 5; on the founding of the Red Cross, see C. Moorehead, *Dunant's Dream: War, Switzerland and the History of the Red Cross* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 1998).
[26] Although *The Laws and Customs of War on Land* was ratified at The Hague in 1899, the counterpart for naval combat was not signed until after the war, in 1907. See *Documents on the Laws of War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) ed. Adam Roberts and Richard Guelff, 71-109.

during the conflict itself. In his memoir, Lieutenant (and later Vice-Admiral) Boris Dudorov recalled the actions of an officer at Port Arthur, Captain Sarnavskii, who was held in particularly high regard. He wrote that Sarnavskii's "knowledge of international law and, in particular, his acquaintance with the protocols of the Hague Convention brought not only the officers, but also the lower ranks in the military hospital great benefit. He boldly pointed out to the Japanese any violation of the Hague Convention, and he contributed a lot to improving their life."[27] Dudorov presents the laws of war as a testament to Sarnavskii's worldly intelligence, but the more salient issue is that both the Russians and the Japanese were aware of the power inherent to pointing out violations therein.

The laws of war reflected the agendas and priorities of the European powers in an age of imperialism, when their various colonial enterprises brought them into contact with fighting forces who had realized the folly in meeting these invading foes head-on in the field.[28] C. E. Callwell's *Small Wars*, a classic treatise on the military tactics to be deployed in such conflicts, embodies much of this contemporary thinking. When "disciplined soldiers" came up "against savages and semi-civilized races," Callwell argued, the surest route to victory was to strike at the enemy "by bold initiative and by resolute action."[29] In Callwell's imaginary, the world was neatly divided into the civilized and the barbarous; and the European powers were under no obligation to stick to the "code" when dealing with the latter. As Alexander Morrison has demonstrated, Callwell frequently looked to Russia's conquest of Central Asia from the 1850s to the 1880s for examples of decisive and heavy-handed blows meted out successfully.[30] He held

[27] B. Dudorov, "Krepost' sdana," *Port-Artur: Vospominaniia uchastnikov* (New York: Chekhov, 1955), 398.
[28] On the subject of Russia's participation in and attitudes towards the laws of war, see Peter Holquist, "The Russian Empire as a 'Civilized State': International Law as Principle and Practice in Imperial Russia, 1874–1878." Washington, D.C.: The National Council for Eurasian and East European Research, 2004.
[29] C. E. Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice*, third edition (London, 1906), 24.
[30] Alexander Morrison, "'The extraordinary successes which the Russians have achieved' - the Conquest of Central Asia in Callwell's Small Wars," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* (August 2019), 30:4-5, 913-936, 915

Mikhail Skobelev, "Russia's most notoriously violent general," in particularly high esteem.[31] Russia was not unfamiliar when it came to military engagements with combatants who refused to play by the rules of conventional warfare.

Within the discourse of international law, the bandits of north China ended up falling relatively neatly into the category of the "informal combatant," which proved to be a thorny issue at the nineteenth-century conferences. The issue of irregular military formations had been the subject of fierce debate at the Declaration of St. Petersburg in 1868. Initially framed as "resistance fighters," the larger powers opined that such persons were not proper belligerents and thus could be summarily executed. Not altogether unsurprisingly, the smaller powers disagreed. The wording of the eventual clause  is illuminating: civilians and combatants would "remain under the protection and the rule of the principles of the laws of nations, as they result from the usages established among civilized peoples, from the laws of humanity, and *the dictates of the public conscience* [my emphasis]."[32] While this nominally appears to be saying that people caught up in war will be afforded protection, the latter part of the clause makes it clear that such actions are conditional to their "civilized state," that is, the extent to which they conformed to the so-called laws of humanity, and, critically, whether or not the public cared. In aiming for compromise, the clause was essentially useless. It does tell us, however, how central ideas about the nation, "civilization," and the "public" were to this developing international legal framework – and how that framework was liable to shift as representations did so in the media.

[31] Morrison, "Extraordinary successes," 929.
[32] Kalshoven and Zegveld, *Constraints of the Waging of War*, 11.

Neither the Brussels Conference of 1874 nor the Hague Convention of 1899 arrived at a more definitive understanding on the treatment of such irregular participants.[33] The Hague Convention of 1899 ratified a document called *The Laws and Customs of War on Land*, which stated that it was prohibited to "kill or wound treacherously individuals belonging to the hostile nation or army."[34] If the *khunkhuzy* were any nationality, then they were Chinese – and, even then, ethnically Chinese, rather than bona fide "citizens" – and China was not a belligerent during the Russo-Japanese War. While the geographical remit of the conflict meant they had little choice but to participate in the war, they did not qualify for the protections of the "hostile nation." Although the *Laws of War* did protect certain militia and volunteer corps, the *khunkhuzy* did not meet these criteria. The definition, as laid out in article 1, was designed with European customs in mind. To be protected, such troops had to be "commanded by a person responsible for his subordinates," be identifiable via a "fixed emblem recognizable at a distance" and carry their "arms openly." Crucially, they had to be conducting "their operations in accordance with the laws and customs of war."[35] The logic here is as cruel as it is circular: in order to qualify for the protections detailed in the *Laws of War*, the group in question had to already to be abiding by its code. In specific terms, these protections included the right to a standard of living in prisoner camps, the right to practice religion freely, and, most importantly, the right not to be slain in cold blood. More generally speaking, extending out such protections was to convey the compliment of civilization.

[33] Gillespie, *The Laws and Customs of War on Land,* 65; The 1899 Convention narrowed the definition of the spy, but as for those who did have the label tacked on, "very little was changed to give such individuals additional status and protections."
[34] *The Laws and Customs of War on Land,* Section II, article 23.
[35] *The Laws and Customs of War on Land*, Section II, article 1.

By the time the Russo-Japanese War broke out, it had been well established that the Chinese bandits in Manchuria and Mongolia did not meet any of the aforementioned criteria. The treatment and the representation of the *khunkhuzy* after 1900 owed to the long-standing wariness of Chinese peoples at the borderland, catalyzed by the shifting diplomatic and geographic aspects to the Boxer Rebellion. Russia's attitudes towards China, a country with over 2500 miles of shared border, had long been ambiguous. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, powerful and influential voices had warned against the "yellow peril" threat. The most notorious of these belonged to philosopher Vladimir Soloviev, whose writings painted out apocalyptic scenarios of the Christian world overrun by the peoples of the east.[36] While Soloviev's doom-ridden portents certainly help explain some of the most violent and troubling aspects of the history between Russia and the people at the Chinese border, this was far from the whole story. As the scholarship on Sino-Russian relations has demonstrated, both liberals and monarchists had good reason to resist such one-note racism.[37] From the 1890s it was the official policy of the Russian government, championed by the minister of finance Sergei Witte, to push for a "peaceful" expansion into China. This mission was idealized as solely economic, without the hassle that accompanied civilizing. Up until the Boxer Rebellion, maintaining a position where such hairs could be split was just about tenable**.**

[36] Alena Eskridge-Kosmach, "Russian Press and the Ideas of Russia's 'Special Mission in the East' and 'Yellow Peril'," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 27, no. 4, (Winter 2014):661–675, 662-663. Another notable proponent of this view was the popular writer Dmitry Merezhkovsky. In an essay penned in the wake of China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-5, Merezhkovsky gnashed out dire words of warning about the doom that awaited Europe if it were to become too much like China. In the words of Susanna Lim, Merezhkovsky was ultimately a proponent of the idea that "chinesefication" equated very directly towards "evolutionary regression." Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, *Dmitri Sergeevich Merezhkovsky and the Silver Age: The Development of a Revolutionary Mentality* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975), 51. Susanna Soojung Lim, *China and Japan in the Russian Imagination, 1685-1922: To the Ends of the Orient* (New York: Routledge 2013), 157.
[37] Eskridge-Kosmach, "Russian Press," 669.

When anti-foreigner tensions started to simmer in China, Russia tried to present themselves as substantially different from the other European powers. This sentiment, as expressed in memoranda penned by top government officials through to the press editorials in intelligentsia journals, was not without some substance. Russia had not been nearly as aggressive with their spiritual missionary activity as had the other European powers, and – the feather in their cap of moral superiority - not once had Russia insisted that China take their opium.[38] Some publications in Russia expressed outright sympathy for the Boxers, likening their anti-imperialist cause to the Boer struggle in South Africa that was capturing global sympathies around the same time.[39]

Through the events of 1900, Russia struggled to keep up a meaningful distinction between themselves as "liberators" and the other European powers (along with Japan) who were acting out the part of "colonizers."[40] Not only was this difference understandably utterly lost on the Chinese, but it caused the other European powers to doubt Russia's intentions. When push came to shove, however, Russia fell in line behind the other western powers. Its diplomatic dance had failed, and what sympathies Russian society had harbored for the Boxers had subsided by the summer of 1900, when the rebels had been driven out from Beijing and moved north, thus placing Russians and their railways firmly within the crosshairs as items of imperial objection.

[38] David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, "Russia's ambivalent response to the Boxers," *Cahiers du monde russe* 41, no. 1 (Jan 2000): 57-78, 78. While the Russians may not have dirtied their hands over the drug trade specifically, it should be noted that benefited tremendously from the Treaty of Peking (1860), through which they acquired Priamorski krai and soon after founded the Pacific port of Vladivostok. Willard Sunderland, *The Baron's Cloak: A History of the Russian Empire in War and Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), chapter 5, Kindle edition. See also Mark Bassin, *Imperial Visions: Nationalist Imagination and Geographical Expansion in the Russian Far East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
[39] Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, "Russia's ambivalent response to the Boxers," 70.
[40] Petr E. Podalko, "'Weak ally' or 'strong enemy?': Japan in the eyes of Russian diplomats and military agents, 1900-1907, *Japan Forum* 28, no. 3 (April 2016): 266-281, 267.

Although there was no formal deceleration of war, Russia invaded Manchuria to protect their investments with a force of 100,000.[41] On the run from both the foreign interventionists and their own government, many of the Boxer rebels sought refuge with the nomadic "bandit" groups of the north. In the words of Victor Zatsepine, "the lines between the regular Qing army, the bandits, and the Boxers had been blurred."[42] As they encroached into the geographical orbit of the Sino-Russian border, these groups came into contact with the wells of tension described by Lewis Seigelbaum: Russia might have been convinced of their "innate superiority" at the far eastern reaches of its empire, but during the late nineteenth century Chinese labor and agricultural know-how was sorely needed given the lack of Russian settlers. [43] In sum, the Chinese were considered both necessary and a threat. Despite Russia's prior protestations that they were different from the other predatory European powers, this campaign reflected – in the worst possible ways - the fact that Russia's military enclaves built along their railways to support and defend the construction were referred to as "colonies." [44]

This invasion of Manchuria culminated in a massacre that occurred at Blagoveshchensk. The military governor of Russia's Amur region ordered the deportation of all Chinese residents from the Russian border town, fearful that they would aid a Chinese invasion.[45] Between 4 and 8 July 1900, an estimated 3000-8000 Chinese subjects, including children, women, and the elderly, were forced across the river by Cossacks at the point of bayonets. No boats were provided, and only the small handful that could swim survived. While an investigation was subsequently

[41] In the words of Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, **"**the Russians cut into these provinces like knives through butter." Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, "Russia's ambivalent response to the Boxers," 76.
[42] Zatsepine, "The Blagoveshchensk Massacre," 115.
[43] Lewis H. Seigelbaum, "Another 'Yellow Peril': Chinese Migrants in the Russian Far East and the Russian Reaction before 1917," *Modern Asian Studies* 12, No. 2 (1978): 307-330, 317.
[44] Olga Bakich, "Origins of the Russian Community on the Chinese Eastern Railway," *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne des Slavistes* 27, No. 1 (March, 1985): 1-14, 2.
[45] Sigelbaum, "Another 'Yellow Peril'," 318.

conducted and the key officials court-martialed, the most severe punishment handed out was three months of imprisonment, and the most lenient an honorable discharge. The governor who had given the order was merely transferred out of the region.[46]

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The massacre in Blagoveshchensk had a very limited media exposure. No reporters had been present, and nothing was published on the incident until 1910, when an anonymous author penned an article ironically titled "Blagoveshchensk Utopia" in *Vestnik Evropy*.[47] This was assuredly not the case during the Russo-Japanese War. During the conflict itself, and in the reams of media that followed in its wake, there was a brazen willingness to show both publicly and visually the corporeal consequences of the contrasting legal status of the Japanese soldiers and the *khunkhuzy*. This scenario suggests an alteration to Mbembe's categories: at stake here is not simply a colonial dynamic structured around the decision as to who lives and who dies, but also a reflection of the interplay between war, media, and the idea that the law hinged in part on "the dictates of public consciousness." After a declaration of war, within the so-called protective embrace of international law, the *khunkhuzy* became a group that could be openly announced as "lose-able" – people whose lives, to return to Judith Butler, "can be forfeited, precisely because they are framed as being already lost or forfeited."[48] Yet outside that embrace, violent atrocity was, if not condemned, then shushed aside.

[46] Sigelbaum, "Another 'Yellow Peril'," 319.
[47] V., "Blagoveshchenskaia 'Utopiia,'" *Vestnik Evropy,* 10 (1910), 236-7.
[48] Butler, *Frames of War,* 31.

At a time when literacy rates were rising and the half-tone printing technique made printing cheaper and more efficient, the conflict itself created an unprecedent demand for news. In the words of Jeffrey Brooks, only in 1904-05 did "newspaper reading [become] common in rural Russia."[49] While a military newspaper, *Vestnik man'chzhurskoi armii* was published in the field, the large commercial dailies were able, thanks to the telegraph, to cover the action in almost real time. Furthermore, many outlets, such as *Russkoe slovo, Birzhevye vedomosti, Novoe vremia,* and *Rus',* either converted their existing weekly illustrated supplements to the near-exclusive coverage of the war (*Iskry, Ogonek*) or set up new ones for that purpose (e.g. *Dnevnik voiny*, *Khronika russko-iaponskoi voiny*, *Illiustrirovannaia khronika russko-iaponskoi voiny*).[50] Several standalone illustrated supplements also emerged, such as *Illiustrirovannaia letopis' russko-iaponskoi voiny.*[51]

Despite the variation in these publications' ideological leanings, the *khunkhuzy* featured consistently across these newspapers as background noise to the war, a perennial nuisance that punctuated the daily military action in straightforward and short accounts.[52] This was overwhelmingly the case in the telegrams from the high command that (to the considerable tactical advantage of the Japanese) were reprinted across all manner of news sources. This message from General Kuropatkin on August 3, 1904 is typical in terms of tone and brevity: "It continues to rain everywhere. The activities of the *khunkhuzy* have intensified."[53] On occasion, these telegraphed descriptions of the daily exploits simply read, "we were occupied with the

[49] Jeffrey Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature 1861-1917* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 28.
[50] The Russo-Japanese War was responsible for a notable surge in newspaper circulation, particularly for *Russkoe slovo.* McReynolds, *News Under the Old Regime*, 186.
[51] Stolarski, *The Rise of Photojournalism,* 89.
[52] The *khunkhuzy* were relatively common in visual sources too; for example, there were three images of the bandits within the first nine issues of *Illiustrirovannaia khronika russko-iaponskoi voiny*, the supplement to the newspaper *Rus'* for the duration of the conflict.
[53] "Telegrammy," *Illiustrirovannaia khronika*, no. 28 (15 Aug. 1904): 1.

*khunkhuzy*."[54] For the *khunkhuzy* certainly did occupy the Russian forces, and sometimes in great numbers. The Russians reported encountering "gangs" in the plural, and an account from February 18, 1905 claimed that a group of border guards had to contend with "over 2000."[55] A later report described the Japanese sending a strong cavalry detachment of *khunkhuzy* over the Manchurian border, with one report citing a number of 11,000, and another claiming 30,000.[56]

More detailed descriptions of encounters with the *khunkhuzy* followed a relatively standard formula to include the location of the engagement, a rough estimate of their numbers, and sometimes an indication of the losses suffered (on either or both sides). But even official documents possess some critical linguistic differences in how the Japanese and the *khunkhuzy* were portrayed. Take, for example, this telegram from General Linevich's infantry front: "On May 16 the Japanese launched an offensive against our forces in the valley of the Qinghai, fewer than 3 versts from the Fenshui pass. […] On May 16 a gang of *khunkhuzy* were found. We sent troops to scatter the gang, and many *khunkhuzy* were slaughtered."[57] While the Japanese "launched an offensive," the *khunkhuzy* are described by the dehumanizing term of "slaughter." In a different telegraph, General Lieutenant Sakharov presented the *khunkhuzy* not simply as inferior militarily, but within a framework that held up chaos as the foil for tranquility. Sakharov claimed that his forces had "dispersed a gang of well-armed *khunkhuzy*, killing their leader along with 47 people and taking four to prison." Despite the fact that the war continued to rage, this act of killing had supposedly brought "calm to this troubled region."[58] Despite the commonality of violence, these representations strongly indicate that these *khunkhuzy* were seen as a very

[54] "Telegrammy," *Khronika russko-iaponskoi voiny,* no. 11 (March 1904): 42; "Telegrammy," *Vestnik man'chzhurskoi armii,* no. 242 (30 April 1905): 399.
[55] *Illiustrirovannaia khronika russko-iaponskoi voiny,* no. 54 (18 Feb. 1905): 850.
[56] *Khronika russko-iaponskoi voiny,* no. 7 (Feb. 1904): 4.
[57] Such telegrams were replicated in many local newspapers and journals; e.g. "Telegrammy," *Illiustrirovannaia khronika russko-iaponskoi voiny,* no. 58 (27 March 1905): 1078.
[58] "Telegrammy," *Voennyi sbornik*, no. 10 (Oct. 1904): 198.

different sort of enemy than the Japanese. Even against the backdrop of war, the bandits' lives were devastatingly cheap.

One place to search for the underlying causes of this discrepancy between the "offensive-launching" Japanese and the bandit "gangs" is in first-hand accounts and news reports. Vasili Nemirovich-Danchenko was one of the more famous war journalists who spent his time in the far east working for Russia's most influential paper, *Russkoe slovo.* He gained a formidable reputation due to his exclusive access to General Kuropatkin's camp and his engaged style of writing.[59] During the war, he published a collection of pieces about his experiences in the far east, *Na voinu (To War)*.[60] The *khunkhuzy* flicker through his narratives, their presence often heralded by the smoke of burning villages on the horizon. Nemirovich-Danchenko does not dance around what he considers to be the consequences of this outlaw lifestyle. The *khunkhuzy* would happily murder Russian patrols they encountered on the road, and, perhaps more heinously, would "capture" and "spirit away" the injured rather than leave them to be rescued by their own.[61] The lack of respect shown to Russian bodies specifically and the established dictates of war more generally was a common thread that ran through descriptions of encounters with the *khunkhuzy*. The point here is not so much to debate the truthfulness of these claims (the bandits surely did unsavory things to certain Russians), but to establish how the depiction of these events established a *quid pro quo* scenario that justified the exaction of Russian retribution across a grossly inequitable distribution of power.

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[59] The historian Richard Stites describes Danchenko as one of the "star journalists," while Louise McReynolds writes that "no other correspondent could duplicate his conversations with the generals, whom he could mention casually as having "bumped into in the hall.'"; Richard Stites, "Russian Representations of the Japanese Enemy," *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero, Volume 2, eds.,* David Wolff and John W. Steinberg, (Boston: Leiden, 2007), 397; McReynolds, *The News Under the Old Regime,* 187.
[60] Vasili Nemirovich-Danchenko, *Na voinu (ot Peterburga do Port-Artura): Iz pisem s dorogi* (Moscow, 1904), 75.
[61] Nemirovich-Danchenko, *Na voinu,* 75.

Nemirovich-Danchenko concludes his analysis of the *khunkhuzy* with a dismissive shrug of a statement: "In general we have not established anything definite about the *khunkhuzy*. We regard them as rabble of robbers, a random horde, who have nothing for themselves in the present, or in the past, or the future."[62] His language – rabble, random – and his implications that this group of people somehow exist in a timeless space all work to cast the *khunkhuzy* as the antithesis of civilization and progress. At other times and in other places, this could have been well used as a rationale for a "benevolent" intervention and colonization.[63] During wartime, it justified dispensability. Casting the net wider across other published materials, we see Nemirovich-Danchenko's primary themes of violence and uncivilized lawlessness echoed, though supplemented in some important ways. In the first instance, *khunkhuzy* violence was indelibly and intimately linked to the violence that the Chinese state used against their own bandit population. In the majority of cases, the images and descriptions of brutal retributions against *khunkhuzy* in the Russian press featured the Chinese as the perpetrators. The Chinese government's policy of executing bandits was treated like a curiosity object, with the Russians positioning themselves as colonial voyeur, a position that worked to legitimize any punishment exacted by their own hands. Yet there was a consistent slippage between the labels of *khunkhuzy* and Chinese, whereby any Chinese (especially those who demonstrated any degree of hostility) could be branded a *khunkhuz*, or at the very least have the question of identity posed. For a reporter with *Dnevnik voiny*, the supplement to *Birzhevye vedomosti,* the difference was negligible when some Russian troops were taken hostage and held for ransom by "Chinese soldiers (or *khunkhuzy*?)"[64] This reluctance to distinguish between Chinese and bandits

[62] Nemirovich-Danchenko, *Na voinu,* 78.
[63] Willard Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field: Colonization and Empire on the Russian Steppe* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2004), 102.
[64] "Vestochki iz Port-Artura," *Dnevnik voiny,* no. 3 (5 June 1904): 23.

corresponds with Jeffrey Brooks' assessment of how Chinese characters were portrayed in Russian literature vis-à-vis the Japanese during the spike of interest in the far east that accompanied the Russo-Japanese War: they were "treacherous and cowardly and uniformly hostile to the Russians."[65]

Yet in these stories, the Japanese were "portrayed with a mixture of respect, hostility and fascination."[66] As Zachary Hoffman has argued, while the right-wing press did racially paint the Japanese as cruel and dishonorable, more moderate publications "largely refrained from insulting Japan and even took steps to humanize them."[67] *Russkoe slovo's* pre-eminent journalists regularly "spoke of Japan's venerable civilization and their military as formidable and orderly."[68] This made their association with the bandits far more multifaceted. These two groups were lumped together on occasion - "Japanese-*khunkhuzy* gangs" (*iaponsko-khunkhuzy shaiki*) was a relatively common reference – on account of the popular (and correct) theory that many of the *khunkhuzy* were operating as Japanese allies and spies, but the conditions of that association did vary.[69] The excessively violent tendencies of the *khunkhuzy* were consistently highlighted not just as an inherent trait, but also as a way of meaningfully separating them from the Japanese. Following a skirmish at Sai-Ma-Tszy on June 6, 1904, for example, *Illiustrirovannaia khronika* reported that "after the battle, our dead soldier was found with his tongue cut out and the joints of his fingers severed. Some say that this is not the Japanese, but the *khunkhuzy*, because they do

[65] Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, 235.
[66] Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, 235.
[67] Zachary Hoffman, "Subversive Patriotism: Aleksei Suvorin, *Novie Vremia,* and Right-Wing Nationalism during the Russo-Japanese War," *Ab Imperio* 2018, no. 1 (2018): 76.
[68] Hoffman, "Subversive Patriotism," 76.
[69] *Vestnik man'chzhurskoi armii* reported that going by a "set of notebooks found on a killed *khunkhuz* […] it is obvious that these *khunkhuzy* were in the service of the Japanese." According to these documents, the going rate per month for a commander was 200 rubles, 30 for an officer and 18 for a private." This information, parroted throughout various other news outlets, was taken as conclusive evidence that the bandits were working for the Japanese, "Telegrammy," *Vestnik man'chzhurskoi armii*, no. 133 (18 Dec 1904): 1.

not want to believe that the Japanese, previously so humane to the wounded, could allow such atrocity."[70] Stories like this one point to a clear dividing line that kept the Japanese safely on the side of "humane," thus ceding the "atrocity" ground to the bandits. At other times, this line was not always so distinct, and the violence of the *khunkhuzy* was used to taint the Japanese by association. An article in *Niva*, published a mere three days prior, also drew attention to the horrendous "disfigurement of the [Russian] corpses," who were "found with punctured eyes" and "cut off ears." As far as this author was concerned, the *khunkhuzy* were the direct perpetrators, but the blame should ultimately lie with the Japanese because they had allied themselves with the bandits.[71] Although of the degree of culpability was debated, the *khunkhuzy* were consistency depicted as capable of committing corporeal atrocities, and thus – to the Russians – eminently deserving of retribution.[72]

When it came to published images of the dead, the iconographical repertoire for the Japanese was decidedly tempered compared to that of the *khunkhuzy*. During the Russo-Japanese War, the camera was still decades away from being technically capable of capturing the heat of battle. This space belonged to the painting and sketch, and together these genres symbiotically shared the burden of representing war in the pages of the illustrated press. The photograph offered an exciting aura of reality, while art was capable of making war sanitary and infusing images with straightforward and unilateral moral messages. This had implications for how dead military bodies were portrayed. The camera could capture death in its post-action stillness, in

[70] "Telegrammy i korrespondentsii 'Rusi'." *Illiustrirovannaia khronika russko-iaponskoi voiny,* no 18 (6 June 1904): 288.
[71] "Chto zhe molchit Evropa?," *Niva,* no. 27 (3 June 1904): 536-8 .
[72] The notion that the root cause of the *khunkhuzy's* supposed predilection for violence was their fundamental lack of civilization also featured in the more highbrow literature of the era. The fixation on the bandits and the body spilled over into their weaponry; as part of a series of "travel notes from Asia," V. P. Vradii wrote an essay in *Oruzheinyi sbornik*. Vradii argued that despite the presence of guns both old and new, the preferred method of weapon for the *khunkhuzy* was the knife. V. P. Vradii, "O ruzh'iakh Khunkhuzov: Zametki iz puteshestviia po Azii," *Oruzheinyi sbornik,* no. 3 (Nov. 1904): 1-4.

kindnesses that ranged from staid to shameless; pompous funerals to piles of corpses awaiting mass burial. Here, the camera's claim to reality (versus that of art) was meaningful, for how the camera exposed different bodies varied significantly between the Japanese and the *khunkhuzy.* Generally speaking, the most explicit photographs of dead soldiers, the sort initially made famous by the American Civil War, were published abroad. Photographs of death in Russia's popular newspapers and magazines were far rarer – at least, compared to artistic representations, where the paintbrush could mop up blood, reattach limbs, and make insignias crystal clear.[73] Yet, when it existed, this sort of photography tended towards the more respectable category of funerals in the case of the Japanese.

Figures 7, 8 and 9 show artistic representations of Japanese death through the stages of battle. The first of these images, captioned "the Japanese struggle with wire obstacles during the storming of the Port-Arthur fortifications (sketch from *L'Illustration*)," looks to capture the heat of the moment. While this image was created for a French magazine (the French were sympathetic to the Russians through the war, with a heavy financial investment in Russia's railway building projects), this was the sort of sketch that was also deemed acceptable in the Russian press.[74] In a very busy picture, the eye is drawn to the only man's face that is revealing itself to the artist down in the bottom left. Bearing a pair of wire cutters, the titular Japanese soldier gives the impression that he is running, not fighting. A common thread throughout all these images is that dead bodies are shown whole. Even here, where the awesome strength of

[73] Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Vintage, 2009), 11; Alan Trachtenberg, "Albums of War: On Reading Civil War Photographs," *Representations* 9 (Winter 1983): 1-32, 23.
[74] James Long, "Franco-Russian Relations during the Russo-Japanese War," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 52, no. 127 (April 1974): 213-33.

modern firepower is underscored and the sky lit up like a fireworks display, the only amputations are made by the frame, as is the case with the soldiers' leg at the bottom center.

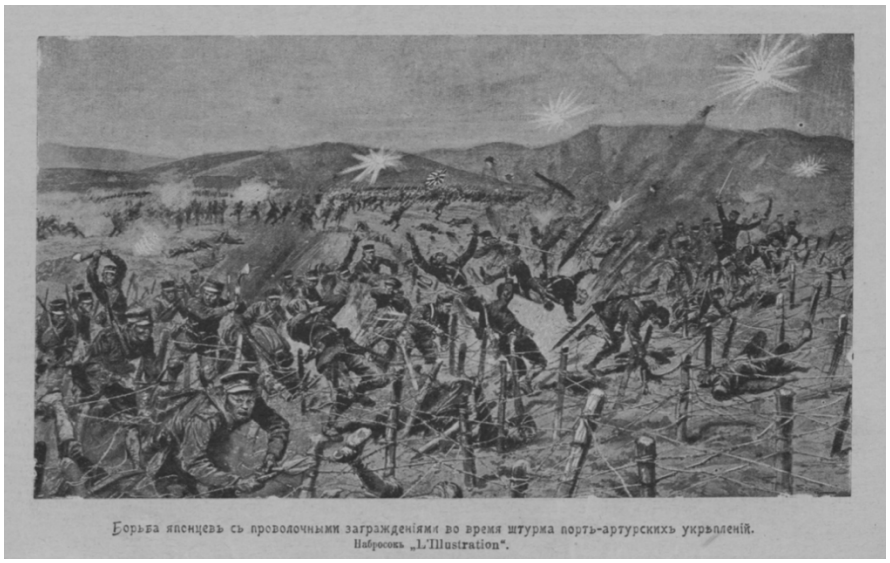


*Figure 7: The Japanese struggle with wire obstacles.* Ogonek*, no. 35 (10 Sept. 1904): 250.*

The second image, which shows the ebbing of a battle, comes from a half-page spread in an issue of *Illiustrirovannaia khronika russko-iaponskoi voiny*, published on July 4, 1904 and captioned "Answering an Attack." Judging by the surrounding narrative, this scene depicts an engagement from late July where the Japanese failed to push the Russians back from their outposts on the southern front. As per Lieutenant General Sakharov's report, "the enemy's killed and wounded were far greater than ours."[75] Death is clearly on display here, but faces are averted, and the bodies, though in various states of crumpled tension, remain whole (a detached hat is the closest indication of the war's corporeally destructive nature). The monochrome illustration allows for easy distinction between the white-booted Japanese troops with their

[75] "Telegramma general-leitenanta Sakharova v glavnyi shtab," *Illiustrirovannaia khronika russko-iaponskoi voiny,* no. 22 (4 July 1904): 338.

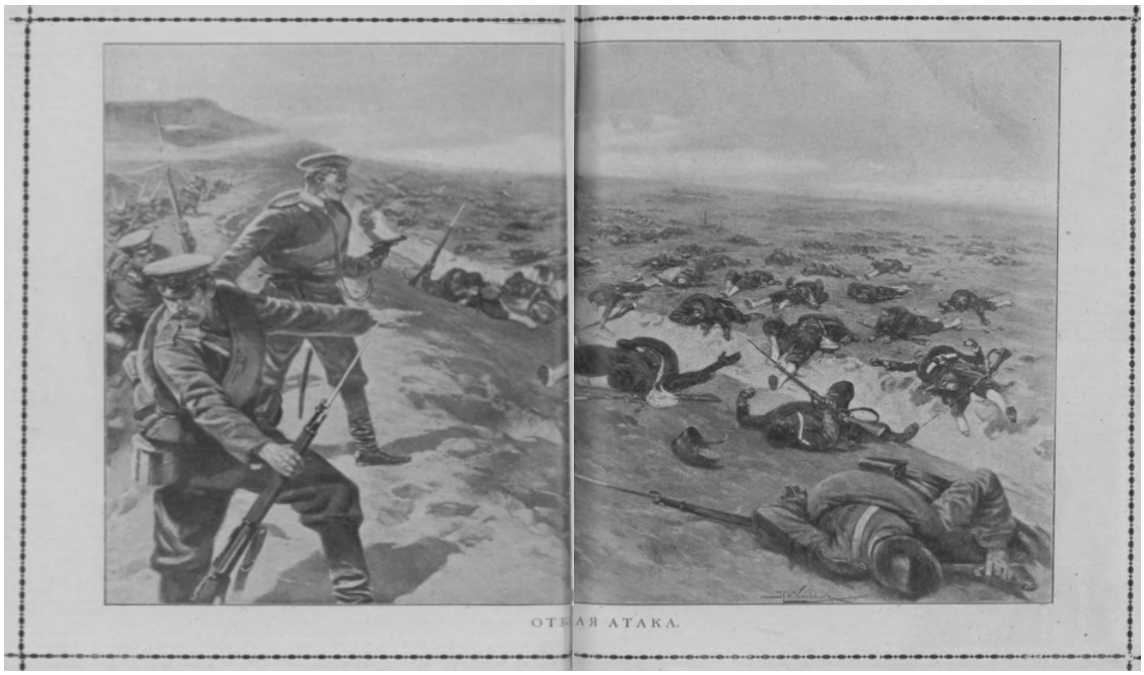

*Figure 8: "Answering an Attack."* Illiustrirovannaia khronika russko-iaponskoi voiny*, no. 22 (4 July 1904): 444-45.*

darker uniforms, and the black boots and lighter dress of the Russians. Figure 3 is more complex. Sourced from *Ogonek*, this image shows the Japanese collecting their dead and wounded after the battle of Nanshan. This is a busy tableaux, but the overall content – the retrieval of corpses – speaks to a faith in the honorable conduct of both sides; the Japanese are preparing their dead for a proper burial, and the Russians are giving them the space to do so. There are some explicit indications that the dead have been ripped apart by the technology (the man in the bottom right appears to be missing an arm), but for the most part the brutal incursions of modern industry into warfare and onto the body are left implicit: the dark corpses in the background are interrupted by the lines of wire fencing, the splayed limbs of the cannon.

It was rare to see individual Japanese deaths represented in print. The ones that were, however, generally played safe within the discursive limits of respect and humility. It is within this space that photographs surfaced. This final example of Japanese death (figure 4) also comes from *Illiustrirovannaia khronika*. Captioned "The funeral of a Japanese soldier who died from


*Figure 9: "The Japanese Collect their Wounded and Dead at Nanshan."* Ogonek*, no. 28 (16 July 1904): 148.*

wounds at Vladivostok," this image is a paragon of quiet respect. The men in the foreground – mostly sailors, but also civilians on the right – have taken off their hats, their eyes are all downcast, and the bayonets in the background indicate that a volley or salute is imminent. Save


*Figure 10: "The funeral of a Japanese soldier who died from wounds at Vladivostok."* Illiustrirovannaia khronika*, no. 37 (15 Oct. 1904): 592.*

perhaps for the presence of an Orthodox priest, the Japanese soldier being committed to the earth is being treated as one of Russia's own.

In most representations of Japanese deaths, artistic efforts were made to retain the corporeal integrability of the bodies. This was not the case with the *khunkhuzy,* who were depicted within a morbid repertoire where executions were permissible. A good example of this genre [figure 11] comes from the spring of 1904 in *Letopis' voiny s iaponiei*. Captioned "The execution of *khunkhuzy* by the Chinese authorities," the only part of the bandit's body in the frame is the severed head. The fact that the executioner's holding up of the head is mimicked by the other individual in the foreground does not indicate respect or sensitivity. Most of the scenes, as described in text or image, involving *khunkhuzy* executions did feature the Chinese in the role of executioner.

*Figure 11: The execution of khunkhuzy.* Letopis' voiny s iaponiei*, no. 21 (August 1904): 397.*

Other publications indicate that Russians did sometime step into this role. In *An Artistic Album of "Manchuria,"* a book published a year after the end of the war that boasted an assortment of high-quality reproductions of sketches, paintings, and photography, the Russians

left behind the colonial voyeur and adopted up the mantle of "educator." Figure 12 shows two pages from this album. The first five of these six photographs document the death of "a Chinese spy" (i.e. a *khunkhuz*) at the hands of the Russians. Beyond the fact that this execution, with a tree for a scaffold, comes across as somewhat impromptu, this was an execution most orderly: the condemned is depicted on route to the scaffold; the loop is placed around his neck; the death sentence is read; the condemned man is hanged (the picture captures the moment the footstool is removed); the doctor checks the pulse. To aid the viewer following along, the captions in the margins (in both Russian and French) spell out these stages in terse, brief sentences. The sixth image does not fit within this well-tailored sequence. Despite the fact that it falls under the overarching title "execution of a Chinese Spy," it shows a scene that is taking place somewhere else entirely, and a very different sort of execution. In this final photograph, it is the Chinese authorities that have put a group of *khunkhuzy* to death and are going about the business of dispensing with the bodies. In ways that echo the restraint showed by Taburin's commander in the opening anecdote, here the Russian method of hanging is depicted as far more civilized and structured than the Chinese process of beheading.

These photographs of the Russian and Chinese scenarios inscribe a hierarchy upon these respective proceedings. By playing around with the photographic form and presentation, *"Manchuria"* packaged up death in such a way that made it look as though the Russians adhered more closely to civilized wartime conduct. The first of the Russian execution images is probably the most arresting, due to the contrast between the stoicism of the Russian guards and the rich emotions that play across the face of the condemned. The Russian contingent in this photograph speaks of repetition and order, as though this execution scene has been played out many times

before. Albeit to slightly different degrees, the other images also reinforce this sense of Russian order and ritual.[76]

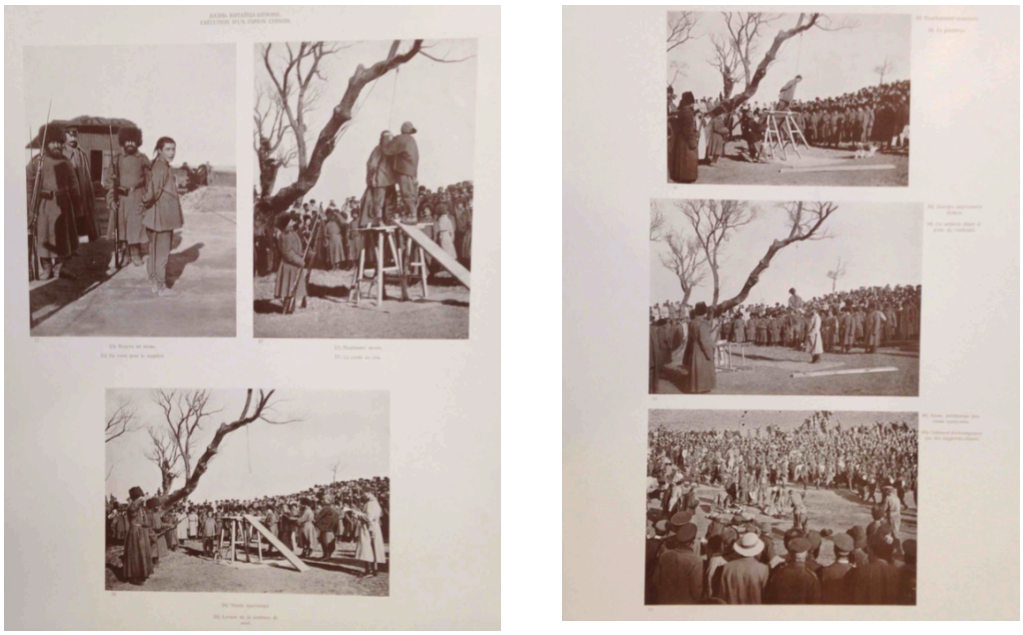

*Figure 12: pages with photographs numbered 55-60. "*Mandzhuriia." Russko-iaponskaia voina*, ed. A. V. Martynoff, (St. Petersburg, 1906), 46-48.*

In contrast, the sixth image [figure 13] depicts the Chinese execution as being observed by a rather hodgepodge array of spectators, exemplified by the wide variety of hats in the foreground. The small pocket of bayonets indicates some semblance of an orderly military presence, but this is overwhelmed by the disorderly crowd of people, many of whom have scaled the tawdry, run down wall in the background in hopes of a better view. The death is messier, too. The *khunkhuzy* have been beheaded and are being buried on the spot. The presentation of these pictures invites the Russian viewer to judge. Whereas the Russian execution images have been taken from an angle that is slightly below the eyelines of the actors, the camera looks down upon the Chinese execution scene. No longer part of the audience, but an abstracted viewer set above

[76] Susan Buck Morrs's analysis of the regimented and futuristic aspect of sequencing images is helpful in this respect; Susan Buck Morrs, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), 135.

and apart from the crowd, it is an omnipresent eye that, like a deity, has not only a right but also an obligation to assume the part of moral arbiter. While Mbembe speaks of the "European" and "colonial" forms of warfare as relatively separate notions, here we see photographic representations of these two forms brought together on one double-page spread. On the one hand, the Russians are exercising their right to sentence the bandit to death, thus exposing the colonial "fiction that war functions as a rule-governed contest"; on the other hand, courtesy of the Chinese execution, we also see the Russians framed within the context of European warfare, whereby "the state undertakes to "civilize" the means of killing."[77]

*Figure 14: The execution of khunkhuzy by Chinese magistrates.* "Mandzhuriia." Russko-iaponskaia voina*, ed. A. V. Martynoff, (St. Petersburg, 1906), 46-48.*

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[77] Mbembe, "Necropolitics," 23-25.

Writing on the Russo-Japanese War, historian Rotem Kowner opines that "this conflict might have been one of the last 'gallant' wars, as well as one of the first 'humane' ones – a conflict in which both sides maintained rather strictly the traditional rules of decency but also provided reasonable treatment to the wounded and prisoners of war according to the humane standards that began to be instituted at the end of the nineteenth century."[78] Kowner's argument represents but the sharpest end of a line of thinking that defines the war bilaterally and concerns only those deemed "official" combatants. When we expand this remit to include the people who did not fall within these standards, Kowner's blanket assertion – that this war was "gallant" and "humane" – fails to hold up in some crucial respects.

Having considered some possible causes for the discrepancy in representation between the "informal" *khunkhuzy* and the "official" Japanese enemies, it makes sense to conclude by briefly considering why the former has been rendered so silent in the historical literature. In the broadest of strokes, one reason is that the war stood out for being the first in the modern era that saw an "eastern" power defeat a "western" one. Against this backdrop, the fact that both Russia and Japan behaved like colonial powers is all-too readily obscured.[79] Another reason has to do with that most clandestine of heuristic devices – the century. In the spate of new literature that accompanied the centenary, the Russo-Japanese War was regularly cast as an origin story for the First World War ("World War Zero"), thus placing it within a narrative trajectory that looked

[78] Kowner, *The Impact of the Russo-Japanese War,* 12.

[79] Recent scholarship has look to demonstrate that the racial discourses during the Russo-Japanese War were considerably more nuanced than a one-note xenophobic haranguing. Rosamund Bartlett has written on "Japonisme.", a vogue for all things Japanese in high Muscovite and Petersburg society. Louise McReynolds has likewise explored how much of the Russian press' was reluctant to over-demonize the Japanese enemy, in hopes of distancing itself from a more overtly racist Western Europe. This is not to say that the Japanese were not often depicted in crude and harshly stereotyped ways; rather, alongside this jingoistic chest-beating there was an equally strong discourse characterized by inquisitiveness and a calculated respect. "Japonisme and Japanophobia: The Russo-Japanese War in Russian Cultural Consciousness," *Russian Review* 67, no.1 (Jan. 2008): 8-33. McReynolds, *The News Under the Old Regime,* 183.

forwards rather than backwards. This made for many compelling historical debates, but also left the war more susceptible to the grand historical plots particular to the twentieth century, specifically that of decolonization. Exemplifying this distortion, R. M. Connaughton describes the conflict as the "first of the modern wars," and "the fulcrum upon which international relations would turn, confirming the direction towards world communism and the ultimate demise of colonialism."[80] These skews help explain why the *khunkhuzy* barely feature in the western scholarship on the Russo-Japanese War.[81] On the few occasions that they have warranted mention, they have graced the page in a manner that is regrettably akin to many of the contemporary sources.[82] For example, in their account of transportation networks during the Russo-Japanese War, Felix Patrikeeff and Harry Shukman describe the *khunkhuzy* as "dreaded bands" who "preyed on Chinese settler and foreigner alike."[83] These bandits "recognized neither master nor allegiance, and… would be as happy to dispatch a Russian soldier as they would a Japanese."[84] In other words, Patrikeeff and Shukman are content to leave the *khunkhuzy* largely decontextualized, as caricatured representatives of Russia's wild east. Making space for the *khunkhuzy,* and by extension the war's colonial dimensions, invites critical revision not only into the narratives within this war, but of colonial violence both within Russia and beyond the borders.

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[80] R. M. Connaughton, *The War of the Rising Sun and Tumbling Bear: A Military History of the Russo-Japanese War 1904-5* (London: Routledge, 1988), ix.
[81] For some useful background from the Chinese perspective, see Mark Mancall and Georges Jidkoff, "The Hung Hu-tzu of Northeast China," *Popular Movements and Secret Societies in China, 1840-1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972), 125-134.
[82] The *khunkhuzy* were sensationalized in the international press at the time. As vividly described in a recent article by Mark Gamsa, a handful of fanciful columns appeared in the French press describing the "collectivist egalitarian" societies of the "Chinese Red Beards." In print, the *khunkhuzy* were a mixture of Rousseau's natural society rendered incarnate, parsed through "a jumble of myth, rumor and unverified bits of factual information." Mark Gamsa, "How a Republic of Chinese Red Beards was Invented in Paris," *Modern Asian Studies* 36, 4 (2002): 993-1010; 995, 1009.
[83] Patrikeeff and Shukman, *Railways and the Russo-Japanese War*, 69.
[84] Patrikeeff and Shukman, *Railways and the Russo-Japanese War*, 70.

Many scholars have argued that imperial violence in Russia was a process developed alongside "other European colonial measures," particularly in the Caucasus and Central Asia.[85] Often, though, this emphasis falls on the violence in these regions that occurred in the wake of the Great Reforms of the 1860s, and the brutalizing experience of WWI. Placing the Russo-Japanese War into this narrative makes sense not only for the sheer fact of the violence and its underpinning ideologies, but also for how it highlights consistent threads within the broader arcs. While it is beyond the scope of this chapter, the instrumentalization of the "bandit" in justifying scenarios where men in military uniforms could make decisions over life and death throughout Russia's vast empire stands as one such example.[86]

More broadly, the case of the *khunkhuzy* underlines the need for studies of colonial violence that address the interplay and dissonance between institutions such as the laws of war and the bodies themselves. This relationship is multifaceted and historically specific, as some excellent recent studies have explored. Peter Holquist has looked at how Russian violence in neutral Persia during WWI was predicated (in part) on the fact that its people fell into neither category of populations catered for by the army's official "Regulations," which distinguished only Russians in a war zone and enemy peoples in a war zone.[87] Looking beyond Russia, Elizabeth Kolsky's research into the "legal regime of exception" deployed at India's northeastern periphery exposes the extent to which the "logic and rhetoric" of colonial law was made flexible

[85] Holquist, "To Count, to Extract, and to Exterminate," 111-144; Peter Holquist, "Violent Russia, Deadly Marxism? Russia in the Epoch of Violence, 1905-21," *Kritika* 4, no. 3 (Summer 2003): 627-652, 634.
[86] Holquist notes that the nominal objective of the Chechen violence was "the extraction of the bandit element." Holquist, "To Count, to Extract," 111. See also Vladimir Bobrovnikov, "Bandits and the State: Designing a "Traditional" Culture of Violence in the Russian Caucasus," in *Russian Empire: Space, People, Power, 1700-1930* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2007), 239-267, 240.
[87] Peter Holquist, "Forms of Russian Violence During the Russian Occupation of Ottoman Territory and in Northern Persia (Urmia and Astrabad), October 1914-December 1917," in *Shatterzones of Empire: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian and Ottoman Borderlands*, eds. Omer Bartov and Eric D. Weitz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 334- 36, 339.

to serve the interests of the British.[88] There are two separate aspects to this burgeoning school of literature worth underscoring: the grey areas *of permissibility* within legal texts themselves (such as the stipulation about the dictates of public consciousness) are critical; and there is much to be gained from positioning the corporeal front and center in this conversation. To borrow a phrase from Kolsky, "while there may be nothing novel about the claim that colonialism was violent, it is odd that so little attention had been devoted to the bloody clash of bodies involved in running the empire."[89] It is the bodies, after all, that prove the deeply troubling fact that the rich vellum papers on which these laws were inscribed proved to be far less flimsy than flesh and bone.

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Only heroes can honor heroes": so spoke the Russian bishop tasked with consecrating the earth over the first monument commemorating Russians who had died during the Russo-Japanese War. Constructed in May 1908 at Port Arthur, the city that had played host to the war's bloodiest siege, this memorial was sponsored by the Japanese government. Before sprinkling the ground with holy water, Bishop Innokentii gave a short speech that opened with an overture to the laws of war: "Recently, the Hague Conference was convened to address questions of peace, but it was soon witnessed that war is inevitable, and those who desire peace must also prepare for war." Here, Innokentii coupled the best of civilized humanity – the desire to mitigate the excesses of military destruction – with an apology as to why it had gone awry. War was a deity-mandated inevitability, and he had a scriptural quote to prove it: "war and death are our

[88] Elizabeth Kolsky, "The Colonial Rule of Law and the Legal Regime of Exception: Frontier "Fanaticism" and State Violence in British India," *American Historical Review* 120*,* no. 4 (Oct. 2015):1218-1246, 1221.
[89] Elizabeth Kolsky, *Colonial Justice in British India* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 4.

inheritance on earth."[90] If these high-minded provocations about religion and morality were the alchemy needed for forgiveness, then the specific catalyst was this ceremony over the dead done right. The bishop then proceeded to address the changing status of the Japanese: "Here, we are witnesses as an alien people erect a monument to our heroes; only heroes can honor heroes, therefore it is impossible not to treat them with respect, and it is impossible not to regret their friendship." Innokentii's speech was not long, but in it the laws of war still pawed at the mirage of a gentleman's agreement.

Chinese locals continued to crop up in discussions after the war. Horror stories circulated in the press about the fate of Russian bodies buried in Chinese soil. In 1909, *Novoe vremia* reported news from Harbin: on the first day of Easter, a religious group had opened donations for the construction of monuments over graves of Russian soldiers. Their reason: "In many parts of Manchuria, scattered graves are devoid of crosses that the Chinese steal, grave sites look like the earth: there are claims that bones are even being removed for use as fertilizer."[91] Stolen crosses, unkept sites, robbed corpses; at a certain level, these insults had to do with material abuse, the most egregious being the rumor that bones had purposefully been removed for use as fertilizer. This, the reduction of the military hero down to the basest of carnal elements, was designed to appall a culture that placed the utmost importance on the integrity of the corpse. On an even deeper level, these complaints tapped into issues of honor and order. Having been roundly defeated in the war, the Russians were now obliged to concern themselves with their position relative to the (Japanese) East as well as the West. As had been the case during the war, there was solace was to be found in making distinctions between the Japanese and Chinese.

[90] RGAVMF, f. 417, op. 2, d. 1079, l. 29.
[91] RGIA, f. 552, op. 1, d. 271, l. 4.

Centering the "lose-able" Chinese bandit, and particularly his suffering body, reveals important gaps in standard narratives of the Russo-Japanese War that concentrate exclusively on the bilateral engagement. Introducing the *khunkhuzy* puts the colonial dimensions of the Russo-Japanese front and center, a move that works to highlight how the laws of war structured conventions of death through distinguishing between official and unofficial combatants. The codification movement was replete with absurdities, and these became particularly evident as they were pushed out into a global context and parsed along lines of nationality and empire. Despite the contrary stories and images in the mass media, therefore, Taburin's Brigade Commander could lay claim to the mantle of civilization and posit that Russians were "not violent" in their relations with the *khunkhuzy*.

## CHAPTER THREE

# DO WE FORGET OUR DEFENDERS? REPATRIATIONS AND IDEAS OF EMPIRE IN THE WAKE OF THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR

In *This Republic of Suffering*, Drew Gilpin Faust's towering account of death during the American Civil War, she writes: "it is work to deal with the dead… to remove them in a literal sense of disposing their bodies, and it is also work to remove them in a more figurative sense."[1] In the latter months of 1909, when the dust had settled on the political turmoil of Russia's 1905 revolution, bodies from the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) started to be moved. The scope of this "work" – both literal and figurative - can be introduced via three vignettes:

In 1909, Lev Golubev headed up an expedition to Manchuria funded by the Committee for the Perpetuation of the Memory of Russian Soldiers who died in the war of 1904-1905. Chaired by the Grand Princess Olga Aleksandrovna, this committee set Golubev the task of assessing the state of the graves such that they might be "put in order." In addition, he was to locate the specific grave of Vasilii Riabov, a popular soldier-spy hero, and repatriate his remains back to his home village.

In 1910, the Korean peninsula was annexed by Japan. The act of dignitaries putting pen to paper had transformed neutral soil into enemy soil: half a decade after the war, ground that had been an acceptable if undesirable stop-gap had suddenly been rendered utterly unfit for the Russian heroes that perished on the *Variag* during the battle of Chemulpo. In large part due to the tireless work of A. S. Somov, the Russian Consul in Seoul, these remains were reinterred in Vladivostok to subdued fanfare at the end of 1911. In addition, all the other bodies from the

[1] Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Knopf, 2008), xiv.

Korean peninsula were moved just over the other side of the border, to a town called Novokievsk in the summer of 1913.[2]

In 1911, the battleship *Petropavlovsk*, former flagship of the Pacific Fleet, was disturbed from her resting place on the ocean floor by a Japanese entrepreneur seeking non-existent treasures. While the black box full of tsarist riches proved elusive, Mr. Sakurai did discover six Russian skeletons when he blew a hole in the port stern. Two years later, one of these was determined to be Admiral Molas, on account of a set of identity cards lodged between his ribs (under the circumstances, this was rather solid evidence).[3] The other five were never definitively identified, although the places they occupied on the ship indicated that they were officers. These bodies, with the last-minute exception of Molas, were buried in Port Arthur.

The Russo-Japanese War was fought almost exclusively on non-Russian land, in Manchuria, the Korean peninsula, and on the surrounding Yellow Sea. During these years, men did not die, and they were not buried, in home soil. Five years after the guns had ceased, this issue was considered sufficiently important to justify the actions sketched out above. While Golubev's expedition to Manchuria led to many recommendations regarding how these bodies should be consolidated, cared for, and memorialized, only Riabov's remains warranted a train ticket back to the Russian heartlands. Similarly, but for an urgent telegram (his coffin had already been ordered), Admiral Molas was to have been reburied alongside his fellow sailors in Port Arthur.[4] At the request of his family and the orders of the Naval Staff, only St. Petersburg could be "Russia" enough for a man with such epaulettes. For his compatriots – the unknown but presumed-to-be officers found alongside him in the sunken tomb – consecrated soil in a

[2] Novokievsk was renamed Kraskino in 1936.
[3] RGVAMF, f. 417, op. 2, d. 1804, l. 68.
[4] RGVAMF, f. 417, op. 2, d. 1804, l. 76.

graveyard in Port Arthur, territory that had humiliatingly been lost during the war, would have to suffice.

This chapter positions the dead to probe at the complex spatialities of the Russian far east at the start of the twentieth century. A lot of quality ink has been devoted to analyzing how the categories of nation and empire played out within the Russian state over time. Introducing a collection of essays on the subject, the editors – Nicholas Breyfogle, Abby Schrader, and Willard Sunderland – argue that a distinguishing aspect of the Russian empire was the "fuzzy or non-existent geographical boundaries separating 'Russia proper' from its imperial territories."[5] While I am interested in asking how "Russia proper" in the far east stretched, warped, and demanded action when symbolically, emotively, and materially attached to the military body, I do not suggest that these bodies are an effective methodological scalpel for excising the nation apart from the empire. This is not to say that they do not reflect different layers. There are moments where the material - the bodies, the soil, evocations of spilled blood – speak primarily to discourses rooted in ideas of the nation. There are other moments when a clear hierarchy between metropole and periphery can be seen, where accusations of neglect by the Japanese and the Koreans spurned the Russian state into action, and these debates of centers, civilization, and race reflect more imperial objectives.[6] However, these two categories were very rarely – if ever – discrete. As such, these bodies invite us to explore the borderlands of the far east as a palimpsest, a space that had been written on and over with pens both imperial and national. Father Bogoslovskii, presiding over the reburial of the Chemulpo heroes in Vladivostok, referred to the

[5] Nicholas Breyfogle et.al "Introduction," *Peopling the Russian Periphery: Borderland Colonization in Eurasian History* eds. Nicholas Breyfogle, Abby Schrader, and Willard Sunderland (London: Routledge, 2007), 8.
[6] This definition is indebted to Ronald Suny and Valerie Kivelson's recent work on the Russian empire. Although they frame it as shifting and amorphous, as a collection of "interwoven strands," the one category they insist on as a constant is "rule by difference." This relates to the supremacy of the metropoles, but also to the "inequitable relationships of superiors ruling over designated inferiors." Valerie A. Kivelson and Ronald Grigor Suny, *Russia's Empires* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2017), 4.

dead as "comrades who came here to the edge of the Russian state *(gosudarstvo)* from their native corners of the vast fatherland."[7] Yet as far as he was concerned, this town that had only been founded in 1860 on the Pacific coast was also "home soil" come 1910, a place where Russian bodies and souls could lie at peaceful rest after their uncomfortable period of purgatory in Korea. As the contradictory elements of his speech suggests, after the Russo-Japanese War, this imperial periphery was written over with narratives indubitably national, but elements of the former continued to shine through.[8]

To a considerable degree, the repatriations and reburials were a reflection of the efforts of the post-1905 autocracy to rebrand themselves in a more populist guise. In many ways, the conclusions I draw are similar to Aaron Cohen's, who has undertaken the most thorough appraisal of the post-war memorial efforts. Cohen persuasively posits that "war remembrance strategies after 1907 […] show a pattern of innovation in public relations that historians have rarely associated with the often backward-looking or out-of-touch official culture that prevailed in the reign of Nicholas II."[9] Many of the memorials erected in the wake of the war, such as the striking statue to the *Stereguishchii*, looked to highlight the experiences of the rank-and-file at the expense of the commanding officers who were saddled with the burden of defeat. This chapter complements his work by focusing on the bodies, rather than the memorials, of the dead soldiers and sailors. In doing so, my analytical emphasis largely falls on the spatial rendering of this post-1905 vision of monarchy out in the far east, an iteration that engaged ideas of nation, empire, civilization, and shame. For the committee did not simply erect a few memorials and

[7] "Rech' pri vstreche i pogrebenii ostankov geroev "Variag" i "Koreetsa," skazannaia Protoiereem Siborskogo flotskogo ekipazha," *Dalnii vostok*, 18 December 1911.
[8] On using the notion of a palimpsest as a metaphor for memory, see Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*, 1st edition (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).
[9] Aaron Cohen, "Long Ago and Far Away," 389.

consider their mission complete; a considerable amount of effort – the sort of "work" that Faust alludes to - was undertaken to locate the bodies, to bless them and retrieve them. Ceremonial plans were made, disinfectants were ordered, and the naval ministry scoured their archives to try and find the names of the dead. There was performance here, to be sure, but it was backed up with substance. With their belated efforts, Nicolas II and the committee comprised of the Russian elite proffered a version of autocratic tsardom that reached for populism in lieu of democracy. Here was the "little father" of Russia caring for men who had died in his name and for his cause. I argue that a critical part of this care involved projecting the idea that they would be also buried in *his* Russian and Orthodox soil. For this to be the case, the far east had to be convincingly portrayed as national "Russian" soil, as opposed to Russia's imperial periphery "beyond Siberia." The sources that concern the repatriations frequently emphasized how far away the bodies lay and the alien nature of their environs, but at the same time considerable efforts were made to underscore the Russianness of the far east. These tugs between distance, the unfamiliar, and Russianness were mediated by what I am calling a reification of the border separating Russia from China and (Japanese) Korea. If we take reify to mean the process of making the abstract more concrete or real, then this process unfolded at the border as the soil on either side – "enemy" vs. "home" – suddenly seemed very important. This far east border, framed by Geoffrey Hosking as "vague and protean," hardened when confronted with the imperative to move military corpses.[10]

Both the performative and the substantive dimensions of the reburials and repatriations had two key audiences, and two distinct but overlapping motivators. The first audience was Russia itself, the Russia reeling from defeat and political turmoil. Here, the impetus was to

[10] Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire* 1552-1917, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 14.

reaffirm the tsar's position in the narrative driving seat. In this regard, Richard Wortman's argument that a "national myth" dominated the reign of Nicholas II is instructive. As had also been the case with his father, Alexander III, this particular vision emphasized the "ethnic and spiritual bonds between tsar and people," as well as the historic union between tsar and Russian land.[11] After the 1905 revolution, intent on undermining the power of the elected Duma, Nicholas doubled down on the tsar-peasant bond, making it seem like the most important relationship in the functioning of the state; it is not a co-incidence that the memorial efforts in the far east overlapped almost exactly with the series of centennial celebrations that spanned from the battle of Poltava in 1709 to Borodino and the founding of the Romanov dynasty in 1913. In the same way that Nicholas used these celebrations to underscore his "rapport with the peasants," so too did the efforts of the committee to ensure that all men, not just the officer class, were moved out of Korea, work to further this national myth. The second audience was the wider international community, and for their reading publics who had lapped up the war's photojournalistic output and had thus also borne witness to Russia's shame.[12] Russia's "empire" was more than an internal category, it was also a claim to spread and uphold "civilization." The motivation here was to claw back a degree of dignity on the world stage. As I hope to demonstrate, charges made from foreign quarters that Russia was failing to take care of her own dead was one of the most powerful catalysts for transforming plans into action.

A common stumbling block within the literature that looks to define the Russian state is that although the empire had (and has) discernable metropoles and peripheries, those metropoles rested at the edge of Europe.[13] In this regard, my work joins the chorus that looks to demonstrate

[11] Wortman, *Scenario of Power*, 5, 270.
[12] Marco Gerbig-Fabel, "Photographic Artefacts of War 1904-1905: The Russo-Japanese War as Transnational Media Event," *European Review of History* 15, no. 6 (December 2008): 629–42, 630.
[13] Katya Hokanson, *Writing at Russia's Border* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 7.

the value of history written from the peripheries. It does so at a time and place when Russia, so accustomed to seeking out standards of civilizational prestige westward, also had to contend with the rise of Japan. As the Japanese empire extended its reach over Korea, the legions of dead both on the peninsula and in the surrounding area assumed an important role. In focusing on evocations of nationalism in a specific region, I have taken inspiration from Hillis' work on the construction of Russian nationalism in right-bank Ukraine. By looking at a borderlands response to an empire-wide phenomenon, Hillis effectively distils the processes through which advocates of nationalism brought their arguments to a broader stage. Besides making a claim for local studies, Hillis' also wades into a broader historiographical debate. At one end of the spectrum, nationalism is perceived as a western import that posed an existential threat to the integrity of the Russian empire. At the other, the Russification of the empire towards the end of its lifespan reflected the successful incorporation of national ideals. This chapter, which addresses both how the far east was framed at the center and at the movements of the bodies in the region itself, argues that there is no "one size fits all" solution. While in western regions nationalism may well have represented a foreign tinderbox, a clamour for peoples who shared a language and a culture to be sovereign, in the far east it was largely seen as a panacea, something to be layered over an imperial outpost as a remedy to feeling forgotten and ignored. With blithe disregard for the native populations, the Russian state had long perceived the far east and Siberia as a blank expanse to be settled.[14]

Finally, a word on the agendas of the historical actors in this chapter regarding the work they undertook for the dead. Thomas Laqueur has two core threads running through *The Work of*

[14] Yuri Slezkine *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North,* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), introduction; Willard Sunderland, "The 'Colonization Question': Visions of Colonization in Late Imperial Russia," *Jarhbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 48, no. 2 (2000): 210-232, 210-211.

*the Dead*, his sweeping survey of death in western culture. The first of these threads looks at certain aspects of death culture within "deep, anthropological time." This explicitly ahistorical framing positions the dead as "a thing to be reckoned with" by the living, where "the uncared-for-body, no matter the cultural norms, is unbearable."[15] The second thread, of course, addresses how imperatives to take care of the dead manifested themselves differently across time and space. This chapter interrogates, but ultimately supports, the methodology of combining these two threads. Uncomfortably timeless though it might be, the idea of an overarching obligation is not only an important buffer against reducing the dead in instances like this, the belated repatriations out of the far east, down to mere tools of political machination. For while it was certainly a calculated move on the part of the monarchy, it that the consuls and mayors out in the far east charged with overseeing the repatriations and reburials were legitimately moved by tasks assigned to them. In any case, the specter of the "uncared-for-body" is also important in explaining how such political machinations, even at times when they bordered on the cynical, were able to command such powerful traction: one of the most potent weapons in moving the repatriation processes forward was to point the finger that said *you have failed to take care of your dead*. In a way that leaves the door open to explore the dichotomy between persuasive words and meaningful actions, the first part of this chapter looks at the processes that brought about the movement of the bodies: a combination of a central push as reflected in the formation of a committee in 1909, local initiatives, printed media, and a rising sense of awareness that the international community was judging Russia critically for failing to take care of their dead. The latter sections consider the movements themselves and the ideas they evoked and reflected.

[15] Thomas Laqueur, *The Work of the Dead: A Cultural History of Mortal Remains* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 4.

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During the Russo-Japanese War itself, occasional repatriations did occur from the far east. These instances were rooted in name and fame; with enough political clout and royal favor, bodies could be brought home. For example, right after the Petropavlovsk sunk on March 30, 1904, Pavel Burachek, flag officer to Vice-Admiral Stepan Marakov and son of another celebrated vice-admiral was brought back to St. Petersburg almost immediately. Off the back of his connections, not only was the father (a close friend of Father John of Kronstadt) able to send a telegraph thanking the Tsar directly for his "participation in my grief, for allowing the removal of the body of my dead son Pavel," but the repatriation back to Smolensk Orthodox cemetery on Vasilevskii island was done on the state dime.[16] Although they proved fruitless, notable efforts were also made to locate the most famous casualties. The inability to locate the body of Vice-Admiral Makarov, the highly respected commander of the Pacific Fleet, was a source of great despondency. Significant energies were also spent to fulfil the wishes of Vasilii Vereshchagin's wife, who begged that all possible measures be taken to find the great artist's body that had perished alongside Makarov on board the *Petropavlovsk*.[17]

After the end of the war, attention fleetingly flared over the lesser known masses. The first official initiative to set in order the graves of Russian soldiers in Manchuria came from the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian armies in the Far East himself, General Nikolai Linevich, just under a month after the war had formally ended. On Sept 25, 1905, he issued an order to catalogue the military cemeteries, and promised provision for their upkeep.[18] Pressure was also

[16] Aleksandr Valer'evich Kobak and Iurii Minaevich Piriutko, *Istoricheskie kladbishcha Sankt-Peterburga* (Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf, 2011), 306.
[17] RGAVMF, f. 469, op. 1, d. 103, l. 23.
[18] RGIA, f. 552, op. 1, d. 242, l. 45.

applied here from below: on September 16, the newspaper *Russkoe slovo* reported from the far east that "among the war participants, there is a desire to create a society for the care of the graves of fallen soldiers scattered throughout Manchuria and Korea."[19] This endeavor was complicated from the offset, however, by the fact that almost all territories on which the battles had been fought were now in the hands of the Japanese. In the immediate aftermath of peace, they were reluctant to provide the Russians with any sort of access.[20] In any case, the Russian government was itself increasingly distracted with quelling the revolutionary turmoil that gripped the country between 1905 and 1907. As such, the fate of Russian graves scattered over Manchuria rose or fell according to the inclinations of the local population and the occupying Japanese forces (whose sensitive and considerable efforts to provide the Russian men with a "proper" burial that diverged significantly from their own cremation rituals should be acknowledged).[21] Come 1909, some had been maintained in "perfect order," while in places such as Padyazi, a village that fell on the Russian's retreat route from the battle of Mukden, former graveyards announced themselves via bones and rotting uniform strewed across the open ground.[22]

Although largely ignored by the state, these bodies were not forgotten completely. For example, on May 18, 1907, Father Ioann Vostorgov, then working as a priest in Moscow, took the opportunity to berate this apparent amnesia at a prayer service held at the opening of an orphanage for the children of soldiers killed during the Russo-Japanese War.[23] The main theme

[19] *Russkoe slovo*, 26 October 1905.
[20] L.V. Golubev and L. M. Bolkovitinov, *Doklad i otchet po obzoru kladbishch i mogil russkikh voinov v Manchzhurii* (St. Petersburg, 1909), 6.
[21] RGIA, f. 552, op. 1, d. 250, l. 16.
[22] Golubev and Bolkovitinov, *Doklad,* 6.
[23] Vostorgov later went on to be a leading figure in the monarchist party and was canonized by the Russian Orthodox Church in 2000. He was an avid supporter of settling the east with Orthodox communities. Aileen Friesen, "Building an Orthodox empire: Archpriest Ioann Vostorgov and Russian missionary aspirations in Asia," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 57, no. 1-2 (2015): 56-75, 57-58.

of Vostorgov's speech was the dislocation between expectation and reality that had tarred the experience of the war. Most of his ire was reserved for the political upheavals that had broken out in 1905 (overlapping with the latter half of the war). Rather than urging on Russia's troops with their prayers and memories, Vostorgov argued, Russian society had given precedence to the "monstrous" and "disgusting, sinister howls" of political subversion. He reserved some indignation, however, for the treatment of the bodies in the aftermath:

> A wicked war ended. The dead remained in far and alien Manchuria. They did not erect monuments, they did not erect temples. They were immediately forgotten, as if they were not there; Russian society, so proud of its humanity when it is a question of punishing political murderers who kill from the corner, forgot about the heroes who died in war, forgot about orphans of killed soldiers and their disadvantaged families.[24]

From the vantage point of Moscow, this excerpt of Vostorgov's speech introduces some themes that reoccur throughout the chapter: the complex issue of distance and space; the ideas embodied in a military death; and who, or what, had an obligation to care for these bodies. Firstly, he touches upon some hurdles in caring for the bodies of the dead soldiers. The most glaring was the sheer distance and apparently "alien" nature of the battleground sites. Notably, Vostrogov does not give any indication that these bodies were in anyway geographically close to Russian land. The apparent foreignness of the far east harkens back to the annexation of the Amur between 1858-1860. As Mark Bassin has convincingly shown, while the geophysical attributes of the far east were widely celebrated before it became a part of Russia, this celebrity status

[24] Protoierei Ioann Vostorgrov, *Pamiati russkikh voinov: otdavshikh zhizn' za otechestvo v voinu s Iaponiei* (Mosow, 1909), 10-11.

melted away very soon after the integration. Bassin's analysis hinges around the idealized conception of Russia, and he poses the rhetorical question: could a "monsoon climate and sub-tropical vegetation, really [be] Russia after all?"[25]

These limitations were certainly used as excuses for inaction. As Vostogov bluntly states, the bedfellow of distance was amnesia: the dead were "immediately forgotten, as if they were not there." At the same time, he sees this as a reason to be sympathetic to the plight of the bodies that remained uncared for out in the far east, because men who died a military death were *de facto* "heroes." The comparison Vostorgov makes between soldiers and "political murderers who kill from the corner" provides some insight as to why the question of providing care for the bodies lay dormant for several years after the end of the war. The most straightforward answer is that the government and the army were preoccupied with the domestic violence of the 1905-7 revolution. However, this violence also altered the landscape of militant death.[26] Against the backdrop of civil insurrection and terrorist actions, the morality of the dead "war hero" retrospectively appeared crystalline in its simplicity. In her research on the Russo-Japanese War and Orthodoxy, Betsy Perabo argues that the notion of Russia's "Christ-loving military" was critical to the official rhetoric of war. [27] Military death was thus also understood in an intimately Christian context, replete with references to martyrdom and sacrifice.[28] However, Perabo does not stretch her story out beyond the naval disaster at Tsushima that effectively ended the war. As such, she does not consider how the aftermath of the Russo-Japanese War stoked the embers of a fire that, fueled by journalistic coverage and burgeoning senses of fin-de-siècle individualism

[25] Mark Bassin, *Imperial Visions: Nationalist Imagination and Geographical Expansion in the Russian Far East, 1840-1865* (Cambridge, 2009), 14.
[26] On how the terrorists themselves morally framed their actions, see Susan K. Morrissey, "The 'Apparel of Innocence': Toward a Moral Economy of Terrorism in Late Imperial Russia, *The Journal of Modern History* 84, No.3 (Sept. 2012): 607-642.
[27] Betsy C. Perabo, *Russian Orthodoxy and the Russo-Japanese War* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 66.
[28] Perabo, *Russian Orthodoxy and the Russo-Japanese War*, 10.

and identity, emerged as a full-blown conflagration across Europe in 1914: if one killed and died for the nation, what did the nation owe in return?

Vostorgov grapples with the idea of the indebted nation by positioning the far-away dead in relation to a social fabric defined by responsibilities that extend beyond the immediate workings of the state. The "they" who had failed to erect monuments presumably refers to the government and the military top brass, but "Russian society" had also forgotten the dead to the considerable detriment of the vulnerable left behind. As such, he presents an archetypical imperial model of an indifferent metropole and a suffering abandoned periphery. There is, not surprisingly, evidence from the far east border regions that likewise suggests that people there felt forgotten, and that they were not very happy about it. Grievances to this effect were laid bare in an article that appeared in *Dosug zaamurtsa* in April 1909, a newspaper published out of Harbin for the border guards of the Zaamur military region, where a decent amount of the fighting had taken place. The article describes the current state of the churches and cemeteries in South Manchuria drawing on information sent into the editor. One cemetery was "completely abandoned… none of the wooden crosses have survived, all cut down by the Chinese. Even on the monument of a mass grave containing 1,600 Zaamurians (a very considerable number), the cross is broken."[29] The anonymous author then starts to twist the knife, asking: "only a broken monument on a mass grave? They [the Japanese] probably wonder as to our indifference to the graves of our fallen soldiers, and whether measures will be speedily adopted at least to organize our large cemeteries." He had some measures in mind, proposing that watchmen for the cemeteries should be taken from among the wounded and crippled pensioners from the Russo-Japanese War. Located at the border, the Zaamur guards were well positioned to appreciate the

[29] RGIA, f. 552, op. 1, d. 242, l. 45.

optics of imperialism. Russia's military that had been bested by the Japanese in 1905, and, with defeat came a host of imperial anxieties. Russia's role of civilizing force in the region was now being questioned, and the border guards thus worried about Japanese perceptions. Corpses were powerful symbols and the specter of abuse was potent, but, as Vostorgov's words also demonstrate, the neglect of the dead was a powerful rhetorical tool when connected to the depleted fortunes of the living left behind.[30]

Although a substantial amount of public initiative emerged during WWI to spearhead efforts to put graves in order, in the wake of the Russo-Japanese War such efforts were ultimately set in motion by the state.[31] These official actions did not happen in earnest until late 1908, when the 1905 revolution had finally subsided. Notably, they were neither blind to the actions of the Japanese (in 1908, the Japanese were making moves to annex the Korean peninsula, and had opened the first memorial to fallen Russians in Port Arthur) nor the fact that men such as Vostrogov were calling on *society* to act. The initial Russian memorial efforts were architectural monuments in St. Petersburg: a church on the English embankment in memory of the sailors who had perished; a striking monument in Aleksandrovskii Park in memory of the *Stereguishii*, depicting the moment when two hero-sailors decided to sink the doomed ship,

[30] In late 1908, the diocesan newsletter published out of Blagoveshchensk, located on the Amur river (the border between Russia and China), listed a set of new protocols they wanted to see enacted in 1909.[30] One of these concerned the education of children, and specifically strategies to "cultivate a feeling of sincere and ardent devotion towards the fatherland." The protocol advised that at least one lesson should be devoted to "necessary information" from Russian history that "illustrated the most vivid examples of patriotism" – including the feats of private Riabov from the Russo-Japanese War. In addition, students should be provided with information about their "national geography." The first goal here was to educate students on where they lived, but the overarching agenda was to "establish in the minds of students the connection between our far-eastern suburbs and the centre of the European Russian fatherland, since our distant land is a living branch of the grand domestic tree." *Blagoveshchenskie eparchial'nye vedomosti*, no. 4 (April 1908): 94.

[31] Melissa K. Stockdale, "United in Gratitude: Honoring Soldiers and Defining the Nation in Russia's Great War," *Kritika* 7, no.3 (Summer 2006): 459 – 485, 460; see also Karen Petrone, *The Great War in Russian Memory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), introduction.

sacrificing themselves to deny the Japanese their quarry;[32] and a decidedly more traditional statue to honor Vice-Admiral Marakov at Krondstadt Naval Base.

The start of concerted and centralized action with regard to the literal remains out in the far east was marked by the founding of the "Committee for the Perpetuation of the Memory of Russian Soldiers who died in the war of 1904-1905" in February 1909 with a proclamation from Nicholas II. Its executive body was comprised of a council of 12 people, chaired by Princess Olga, the Tsar's sister. With a strict dress code of "frock coats," this council was painfully elite. Joining the Princess was her husband, Prince Peter Oldenburgskii. Other notables included Mikhail Akimov, chairman of the State Council and former Minister of Justice, Alexander Stolypin, younger brother of the Prime Minister, and Nikolai Khomiakov, the chairman of the Third Duma (1907-1910). In all, only three men hailed from non-noble backgrounds – a priest and two wealthy financiers. Meeting for the first time on 20 March 1909, their first task was to co-ordinate donations and establish local departments to enable this process.[33] To this end, an appeal was penned by Alexander Stolypin. Though the local departments were able to adapt the script to suit their own ends, Stolypin's version was circulated via *Tserkovnie vedomosti*, the Holy Synod's official newspaper.[34] The fundraising kicked off with an all-night vigil on 13 September 1909, with all proceedings going to the Committee.

The manner in which the Committee engaged with the provinces in regards to fundraising for the dead reflects the nature of imperial governance and its processes of differentiation.[35] By 1909, the "inner provinces" (*vnutrennikh gubernii*) had local governments (*zemstva*) that the

[32] Aaron Cohen, "Long Ago and Far Away: War Monuments, Public Relations, and the Memory of the Russo-Japanese War in Russia 1907-1914, *Russian Review* 69 (July 2010): 388-411, 395-6.
[33] RGIA, f. 552, op. 1, d. 241, l. 1.
[34] RGIA, f. 552, op. 1, d. 241, l. 2.
[35] Kivelson and Suny, *Russia's Empires*, 3.

committee could send their letters to, while the recipients on the "outskirts" had to be the Governor-Generals, as *zemstva* had not been established. This latter category included what Ronald Suny and Valerie Kivelson refer to as "troublesome areas" (Warsaw), central Asian colonies (Turkestan), but also the Siberian and far east regions of Irkutsk and Primorskaia. The last encompassed the strip of land on the other side of the Korean and Chinese border and included Vladivostok and Novokievsk.

Framing their work as a "holy cause" to "eternally immortalize" the soldiers, letters of appeal were also sent to the commanders of all military units, and A. A. Gris, the director of the St. Petersburg telegraph agency, was invited to the meetings of the council and the committee to aid in the dissemination of information.[36] The committee was successful: by the end of the summer, over 500 local departments had been established to coordinate donations. The establishment of the committee marked the changing of the tide regarding the fate of the material remains out in the far east, and this happened via three print-based initiatives: a donation drive; an expedition out to the far east following by the publication of the report on that trip; and an educational collaboration with well-connected publishers that sought to reframe both the war and the far east. Although donations (a substantial 65,000 rubles) had been sent to the General Governor of the Primorskaia district, P.F, Unterberger, during the war to help bury the fallen with dignity, all of his plans regarding brotherly cemeteries and monuments had been shelved, perhaps due to more immediate political concerns. The committee's meeting notes state that the Governor gladly handed over the money in 1909.[37]

[36] RGIA, f. 552, op. 1, d. 242, l. 45.
[37] RGIA, f. 552, op. 1, d. 241, l. 12. (Unterberger attended the committee meeting on 24 April 1909).

In their appeal for donations, the committee relied on the notion of distance and strangeness to achieve many different ends.[38] One example, printed in Kazan demonstrates effectively just how the dead bodies of the Russo-Japanese war, held up to the light, refract an evocative and paradoxical spatial understanding of the Russian far east. In the first instance, the remoteness of the war was used to solicit a sense of pity. The opening sentence railed, "During the Japanese war, the Russian people needed to defend themselves thousands of miles from their homes, beyond Siberia." Stoking their audience's patriotic sensibilities was also important, and they did this by emphasizing that these men, who had died defending a border region, were defending Russia: "Defeat of the enemy would not come, but the Russian army did not allow him onto his native land, fearlessly giving his life, dying in silence, fighting hard as warriors and heroes." As such, the far east was simultaneously "native land" (successfully defended, the only victory to be salvaged from the defeat) and a place "thousands of miles" from home. This framing reflects how, during the nineteenth century, Siberia had become definitively integrated into the Russian national imaginary.[39] The far east, however, did not automatically fall into this realm of instinctive belonging.

Amidst this haziness, the Russian border assumed a position of importance. While the land was Russian on one side, it was referred to as "alien and distant country" on the other – specifically, "off the coast of Chinese waters and among Chinese fields." While this appeal used the term "country," (*strana*) when referring to China, *rodina*, which translates to homeland or motherland, was used to describe the Russian polity. Although this is by no means unique to Russia, it is worth pointing out the strong linguistic associations between the homeland, soil, and

[38] Vostrogrov, *Pamiati russkikh voinov*, 4.
[39] This is reflected in the great migrations to Siberia that took place under Stolypin's premiership. Sunderland, "The 'Colonization Question,'" 213.

the body.[40] *Rodina* is the Russian for homeland or motherland and can either connote the land of one's birth (the nation), or the more specific location (e.g. a town or village). In the *Explanatory Dictionary of the Great Russian Language*, Vladimir Dal' explicates this entry by the proverb "and the bones of the homeland cry." The maxim accompanying "home soil" (*rodnaia zemlia*) is even more explicit: *s rodnoi zemli - umri, ne skhodi* (literally: "die on home soil but do not leave," which means more idiomatically, fight and die for your land before relinquishing it to the enemy).[41] Writing on the movement of bodies in a later period, anthropologist Katherine Verdery argues for a strength of the political nexus built around the triage of "kinship-soil-nationalism." As an example, she points to the fact that the Tomb of the Unknown Solider in Moscow from WWII was surrounded by six marble blocks containing earth "drenched with blood" from Russia's "hero cities."[42]

Despite the distance between the far east and European Russia, this earth had been defended with Russian blood – it was also the *rodina*. This presentation of the far east speaks to a distinctly mutable notion of Russian nationalism. While the majority of the literature on the topic concentrates on the western borderlands,[43] and to a lesser extent Siberia,[44] the land "beyond Siberia" offers a different formulation. This was a periphery rendered "more" Russian not as a

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[40] Christine Worobec's work with ethnographic sources has effectively demonstrated the importance of earth to late imperial Russian death culture. She cites one instance where an elderly man asked to be taken to the fields, so that he "could get down on his knees and bow to the ground in all four direction. With each genuflection he crossed himself and said, "Damp Mother Earth, forgive and accept me!" Christine D. Worobec, "Death Ritual among Russian and Ukrainian Peasants: Linkages Between the Living and the Dead," *Cultures in Flux*, eds. Stephen P. Frank and Mark D. Steinberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 11-33, 18.
[41] Vladimir Dal', *Tolkovyi slovar' zhivogo velokorusskogo iazyka,* 4 vols. (St. Petersburg-Moscow, 1903-9), 3; 1697 and 1; 1691.
[42] Katherine Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 106.
[43] Suny and Kivelson, *Russia's Empires*, 200; Theodore R. Weeks, *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia: Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier, 1863 – 1914* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996), 70-79.
[44] Mark Bassin, "Inventing Siberia: Visions of the Russian East in the Early Nineteenth Century," *American Historical Review* 96, no. 3 (June 1991): 763-94.

defensive gesture against threatening alternative formulations of nationalism, nor – as was the case with Siberia – a seemingly endless promise of sable wealth, but by sacrifice and the need to honor that sacrifice. And, if a key part of Russification was to spread Orthodoxy, the erection of graveyards, memorials, and chapels surely served as a means to do so.

At the same time, the desire to take care of the dead also stemmed from the gaze, real or imagined gaze, of the cohort of colonizing nations. A third element in the appeal spoke directly to ideas of hierarchy by calling attention to some of the "civilizing" assumptions that had underpinned Russia's imperial project in the first place. The is most readily evident in how the committee framed China. Not only was the country the reference point for far away and foreign, the text explicitly stated that "the bones of martyrs and passionate warrior" lay "forgotten" and "scattered over other people's fields, not arranged, not guarded." The implication, supported elsewhere, is that the Chinese had let the gravesites of Russian heroes fall into disrepair.[45] As described in the previous chapter, a notable distinction had been made in the press and elsewhere between the representation of the "official" Japanese enemy and the "unofficial" Chinese locals caught up in the fighting in Manchuria. Given that the war did not provide a single outright Russian victory, the racist repertoire of hierarchy was somewhat limited in terms of depicting the Japanese; no such restrictions applied to the Chinese. This appeal reflects the same ideas: on this foreign Manchurian land, there is no "eternal peace" to be found for the Russian heroes. It ends with a resounding rhetorical call to action: "Do we forget our defenders?"

These appeals were successful. Twice a month, the newspaper *Russkii invalid* printed a list of received donations, and in first month alone 85,000 rubles were raised.[46] Perhaps the best indicator of the public's enthusiastic response was a letter printed in *Novoe vremia* shaming an

[45] RGIA, f. 552, op. 1, d. 250, l. 16.
[46] RGIA, f. 552, op. 1, d. 271, l. 15.

infantry regiment for only donating 48 kopeks. "Maybe this is an accidental remnant from a donation sent earlier? God willing!"[47] In addition to humiliating the recalcitrant, *Novoe vremia* also published articles that passionately advanced the Committee's vision. On 17 March 1909, Alexander Stolypin, brother of the Prime Minister, argued that Golubev's mission out in the far east was an embodiment of the "new" Russia, one that positively melded its ideas of autocracy with the will of the people – as reflected in the establishment of the new Duma. Stolypin made it abundantly clear that this was a new era of charitable collecting; one where "every kopek would reach its destination," any excess money would be returned to donors, and no specialists would be hired to organize extravagant events like performances, balls, concerts or shows. "If the reformed system is approved and legitimized by the proclamations of solemn manifestos," Stolypin argued, "then its penetration into the everyday life of the people and public morals is determined precisely by such events as indicated above [the formation of the committee]. They are a necessary consequence of the natural connection of the new with the old." This combination was the "correct formula," one that ensured there would be "no mistake," because here it was the "people themselves" that would "perpetuate the eternal memory of their dead sons."[48] In this vision of reformed Russia, the people had a new agency.

As such, there was an element of autocratic performance in bringing about the formation of the Committee and sanctioning its mission. As much as considerations of blood, soil, and sacrifice played a role in the reburials and repatriations, these strands all coalesced around a projection of power. As Richard Wortman has compellingly argued, after the 1905 revolution Nicholas II did not simply roll over and accept that his autocratic days were over. Instead, he worked hard to cultivate the idea that Russia was most truly embodied in the relationship

[47] RGIA, f. 552, op. 1, d. 271, l. 16.
[48] RGIA, f. 552, op. 1, d. 271, l. 2.

between tsar and people as a way to bypass the newly formed elected Duma. At the Poltava anniversary celebrations in 1909, he omitted all references to the Duma or the government, dwelling instead on the "close bond of the entire population of Our native land with their Sovereign."[49] With the Princess Olga at the head of the Committee, Alexander Stolypin's words about a "new" Russia, one where the emphasis fell more on the "people themselves" and less on frivolous balls and shows, were not so much a negation of autocratic power as they were a reflection of this new vision. Wortman's presentation of the late tsarist era as flexible and reactive has influenced a new wave of scholarship on the monarchy, one that holds up how the tsarist family courted mass media and other facets of modernity to mold and adapt their image.[50] Although he emphasizes defeat in the war more so than the broader backdrop of revolution, Aaron Cohen also presents the post-1905 Russo-Japanese War memorials as evidence of the state's "innovation." The physical structures of memory projected the idea that "the Tsar and the people were one." Military humiliation had rendered the traditional statues of gallant leaders on proud horses untenable, and thus the "ordinary martyr" offered the only way forward for "a patriotic education of the masses."[51] I argue that these interpretations, largely contained within the spheres of representation, the media, and art, were moments of performance that were backed up by substance to varying degrees. While some of the bodies received special treatment, there were occasions – specifically in Korea - where these embracive gestures did translate over to a concern for *all* the dead out in the far east.

Around the same time the donation drive was being established, two men from the Committee set out to the far east to inspect the graves, bless the sites, oversee some stop-gap

[49] Wortman, *Scenarios of Power,* 378.
[50] For example, Alison Rowley, *Open Letters: Russian Popular Culture and the Picture Postcard, 1880 – 1922* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).
[51] Cohen, "Monuments," 398.

measures, and to compile a report on the work that lay ahead. Heading the expedition was Lev Golubev, a nobleman from Nizhny Novgorod who had worked for the Red Cross during the war, and aiding him was Colonel Leonid Bolkhovitinov, another nobleman who had worked in the office of the quartermaster general during the war. Their report was presented to the committee in December 1909 and soon thereafter made available to the public.[52] Rather than delving into the paradoxes surrounding Russianness and distance, this booklet focused on the gritty details of the gravesites. The report reads as a travelogue through the old battle sites, focusing on the material signifiers – or lack thereof – of a well-ordered Russian graveyard. They noted whether or not there were fences, how many crosses remained over graves, and what sort of sentries (if any) were in place. Though there were odd exceptions and the Japanese memorials were praised for their beauty, Golubev and Bolkhovitinov's was not a rousing tale of honorable success, but one of dire need. At many sites only temporary structures had been erected and five years later, the limitations of such stop-gap measures were showing. Like the call for donations, the Chinese population was singled out as a cause of this destruction. With a dismissive sleight of hand, Golubev noted that crosses had been plundered for firewood on their watch, and worse: "of course, the Chinese part of the cemetery has been turned into a ploughed field."

The last of the committee's central overtures was a collaboration with a publishing initiative. In 1910, A. E. Riabchenko, a publisher with a right-wing reputation had reached out to the committee.[53] He was looking, with the sponsorship of Nicholas II's youngest brother, the Grand Duke Mikhail Alexandrovich, to print a book entitled *Rossiia* that would contain brief descriptions of all the provinces and regions in the empire. Riabchenko argued that the memorial

[52] Golubev and Bolkovitinov, *Doklad.*
[53] RGIA, f. 552, op. 1, d. 242, l. 58; Joan Neueberger, *Hooliganism: Crime, Culture and Power in St. Petersburg, 1900-1914* (Berkeley: University of California, 1993), 252.

efforts of the committee reflected the critical need to make the far east feel more Russian, and offered 20-30 per cent of the profits from the book sales to their coffers.[54] *Rossiia* was eventually published in 1913. The editors hoped that the book would not only be compulsory for all educational, government, public, and military institutions but, ideally, it would be present on the "desktop of every Russian citizen." In his opening notes, Riabchenko was explicit that these maps were intended to be a panacea for the geographical ignorance that plagued the Russian population, a problem that, once addressed, would foster attachment to the fatherland. Through the efforts of the contributors, these maps would "help to educate the people in the rise of the national spirit, high patriotism, selfless love of the Motherland, and faith in its power and strength."

Taken together, the materials that document the prelude to the repatriations demonstrate how designating the far east as "home soil" was neither straightforward nor self-evident. There was clearly an anxiety that the far east had not been made "Russian" enough, as reflected in the metropoles via the publication of *Rossia,* and the protestations from the Zaamur border guards at the periphery. To make good this gap, the committee's call for donations had to perform some quite spectacular narrative manoeuvres, whereby the *raison d'être* for the war was transformed from an aggressive push for the ice-free harbour of Port Arthur to the defence of the Russian border. Critically, this spatial shift was taking place against a political backdrop that had been violently disrupted, thus bringing into question what sort of institutional entity would be caring for the bodies. While it was the Revolution of 1905-7 that prevented the bodies being properly cared for in the first place, Stolypin's speech indicates that the formation of the committee inaugurated a new idea of Russia, one that was considerably more open to "the people

[54] *Rossiia, Geograficheskoe opisanie Rossiiskoe Imperii po guberniiam i oblastiam s geografichsekimi kartami* (St. Petersburg, 1913).

themselves." Turning attention to the material remains, we see how this new ideal of Russia translated over into meaningful actions in the far east.

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Alongside the many large graveyards in Manchuria near the sites of the war's bigger battles were also thousands of smaller plots. Upon the advice of Golubev and Bolkhovitinov, the committee decided the best course of action was to consolidate and expand the larger graveyards, and then take measures for their provision. As it stood in 1909, some smaller graveyards contained hundreds of bodies, others a mere handful; many were "completely forgotten" and could only be located with the help of local Chinese residents. The crosses that marked the graves had often been plundered for firewood – a cemetery near Shahe had eighteen tombstones, but only one surviving cross over that of Private Apollon Mogilnikov, of Yenisech province.[55] Sometimes trenches that had been dug for mass graves were not deep enough, and bones and clothing lay above the land. This major task kept the committee occupied until 1914, when a new war boasting unprecedented levels of destruction stole their attention away.

In all three of the famous moments described in the introduction – the repatriation of Vasilii Riabov, the retrieval of the Petropavlovsk corpses, the exodus of bodies out of Korea – the committee played a pivotal role, providing advice, assistance, and, most critically, funds. There were, however, some important distinctions between these moments. For starters, whereas the annexation of Korea and the discovery of the Petropavlovsk were (to varying degrees) surprises that forced Russia's hand, Riabov's repatriation was deliberate: Golubev went east in

[55] RGIA, f. 552, op. 1, d. 247, l. 79.

1909 with explicit orders to locate his body and send him home. Despite these differences, all of these instances reveal how the far east was presented as a space where narratives of empire and nation combined and jostled together.

Riabov's fame was an individual and personal fame, unlike those who died at Chemulpo, it he significantly eclipsed that of the other man who was sent all the way back to a European Russian "home." Vice-Admiral Molas, one of the six men found on the *Petropavlovsk*, had not been a notable figure during the war. His exploits and death had paled in comparison to his commander, Vice-Admiral Makarov, who was a media darling. Riabov's story, on the other hand, had been everywhere. He had captured the imagination of the Russian public back in 1904 when, donning a fake hair braid and a change of clothes, he attempted to pass for a Chinese peasant in order to secure some critical intelligence. While he was thwarted before any success could come of his mission – he was apprehended almost immediately – his resolute bravery in the face of execution was such that the Japanese left the Russians a note informing them how impressed they were by his comportment. (His last words were reputedly: "I am ready to die for Tsar, Fatherland and faith.") This note flew about the Russian press, making Riabov an overnight celebrity. This was no flash-in-the-pan either. A diary penned by a ship's doctor speaks of the captain invoking Riabov's name on the eve of the battle of Tsushima to stoke the patriotic fires in the bellies of his crew.[56] Memorial posters were made of his adventures, and within a month of his death the decision was taken in his home village of Lebedev to rebuild the local school in his name.[57] According to the popular stories written in the wake of his death, the Tsar personally

[56] V. Kravchenko, *Cherez tri okeana: Vosponinaniia vracha o morskom pokhode v russko-iaponskuyo voinu 1904-5 gg.* (Petersburg, 1910), 117.
[57] "S Lebedevka," *Russkii invalid,* no. 226 (16 October 1904): 2.

committed 1000 rubles to Riabov's family and a further 1000 to the school.[58] To a significant degree, the press attention the committee received in 1909 hinged around this mission.

Riabov's body was located without too much trouble, because his grave was known to the Chinese villagers, and some of the distinctive clothes he had been buried in were preserved on his body.[59] In addition to funds allocated to the search, an extra 150 rubles was spent on a coffin and another 750 rubles for the transport back to Russia.[60] (In comparison, 700 rubles were spent in total repatriating the thirty-three Chemulpo dead to Vladivostok.[61]) In a blend of old and new, a priest and a photographer accompanied Golubev to Riabov's gravesite.[62] Perhaps the imperial investment in the school was the reason the body was sent to Lebedev, rather than to somewhere more "visible," like Moscow or St. Petersburg. But it seems more likely that his return to his home village, back to his native earth, was also seen as a mobilizational and educational opportunity for the common soldier. A book about Riabov published in 1916 implored all Russian rank-and-file to follow his example.[63] The lesson was simple: despite it seeming likely that no-one would ever know his fate, and with no chance of surviving, Riabov had remained a loyal devotee until his last breath. He had died so well, that to be buried alongside his family was his just deserve. Despite the efforts made to make the far east "Russian" in the appeal for money, this land was not sufficient to celebrate the iteration of Russia that Riabov had uttered on his dying lips: "Tsar, Fatherland and faith." Here, an image of Russia swims up into view that, while strongly evocative of the autocratic past, is also melded together

[58] A. N. Shakhobskoi, *Chto nuzhno znat kazhdomu v Rossii* (St. Petersburg, 1912), 102.
[59] Golubev and Bolkovitinov, *Doklad.*
[60] RGIA, f. 552, op. 1, d. 247, l. 38.
[61] RGIA, f. 552, op. 1, d. 251, l. 28.
[62] Golubev and Bolkovitinov, *Doklad,* 37.
[63] V. M. Vatel, *Riadovoi Vasilii Riabov* (Moscow, 1916), 32.

with popular media celebrity and even an implicitly inclusive idea of racial identity: while Riabov failed at his job, his fame hinged on his capacity to pass as a Chinese local**.**

Unlike Riabov's repatriation, the annexation of the Korean peninsula and the recovery of the *Petropavlovsk* corpses were not pre-empted. But despite the lack of forward planning, both of these latter scenarios indicate that the committee had a blank cheque at their disposal, and a full repatriation back to European Russia was likewise considered the most desirable outcome. A key reason here was that, in a very material capacity, military remains reflected and embodied the potential to conflate the space between the place where an event (such as a battle) occurred, and places (such as the capitals) where the imperative to remember that event and constitute it as part of a binding narrative were strong. The battle of Chemuplo in Korea fell squarely within the "brave sacrifice" narrative repertoire of war. One of the very first sea battles of the war, at Chemulpo the Japanese had inflicted such damage on the two Russian ships guarding the harbor, the *Variag* and the *Koreetz*, that the crews made the decision to scuttle them after they limped back to shore. While the engagement had objectively been humiliating, the crews were subsequently accorded hero status on account of their refusal to surrender to the enemy. They were feted in the streets of St. Petersburg, as newspapers described their feats with grandiose epithets, poems were penned, medals distributed,[64] and books were published lauding their feats.[65] Thirty-three men died during this engagement, of which one was an officer. Six years after the battle, the head of the Spiritual Mission in Korea, Archimandrite Pavel, referred to the "glorious exploit of the heroes of January 27, 1904" as "undoubtedly one of the brightest pages of Russian military history," one that would "forever glorify the flag of St. Andrew."[66]

[64] RGAVMF, f. 417, op. 5, d. 2886, l. 18.
[65] A. Samarskii, *Voina s iaponiei: geroi-moriaki s "Variaga" i "Koreitsa,"* (Orenburg, 1904).
[66] RGIA, f. 552, op. 1, d. 251, l. 1.

A. S. Somov at the Seoul consulate was charged with doing something about these heroes when the Chemulpo soil turned from neutral to enemy. Like his counterpart who dealt with the *Petropavlovsk*, one of his most powerful arguments had to do with visibility. Somov railed at the idea that if they stayed in Korea, their graves would only be visited by two or three tourists a year. This would be an utter waste, for "the *Variag*'s battle is a page of our glorious history, the monument in its honor has a huge educational value and should not be buried in the wilderness abroad; its place is in Russia."[67] By Russia, Somov pointed explicitly to the capitals. In the end, the Chemuplo heroes ended up being sent to Vladivostok – still Russia, but clearly a step down from the "home soil" Somov had coveted.

The *Petropavlovsk* was a somewhat different story, built around the narrative bones of a freak that stole away a maverick commander in Vice-Admiral Makarov. The flagship of the Pacific Fleet had hit a mine on 31 March 1904 and sunk within a matter of minutes, committing 600 souls to the deep. In October 1911, the wreck was discovered by a Japanese entrepreneur. Rumors spread that the body of Vice-Admiral Marakov had been found, but it was only in the summer of 1913 that more reliable information arrived: six bodies had been recovered from a hole that Japanese divers had blown in the side of the ship.[68] General Dobronravov was the commander of Vladivostok port, and in charge of organizing the funeral of the *Petropavlovsk* remains. Initially, he had ordered six wooden coffins for six sets of skeletal remains, not foreseeing Admiral Molas' total repatriation back to Petersburg. The instructions to send Molas home arrived on June 18, only six days before the funeral took place.[69] Despite the fact that he had no doubt put tremendous effort into organizing a pompous array of funeral ceremonies at

[67] RGAVMF, f. 417, op. 2, d. 1314, l. 2.
[68] RGVAMF f. 417, op. 2, d. 1804, l. 76.
[69] It was decided that the burial of the Petropavlovsk officers would take place on June 24, the anniversary of the battle of Cheskemsky (and a Russian victory in the Russo-Turkish war).

such short notice, he took the news surprisingly chipper: "I suppose this coffin can be used to bury the remains of another officer from the *Petropavlovsk*, if one is subsequently found."[70] In his official report of the funeral, Dobrenavov felt compelled to argue that Molas' journey back to St. Petersburg was not an act designed to emphasize his superiority in rank and station that set him apart from the rest of his crew, but rather a transfigurative gesture that would foster a collective remembrance of the *Petropavlovsk en masse*. He claimed that right from the beginning, he had personally believed it would be possible to send Molas back to "Russia." For Dobrenavov, Admiral Molas represented *all* the sailors – Admirals, officers and lower ranks alike – who had perished aboard the *Petropavlovsk*. For nine years, these men had shared a common "battleship-grave," which had negated the difference between the ranks. As such, he argued that it was not simply Molas who was returning to Russia, but also "some part of the unforgettable common grave of the glorious defenders of Port Arthur." The sacrifice of all the sailors would thus be rendered dearer, for embodied in Molas' coffin, the brave tragedy of the *Petropavlovsk* would now lie "closer to the Russian heart."[71]

These two instances bring to light the relative weighting of fame and rank regarding repatriations, and the corresponding ability to transfer the importance of the events of the far east over to St. Petersburg or Moscow. While the feat of the *Variag* had received a lot of attention, only a couple of low-ranking officers numbered among the dead. And for all Dobrenavov's protestations that Molas' repatriation was an inclusive and rank-negating act, Molas journeyed back to St. Petersburg in a metal coffin that was considerably more expensive than the wooden ones that housed his fellow *Petropavlovsk* men – and paid for privately.[72] Both these ideas and

[70] RGVAMF, f. 417, op. 2, d. 1804, l. 88.
[71] RGVAMF, f. 417, op. 2, d. 1804, l. 88.
[72] RGVAMF, f. 417, op. 2, d. 1804, l. 76.

actions do demonstrate a clear hierarchy that put the metropole over the peripheries, the elites over the ordinary man. The cases of the *Petropavlovsk* and Riabov test the idea that the Committee tried so hard to sell: the far east was properly Russian.

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The repatriations of bodies out of Korea, on the other hand, was an episode defined by the strong push factor of "enemy soil" and a heightened sense that the Japanese were watching and judging. It is in this instance that the imperial nature of the far east periphery was written over with narratives that were far more national in flavor and tone. In this instance, the ultimate imperative was that all the bodies on the peninsula should be removed, a process that reified the Russian border. In this instance, the land just on the other side of the border was presented very much as "Russia proper."

The Korean peninsula – and specifically Port Arthur – had been geographically pivotal to the Russo-Japanese War. One of Russia's most pressing reasons for seeking to expand their territory to encompass Port Arthur's harbor was the problem posed by Vladivostok icing over during the winter months. Japan had parallel designs over Korea, and thus the two sides came to blows. In addition to the naval battles at Chemulpo, there were a number of land battles. Come the end of the war, the graves of Russian soldiers were scattered around the river Yalu and along the northeastern coast of Korea.[73] While the formal annexation of Korea did not come out of the blue – at the end of the war, Japan was awarded the peninsula as a protectorate – it was at this

[73] RGIA, f. 552, op. 1, d. 251, l. 6.

point that various conversations and maneuverings came to a head regarding the dead Russians buried in Korean soil. While those pushing for greater efforts to remember the Chemulpo dead had managed get their cases onto the desk of the Tsar by 1908, it was not until 1910 that the issue of all the dead came to the attention of the Committee or the Winter Palace.[74] Yet even then, the remains in Korea were split in two. For example, a letter weighing up various repatriation options spoke of "the remains of the sailors from Chemulpo and the remains of warriors from all of Korea."[75] While the relatively feted group of Chemulpo dead were moved to Vladivostok, those who did not die in a blaze of heroic glory were moved to the far smaller city of Novokievsk in 1913, just the other side of the Korean border.

Before the annexation of the Korean peninsula in 1910, the question of soil had been altogether absent. Up to that point, the plan that the consuls and diplomats most favored was to drastically renovate the Orthodox Church in Seoul. This new church was to have a specific temple-memorial to the heroes of Chemulpo. Under this schema, the sailors' bodies would have been moved from the "foreign" cemetery in Chemulpo to consecrated soil in Seoul.[76] After the annexation, even soil that would have been blessed by an Orthodox priest would not suffice. In a letter to the Commander of Vladivostok, one Consul wrote that it was "imperative" that the Chemulpo heroes be transferred from a "foreign country" to their "native land," for which they had "laid down their lives on the battlefield."[77]

The same 1910 annexation impetus also put pressure on Russia to do something about the other men buried in Korea. A 1909 iteration of the Seoul temple proposal suggested that all the bodies (previous conversations had exclusively concerned the Chemulpo heroes) scattered across

[74] RGAVMF, f. 417, op. 2, d. 13, 1. 4.
[75] RGAVMF, f. 417, op. 2 d. 1314, l. 4.
[76] RGAVMF, f. 417, op. 2, d. 1314, l. 4.
[77] RGAVMF, f. 417, op. 2, d. 1314, l. 4.

the country should be moved to the graveyard. In describing the problem to the committee, Somov put forward two reasons at this point. The first had to do with money: “in view of the remoteness of their location, constant supervision is not possible, because the frequent sending of officials for inspection and their maintenance is associated with large expenses.” The second was reputation: moving the bodies “will also get rid of undeserved and offensive reproaches in the careless maintenance of the graves of Russian soldiers.”[78] In early 1910, an agent named Biriukov was sent out to inspect the graves in North-eastern Korea, and – notably – to oversee the serving of requiems over the graves in front of his Japanese escorts. His report detailed a total of 26 grave sites in Korea, containing 76 sets of remains. Over these sites, the Japanese had paid for inscriptions in Korean that read “"Brave warriors who defended the honor of their homeland, peace be upon you."[79] Biriukov then went to north-western Korea, where he found an additional 21 sets of remains. These were in a decidedly worse condition, with no inscriptions over the graves.[80]

The plan to move these soldiers to Novokievsk was put forward right after the annexation. This, Somov argued, was the desire of “the Russian heart.” This proposal quickly received the backing of Nicholas II. Novokievsk was perhaps an unlikely destination, but it made sense because Somov had already looked into transferring a certain set of remains – that of the 7th East Siberian Rifle Regiment. This frontier military unit asked for their fallen soldiers so that they could erect a monument over it, pointing out that their town was far closer than Seoul.[81] Throughout 1910, the question at hand was whether all the bodies should be transferred to Novokievsk, or just those buried in the northeast. At this point, a slightly different motive came

[78] RGIA, f. 552, op. 1, d.251, l. 6.
[79] RGIA, f. 552, op. 1, d. 251, l. 15.
[80] RGAVMF, f. 417, op. 2, d. 1314, l. 4.
[81] RGAVMF, f. 417, op. 2, d. 1314, l. 4.

into play. When Biriukov had made his tour, he had warned that the poor conditions of the Russian graves could be leveraged against Russia's reputation in the region:

> It would be desirable to pay attention to these graves, inspect them, put them in proper order and take them into our care. The complete apathy and indifference from our side to the memory of the fallen soldiers greatly diminishes Russia's prestige in the eyes of the Japanese and Koreans, among whom respect for the memory of the deceased is very well developed, especially for the memory of the soldiers who died in battle. Undoubtedly, the Japanese use this circumstance to drop our name in the eyes of the Koreans...[82]

This transpired to be a rather accurate prediction. In October 1911 the Seoul Press – a mouthpiece of the Japanese government – ran an English-language article soliciting donations from the Japanese military for the upkeep of some Russian gravesites.

> The remains of Russian soldiers who were killed or died of disease in Chosen during the late war were interred in graveyards at Wiju, Yougampo, and Chonju […] they have gone to ruin. Some days ago officers and men of the Second Division and ex-soldiers living in Wiju decided to repair the graves and opened a subscription among themselves for that purpose and the work has recently been commenced. The graves will hereafter be taken care of by the Japanese military.

[82] RGIA, f. 552, op. 1, d. 251, l. 15.

This garnered quite the reaction. Ia. Liotsh, who worked at the Seoul consulate, described the reasons for action to the commander of Vladivostok's port. Writing at the end of 1911, he described how "the slowdown in perpetuating memory on the battlefield produced an unfavorable impression in the local society." More specifically, "the graves of the fallen, scattered in various remote corners of Korea, came to a certain decline and there was reason to fear that in places the Japanese authorities, close to the above-mentioned graves, could take uninvited participation in the protection of them."[83] In a secret telegram, another agent advised that "it would seem desirable to immediately display our activity by sending to the burial ground a person who could appropriate the necessary funds for the preliminary costs of putting graves in order."[84] By September 1912 the decision was finally made to transport all of the dead to Novokievsk, and the Committee to Perpetuate the Memory provided six thousand rubles for the cause. The following June, the repatriations were completed.

This Korean scenario had the effect of glorifying the soil of Russia and thus reifying that border through the processes of repatriation. Whereas the Riabov and the Molas repatriations left the distinct impression that a clear hierarchy existed between one's "real" home or the metropole more broadly and the far east peripheries, the events and ceremonies that accompanied the reburials in Vladivostok and Novokievsk work to deny, or at least suspend, this hierarchy and to emphasize the "Russianness" of the soil. On December 18, 1911 the regional newspaper *Dalnii vostok* printed the speech made by A. Bogoslavskii, archpriest of the Siberian Navy, as the heroes of Chemuplo were being recommitted to the earth in Vladivostok. With his words, which were spoken, printed, and disseminated, Bogoslavskii explained the meanings of this repatriation. His opening sentences were salutations to the Russian soil on which he and his

[83] RGAVMF, f .417, op. 2, d. 1314, l. 5-6.
[84] RGAVMF, f. 417, op. 2, d. 1314, l. 21.

present company stood: “We welcome your return to your native land (*rodnuiu zemliu*), the great dead! As comrade sailors-in-arms, the motherland (*rodina mat'*) herself now meets you, her dear sons, the lost heroes of the *Varyag* and the *Koreets*.”[85] Here, on this Russian soil, was a family reunification long overdue, that of the motherland with her sons, buried as brothers in arms. The priest referred to the dead as “comrades who came here to the edge of the Russian state from their native corners of the vast fatherland.” Throughout his speech, the subtle distinctions that Bogoslavskii drew between Russian soils paled in comparison to those he made between the relative power of the motherland vis-à-vis Korean soil. He described the heroes’ sojourn in Korean soil as “your bones found temporary peace in a foreign land,” establishing an innocuous discursive trilogy - “bones,” “temporary,” “foreign” – where the remains were reduced to their most basic materiality. It is noteworthy that this was the only part of his speech where he refers to the remains as bones, *kosti*. Now on Russian soil, they are “already resting peaceable and serenely” even before they have been lowered into the earth. Moreover, they are no longer mere *kosti*, but are “the remains of heroes” (*ostanki geroev*) or the great dead (*velikii mertvets*), and this process involves the new addition of residual, ethereal powers. Bogoslavskii proclaims that these heroes have the capacity to console the motherland after defeat and to provide it with a meaningful existence moving forward: “invisibly soaring above the coffins, there is a living invincible spirit bequeathed to you… to restore the power of the fleet, heal its wounds, and the ancient flag of St. Andrew will rise above its former, never to be taken or borne by others.” On the right side of the border, the military dead, reunited in their proper soil, offered hope and a vision for the future.

[85] “Rech’ pri vstreche i pogrebenii ostankov geroev “Variag” i “Koreetsa,” skazannaia Protoiereem Siborskogo flotskogo ekipazha,” *Dalnii Vostok*, 18 December 1911.

Unlike Chemulpo, where the set of 33 remains had been clearly defined, the removal of the rest of the corpses from Korea eighteen months later involved far more intensive searching. Reporting back to the Committee about the repatriation, the agent went to lengths to assuage them that *all* the bodies had been removed.[86] Biriukov's report had listed 97 remains in total in Korean soil, and these were duly checked off: the remains of 90 had been found. One of the initial 97 had been a Korean, another had been a civilian sailor. As for the remaining five, "the ashes of one were transferred to Russia earlier, the grave of another was washed away during the flood, and the remains of a third, according to the locals, were obliterated by wild animals." This left two outstanding, which the agent chalked up to "some inaccuracies in the initial assumptions." As he was adamant that "it can be assumed the all the remaining remains of warriors buried in Korea have been found," it was clearly very important that no-one was left behind. But this having been achieved, the ceremonial processions that brought the remains from Chemulpo to Vladivostok, and north Korea to Novokievsk were characterized by a relatively stress-less goodwill. In both cases, the Japanese helped to send off the remains with "magnificent solemnity."[87] The transport hubs, both rail and port, were all decked out in flags and finery, and the locals came to pay their respects.

These ceremonies differed in some meaningful respects to the reburial of the *Petropavlovsk* dead in Port Arthur. These concerns all had to do with context, one of which was that the skeletons had not so much been "found" as rather "disturbed" from their resting place. The actions of the Japanese diver were condemned as an action of money-grabbing piracy that utterly disrespected the conventions of navies generally and Russian death culture specifically. The news had not been received back in St. Petersburg well. For example, a *Novoe vremia* piece

[86] RGIA, f. 552, op. 1, d. 251, l. 110.
[87] RGVAMF, f. 417, op. 2, d. 1484, l. 4.

smarted that "Hundreds of Russian officers and men are with the *Petropavlovsk,* in their eternal sleep in the bottom of the Port Arthur Harbor. The *Petropavlovsk* is the sacred grave of the brave Russians. But the Japanese, the enemy of the day, have gone about desecrating the grave, disturbing the gallant sons of Russia in their eternal rest."[88] Russian officials out in the far east were split over the extent to which the Japanese Naval Ministry should be held accountable for the actions of the diver. Here the etiquette of war clashed against its laws: custom suggested that ships on the ocean floor should be left as graves intact; the laws gave the victor rights of usage. One Russian agent initially pushed for a burial as low-key as possible. This did not have much to do with the issue of home soil, but rather a suspicion that that Japanese efforts to contribute to a grand event would merely furnish them with "one more time to be proud of their victories."[89]

Eventually, the Japanese were allowed to help, and their efforts were applauded and considered sincere. This factor notwithstanding, though, there were some notable differences between the outright celebrations of the reinternment of the Korean dead and the more tempered accounts describing the reburial of the *Petropavlovsk* remains in Port Arthur. Of central significance was home soil. Three men who had been critical of the day's proceedings – Consular Trautshol'd from the Dalnii embassy, Vice-Admiral Iakolev, who had survived on the *Petropavlovsk,* and General Dobronravov – all submitted reports back to the naval ministry. All three reflect various tensions between the presence of their Japanese hosts and a desire to furnish the proceedings in as Russian a fashion as possible, a tension fundamentally underscored by the demands of putting on a ceremonial show at the site of the war's most notorious defeat.

[88] RGVAMF, f. 418, op. 1, d. 4519, l. 9.
[89] RGVAMF, f. 418, op. 1, d. 4519, l. 8.

The date of the funeral had been consciously set for June 24, the anniversary of the battle of Chesma - a Russian victory from the Russo-Turkish War.[90] Not only did this work to Russianize the event, but it also made it part of the larger performance of late imperial tsarism. The remains had been put in coffins at Dalnii, a town just to the east of Port Arthur, so the ceremony involved the transfer between the two. Iakolev made much of the fact that a church choir and two priests from Harbin had been sent to Dalnii, because this meant that the initial ceremonies "were performed in a setting that suited them."[91] He also heaped plaudits on Dobronravov and his co-workers, who had organized the entire affair and worked tirelessly to "provide the smallest details" that helped create a sense of "a familiar setting for these Russians' funeral in a foreign country."[92] But this space was distinctly foreign, full of signs of Japanese power and occupation. The hotels the Russian delegation stayed in had Japanese names, and representatives of the Buddhist clergy came to pay their respects, as did Japanese nurses from the Red Cross.[93] No salute took place at the cemetery as was the Russian custom, because Japan was undergoing a period of national mourning where "music and salutes were cancelled."[94] As such, this meant that the successes of the day and the objectively beautiful nature of the ceremonies were tinged with both regret and a sense of lingering entitlement. Dobronravov thought that the Russian colony that lived in the region had been "touched by the extraordinary grandeur and magnificence of spiritual triumph," but tempered this praise by noting that it was the only occasion of "such splendor" since the "transition of Manchuria to the enemy."[95] While the burial might have been deemed a triumph, the bar for celebrating Russia on the peninsula had been

[90] RGVAMF, f. 417, op. 2, d. 1804, l. 17.
[91] RGVAMF, f. 417, op. 2, d. 1804, l. 76.
[92] RGVAMF, f. 417, op. 2, d. 1804, l. 52.
[93] RGVAMF, f. 417, op. 2, d. 1804, l. 52.
[94] RGVAMF, f. 417, op. 2, d. 1804, l. 52.
[95] RGVAMF, f. 417, op. 2, d. 1804, l. 91.

brought very low, and he couldn't help but mention that the day reminded some of a deep-set belief: if Petropavlovsk had not perished, Port Arthur would not have surrendered to the enemy.[96]

Efforts to push back against this view were also visible. Trautshol'd's report made a subtle case that Russian blood rendered any soil, if not actually Russian, hallowed. He argued that the funeral had "left a strong, indelible impression on the hearts of all of us Russians who were present," for they left the cemetery with a "feeling of deep satisfaction" that some of "those brave Russian knights… the pride of the unforgettable Makarov" had been not just laid to rest – but added – to "sacred soil, profusely stained with the blood of Russian warriors."[97] Although blood stains might have conferred partial ownership, this was clearly a relatively poor substitute for Russian soil, even Russian soil that lay at the edge of the empire. As such, the full symbolic power of the border transfer and the subsequent reburial was conspicuously absent. This was a family reunion between brothers but missing the motherland, and few hopes or dreams could be stacked up on top of these set of dead. These bodies, like the ones in Korea after the annexation, were uncomfortable.

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Writing on the subject a decade ago, Ann Stoler advised that "we might turn our attention away from empires as geopolitical entities and focus more on a range of the forms they take, take

[96] RGVAMF, f. 417, op. 2, d. 1804, l .91.
[97] RGVAMF, f. 417, op. 2, d. 1804, l. 52.

on and dissolve into."[98] Military death offers insights, not neat conclusions, into these sweeping debates and conversation. These corpses act like old carousel photograph projectors – they send different aspects of nation and empire flashing before the eyes in an array of combinations; "forms," as Stoler would have it. At certain moments, an image of an indifferent and distracted metropole and an indignant and ignored periphery is illuminated. At others, the Russian border dominates the horizon. The list flickers through the importance of "home" soil; the "barbaric" nature of Asiatic others; fears about how Russia was perceived abroad. But above all, the remains of the soldiers and sailors who died in the far east during the Russo-Japanese war speak to the tensions inherent in the efforts to make that part of the world "Russia," and the stuttering processes by which colonial peripheries are transformed into something that resembles native land.

By focusing on how the autocracy of Nicholas II backed up its performative aspects with tangible effects, we see how this "reformed" Russia was torn between the enduring traction of imperial ideas rooted in notions of difference and hierarchy, and a more inclusive concept of whose bodies deserved attention. On the one hand, there are the European repatriations of specific individuals (Riabov and Molas), and the special treatment given to "heroic" sets of remains (the Chemulpo dead). These scenarios are mirrored at earlier moments in the fundraising process, where the narrative that Moscow and Petersburg had "forgotten" the corpses out in the far east was used to garner both sympathy and rubles. On the other hand, other moments saw such hierarchies quashed, and a Russia where all soil was home soil, with a border vital to its constitution swimming clearly into view. But these moments of isolation are relatively fleeting;

[98] Ann Laura Stoler, "Considerations of Imperial Comparisons," *Empire Speaks Out: Languages of Rationalization and Self-Description in the Russian Empire* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 33-58, 40.

on the whole, the dynamics reflect a far more complicated melding of the two ideals, a scenario of overlaps and tensions where the far east was simultaneously far away, “beyond Siberia,” and also Russian.

## CHAPTER FOUR

## "CROSSES MADE FROM PROPELLERS": AVIATORS, DEATH, AND TRANSNATIONAL IDENTITIES

The new military art of flying exerted a strong pull over the headlines in Russia's *fin de siècle* in no small part because of the mortal dangers involved. In February 1911, *Voennyi mir' (Military World)* printed an image entitled "A Map of Aviator's Graves" [Figure 14]. In this illustration, death waits in the heavens for a ghostly airplane. Below lies a map of Europe and America, marked out with locations where pilots had died. This picture was accompanied by an article that listed off a barrage of worrying statistics. One person had died in 1904, four in 1909, and 33 in 1910. Drawing this trend forward into the present year, the author predicted that "on average, one out of every ten aviators will die a tragic death."[1] A few months later, in June 1911,


*Figure 15: "A map of aviator's graves,"* Voennyi mir', *no. 2 (February 1911), 96.*

[1] "Karta mogil aviatorov," *Voennyi mir',* no. 2 (Feb 1911), 96.

one of Russia's most popular illustrated journals, *Iskry*, ran a cover that also addressed the dangers of flying. This image was entitled "In the Battle with the Elements" and captioned "The Constant Passenger" [Figure 15]. Here, an anonymous pilot focuses on the job at hand, intent on ignoring death clinging to his back. These two journals courted vastly different audiences: *Voennyi mir'* was a short-lived military publication that ran between 1907-1915, while *Iskry* was the illustrated weekly published by the liberal mouthpiece *Russkoe slovo.* And yet, both journals published these provocative images of humans breaching the heavens, failing, and daring to trespass into the domain of God and death.

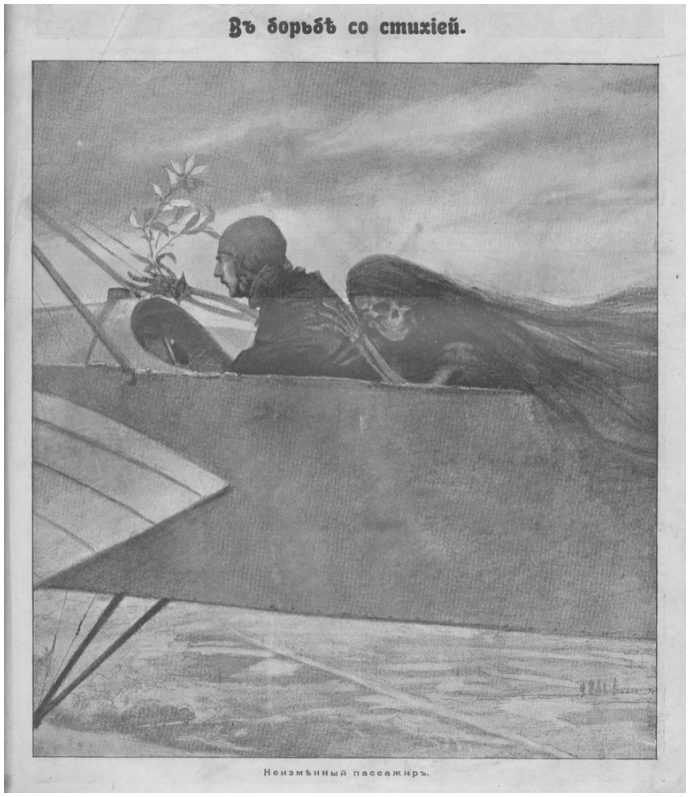


*Figure 16: "In battle with the elements,"* Iskry*, no. 24 (19 June 1911), 1.*

The most prolific flying aces of WWI – the Red Baron, Eddie Rickenbacker, Billy Bishop, Georges Guynemer – enjoy a fame that even to this day eclipses the war's most decorated generals. Without a notable representative in this elite club, and additionally hampered

by the pervasive side-lining of the eastern front in WWI literature, the scholarship on Russia's military aviation has lagged in comparison to its western counterparts.[2] Those who have taken on the subject, however, make pains to point out that Russia's air force – at least in terms of number of planes – was second only to that of France on the eve of the First World War. Yet despite the lack of internationally renowned flying aces, Russia's aviation heroes were treated in death like celebrities in the years preceding 1914. Lev Matsievich was the first of Russia's military pilots to die, and his funeral procession in the autumn of 1910 saw so many thousands of people take to Nevskii Prospekt that the thoroughfare was blocked entirely, and even an airship joined the procession.[3] Something similar happened six months later when Bronislav Matyevich-Matseevich (these men who shared the same tragic fate had their names confused more than once) died after he lost control of his plane and it hit a brick wall. On each occasion, both specialist journals and general-interest publications aimed at a mass audience devoted numerous pages to exulting these men and their exploits, detailing the circumstances around their deaths and the people who turned out to pay their final respects. This popular enthusiasm for pilots did not wane. Even as the deaths stacked up after 1914, the crowds kept showing up for men of relatively low rank all the way through the revolution to the end of the war.

In his study of early German flight, Peter Fritzsche argues that "aviation, perhaps better than any other field of technology, clarifies the link between national dreams and modernist visions."[4] Russia-based historical investigations have likewise prioritized the national context as

[2] Notable studies on early aviation include John H. Morrow, *The Great War in the Air: Military Aviation from 1909 to 1921* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Pres, 1993). Joseph Corn, *The Winged Gospel: America's Romance with Aviation, 1900-19* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983). Linda R. Robertson, *The Dream of Civilized Warfare: World War I Flying Aces and the American Imagination* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2003). Dominick A. Pisano, Thomas J. Dietz, and Joanne M. Gernstein, *Legend, Memory, and the Great War in the Air*, First Edition (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992).
[3] "Pokhorony kapitana Matsievicha," *Ogonek,* no. 41 (9 October 1910), 18.
[4] Peter Fritzsche, *A Nation of Flyers: German Aviation and the Popular* Imagination (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 3

the key to understanding the pilot's phenomenal cultural cache. In *Dictatorship of the Air,* Scott Palmer thus poses the overarching question, "what is 'Russian' about Russian aviation?" He anchors his inquiry around a folk tale, the "Russian Icarus," which featured a serf who tried to escape from his master by building wings and flying away. The attempt was unsuccessful, and the serf was beheaded for the dual charges of heresy and trying to escape the bonds of his servitude. Palmer interprets the early twentieth-century moment of what he terms "air-mindedness" within a nation-based framework of progress. He argues that the airplane was seen as a conduit to success, as the means to "make possible backward Russia's rapid transformation into the world's most advanced and powerful nation."[5] By his reading, the "Russian Icarus" reflected Russia's backward past, and the airplane its panacea foil – a future full of potential. Another notable contributor to the historiography of early Russian aviation is Gregory Vitarbo, whose research focuses on how the technological modernity of the airplane affected the culture of the Russian officer corps. Vitarbo's emphasis is on how Russia's nascent air force differed from other European countries, and he too thus defines Russia's military pilots in opposition to their Western counterparts.[6] Vitarbo concludes that "Imperial Russia's aeronautical might was merely a facade of modernity, a Potemkin village in the sky."[7] While both studies have moments of adroit and nuanced analysis, they both revolve around the binary of a backwards Russia and a progressive Europe – a chasm that aviation ultimately failed to straddle.

The pervasiveness of the nation and nationalism in the contemporary historical literature on aviation is understandable given how closely the early technology was intertwined with the

[5] Scott W. Palmer, *Dictatorship of the Air: Aviation Culture and the Fate of Modern Russia,* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 6-7.
[6] Gregory Vitarbo, *Army of the Sky: Russian Military Aviation before the Great War, 1904-1914* (New York: Peter Lang, 2012), 5, 208.
[7] Vitarbo, *Army of the Sky,* 207.

military. Lighter-than-air balloons had been used sporadically during war since 1783 and systematically since the American Civil War. In 1909, the American Army's purchase of a Wright Model A inaugurated the era of heavier-than-air military aircraft.[8] The year 1909 was also critical for Russian military aviation, as the War Ministry set up its aviation branch, diverted money towards the purchase of foreign (mostly French) airplanes, and bought a Russian-made dirigible.[9] Russia's first military aviation school was opened in the summer of 1910 at Gatchina, and another at Sevastopol, able to function through the winter, was established shortly thereafter. By September 1910, according to the military historian John Morrow, Russia possessed ten airplanes and 30 pilots-in-training, and a year later the number of planes had risen to 30 and they were participating in military maneuvers.[10] While some amateur clubs also thrived, the high expenses attached to the activity meant that the archetypical pilot quickly became a military pilot, decked out in a uniform and with the colors of his country painted on his tail.

In this chapter, I argue that while the aviator certainly provided a link between "national dreams and modernist visions" (Fritzsche), this figure – particularly in death – was also critically constituted by frameworks of meaning that were distinctly transnational. Using published printed materials, such as newspapers, journals, novellas, plays, and books, I trace the threads that connected the pilot to Russia, but also to other pilots across the European continent. Delving beneath the surface of military-based notions of modernity, which are tied up within paradigms of success or failure, I place particular emphasis on late imperial ideas of decadence, the relationship between man and machine, and the rise of celebrity. These binding agents provided a common identity for Russian aviators that ultimately placed profession above nation. Although

[8] Morrow, *The Great War in the Air,* 1.
[9] A dirigible is a lighter-than-air aircraft that can be steered through the air under its own power.
[10] Morrow, *Great War in the Air,* 24

dead pilots were hailed as home-grown celebrities in the press, as the finest sons embodying the brightest qualities of their respective countries, longer-lasting elements of material culture suggest otherwise. Prior to the First World War, as I will discuss further below, a trend that seems to have originated in Russia emerged whereby the graves of fallen pilots were marked by new sorts of headstones constructed out of airplane propellors.[11]

Responding to a 2006 *American Historical Review* forum, the Soviet historian Michael David-Fox pointed out that transnational history "fit the Russian field, to paraphrase Stalin, like a saddle on a cow […] it centered on the meaning of transcending something Russia never was, the nation-state."[12] Here, he touches upon a core precept of transnational study: that it is designed to break out from the nation-state as a category of analysis.[13] There are, justifiably, some strong judgement values attached to this move, rooted in the idea that nation-based studies are easy prey for myopic, ethnocentric lenses which are limited at best and actively harmful at worst. However, this aspect to the "transnational turn" has produced a set of rigid back eddies, strictures that seem to insist that movements, peoples, ideas, and goods could be *either* national (not great) *or* transnational (better).

While it might be superficially stirring to pitch the transnational against the national in a winner-takes-all fight, this chapter develops a symbiotic analytic framework, taking advantage of Russia's lack of cookie-cutter "nation-statehood" as an opportunity to explore the mutability of

[11] The first instance of constructing gravestone markers out of propellors that I have come across is from 1912 in Sevastopol, for Staff Captains Leon and Ianish. The press described this move as "original" (*Iskry*, no. 7, (12 February 1912), 51), and though my search into other countries' aviation histories have been relatively cursory, as far as I know it holds up. In Melanie Winterton's recent dissertation on pilots of western Europe, she mentions no such instance that predates WWI. Melanie Winterton, "Haptic Air-scapes, Materiality, and the First World War: An Anthropological-Archaeological Perspective, 1914 – 2018." PhD diss., (University of Bristol, 2019), chapter 5.
[12] Michael David-Fox, "The Implications of Transnationalism," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 12, no. 4 (2011): 885–904, 886.
[13] C. A. Bayly et al., "AHR Conversation: On Transnational History," *The American Historical Review* 111, no. 5 (2006): 1441–64.

both frames. The mourning practices, the press coverage, and the stories that emerged around the deaths of military aviators reflected and sustained ideas and practices that were both national *and* transnational. In addition to pushing back against this either/or dimension of the transnational turn, there is significant value in bringing together cultural ideals and military contexts when investigating Russia's late imperial era. The years leading up to WWI were rife with political, economic, and intellectual transnational exchanges, just as Russia was undergoing one of its most sustained moments of nation-building. David-Fox is on relatively solid ground when he states Russia was never a "nation-state," but that does not mean that the late tsarist regime did not try hard to make it so.[14] In 1909, when aviation emerged, the lingering embers from the 1905 revolution had finally been doused and the monarchy was looking to restore a sense of legitimacy and pride. It was also desperate to claw back some respect in military quarters after the humiliating defeat to Japan in 1904-1905. Funneling money into the new field of military aviation was a means of projecting such strength, and footing the funeral bill for the unfortunate pilots helped to encourage the public to invest emotionally in the project.[15]

At the same time, the sketches of Russian pilots flanked by skeletons [Figures 1 & 2] indicate that the men and women who lined the streets to watch the coffins pass were living through sort of a *fin de siècle* like the one described by cultural historian Mark Steinberg, defined by vast oscillations between rampant confidence and a sense of deepening crisis. In an essay on worker-writers, Steinberg argues that after 1910, "wings often grew on the bodies of human

[14] Richard Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: From Alexander II to the Abdication of Nicholas II* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 10-12. David-Fox posits that the revolutionary period is one of two moments that are best poised to contribute to the broader debates on transnationalism (the other being the communist era) because of the prevalence of "westernization" ideas. "Implications of Transnationalism," 886.

[15] The absence of an active conflict in aviation's early years did not fundamentally alter the formal military designations of the deaths. In September 1913, the military base at Kronstadt, just outside St. Petersburg, asked the Naval Ministry for a list of aviators killed while flying (*pogibshikh pri poletakh*) since July 1910. These were for memorial boards in the island's Cathedral, as these pilots "should be considered dead in the line of duty." RGVAMF, f. 417, op. 2, d. 1807, ll. 143-144.

saviors."[16] He argues persuasively that this was an age rife with allegory, where flight became a dominant motif; it was a "potent symbol, a dream of transcendent power and freedom, of a mystical break with the universe of everyday experience." Drawing from both the Orthodox Christian tradition and the more immediate influence of Fredrich Nietzsche, Steinberg posits that on the one hand, "magical flight can denote freedom from monstrous and evil forces, a link between the profane and the sacred, a mysterious understanding and power, and transcendence above the physical bonds of the human condition." On the other, the "Superman, widely influential in Russian culture, was "an enemy of the spirit of gravity," who would "one day teach men to fly."[17] What Steinberg's study of text and language fails to consider – and what this chapter hopes to effectively reintegrate – is that by 1910 Russians were literally taking to the skies, both on individual initiatives and with substantial financial backing from the military state.

The first section shows how the Russian military pilot emerged as a figure who bore a special relationship to death. The second section takes a closer look at their funerals and positions the pilots as late imperial celebrities. The third section highlights the overlaps between the representation of the pilots and popular cultural trends like decadence and mysticism, both transnational phenomena rooted in dreams and the darker sides of progress that devolved into particular national iterations. The final part of this chapter explores the union of man and machine as the basis for a transnational pilot identity – one that was sufficiently strong to alter the visual topography of military graveyards.

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[16] Mark D. Steinberg, "'A Path of Thorns': The Spiritual Wounds and Wandering of Worker-Poets," in *Sacred Stories: Religion and Spirituality in Modern Russia*, eds. Mark D. Steinberg and Heather J. Coleman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 304-329, 319. See also Mark Steinberg, *Proletarian Imagination* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 98-99, 242-245.
[17] Steinberg, "A Path of Thorns," 320.

During the nascent years of military aviation, the figure of the aviator underwent some considerable transformations. This was particularly evident in two spheres of meaning, the technological and the legal. When accidents happened in the earlier years, the pilot was commonly painted as a tragic but mostly passive victim of machine-based error. However, come the First World War, despite the fact that the technology itself remained considerably unreliable, the pilot had emerged as the master of his own destiny. When Peter Nesterov died in 1914, for example, the stories framed him as the agent; if anything, it was an excess of his own heroic traits – self-destructive levels of bravery and skill – that had led to disaster. This shift, rooted in the status of the aviator, was paralleled by the pilot's international legal standing. Initially, the law tried to categorize the pilot as a reconnaissance figure – as a quasi-spy whose captured body was perilously unprotected from the judgement of the laws of war upon capture. However, in a mere matter of months, this potentially perilous situation had altered to the point where the aviator was considered to be a prisoner of high honor.

There was not an excess of artistic license behind the spectral skeleton hovering above Europe and America in *Voennyi mir*'s "map of aviator's graves": early flying apparatuses were extremely dangerous. In 1911, an article in *Voennyi sbornik (Military Journal)*, the mouthpiece of the War Ministry, analyzed all the known aviation accidents across Europe in 1909-1910.[18] According to the research of a Frenchman, Lieutenant Colonel Bouttieaux, a total of 148 misfortunes had occurred across these two years. Of these, 31 had proved fatal to the pilot. Breaking down the constituent reasons underlying the accidents, the deadliest culprit was design issues (17), followed by problems with the airplanes' control systems (9). The author of the

[18] "Prichiny nechastii s aeroplanami," *Voennyi sbornik,* (June 1911), 183-184.

article (who signed off with the initials V. B.), presented these findings with an air that mixed resigned inevitability and optimism, arguing that it was "not uninteresting that the percentage of accidents is much lower than expected," given that the constant appearance of new models should, in theory, invite a direct comparison to "the first examples of air conquest."

The opinion that death was simply unavoidable prevailed elsewhere, although other voices did not share V. B's sanguinity. After the death of Matyevich-Matseevich on 18 April 1911, the engineer D. Grigorovich wrote into the editor of *Vestnik vozdukhoplavaniia (The Aeronautics Herald)* to offer his take on the disaster.[19] Acknowledging that "aviation is war, and death becomes inevitable in the face of such unfavorable circumstances," he was nonetheless adamant that manufactures should not held beyond reproach or responsibility. In a diatribe seeped through with nationalist (which is to say, anti-French) stereotypes, Grigorovich argued that French planes could never be expected to properly protect Russian bodies: "It is time to renounce the worship of the creators of these primitive constructions. Unexpected success for themselves turned them into knights of profit long ago. It is not necessary to demand beautiful and dangerous Parisian toys, but strong, reliable and, to the extent achieved by science and practice, perfect aircraft." The engineer was particularly incensed at how current technological failings negated the skill levels of the men in the cockpit. As it stood, he argued, these machines rendered the best pilot in the world as incapable as the most inexperienced aviation student. The same journal had also refused to consider that "the fatigue of the aviator, who had complained before the flight of a backache" had contributed to the death of Lev Matsievich in September

[19] D. Grigorovich, "K gibeli Matsyevicha-Matsevicha," *Vestnik vozdukhoplavaniia*, no. 9 (May 1911), 19-23.

1910; the real culprit had been the design of the cockpit, which utterly failed to protect the pilot.[20]

Descriptions in popular magazines like *Ogonek* likewise emphasized unilateral failure on the part of the machines. For Matseivich's incident, an eyewitness reported: "Suddenly something terrible happened, chilling to the soul […] The airplane sharply, abruptly, leaned to the side… and a black figure separated from the grey mass of the falling Farman."[21] The narrative for the disaster that killed the Matyevich-Matseevich brothers half a year later was very similar: "Suddenly the airplane adopted a vertical position and began to fall. The device hit a stone wall at the airfield and burst into smithereens. Matyevich-Matseevich and his brother were killed on the spot."[22] Of the 31 fatalities in 1909-1910, Bouttieaux only placed the blame at the pilot's feet in three instances. As such, in the years preceding the war it was mainly this risk factor that helped to bolster the image of the pilot. They were heroes for facing such terrible odds. Writing about both Matseivich and Matyevich-Matseevich, *Niva* lamented their "sad and heroic fates." The fact that their lives had been cut short by rogue gusts of winds was nonetheless framed, somewhat perversely, as cause for bellicose celebration: "how characteristic and suitable this dangerous and heroic profession is for military service."[23]

By 1913, this narrative was shifting. That year, Peter Nesterov edged out his French rival Adolphe Pégoud to become the first man to complete the "dead loop" (*mertvaia petlia*).[24] After months of careful calculations, Nesterov threw caution to the wind and completed a full 360-

[20] K. Viktor, "Po povodu katastrofi s L. M. Matsievichem," *Vestnik vozdukhoplavaniia*, no. 18-19 (October 1910), 10-13.
[21] "Pervaia zhertva russkogo vozdukhoplavaniia," *Ogonek,* no. 40 (2 October 1910), 12. The Farman was a French aircraft developed before WWI.
[22] "Shtabs-kapitan B. V. Matyevich-Matseevich,"*Ogonek*, no 17 (23 April 1911), 12.
[23] "Gibel' aviatora B. V. Matyevicha-Matseevicha," *Niva*, no. 18 (1911), 345-6.
[24] "Aviator Nesterov," *Iskry*, no 35 (7 September 1914); 1-2; *Novoe vremia* (20 March 1914); and Vitarbo, *Army of the Sky,* 156-157.

degree upside-down maneuver. The performance of this death-defying feat became the catalyst that positioned the pilot as the master of aviation technology. Indeed, Nesterov's own tombstone has the date of his first "dead loop" inscribed in larger text than any of his subsequent actions, which were far from inconsequential. On 25 August 1914, mere weeks after Europe's lamps went out, Nesterov became the first pilot to destroy another airplane in aerial combat. The victory he achieved through ramming his Austrian enemy was distinctly pyrrhic, as Nesterov lost his own life in the process. In this instance, the obituaries that flooded in celebrating Nesterov's heroism worked hard to underscore the extent to which he had effectively chosen his own fate. The correspondent for *Iskry* interviewed some captive Austrians about Nesterov, who claimed that they had always known which plane was his, so "beautiful and freely" did it soar.[25] Although airplane technology itself was still far from perfect, the narrative surrounding pilot's deaths had changed. Within the context of global war, pilots were presented as the masters of their aircraft – and therefore their own sacrificial destinies – apparently no longer beholden to the capricious nature of the nuts and bolts that held their machines together. *Iskry's* obituary went on to depict Nesterov's plane as a conduit for the expression of his creativity, writing that "he was a poet in his soul, who looked at aviation as a special kind of art." The fact that this creativity had been pushed out to deadly extremes was a feather in his cap, not a mark against his skill as a pilot.

Authors in more erudite publications also shifted control from the airplane to the pilot. An article in *Russkaia mysl' (Russian Thought)*, published in October 1914 (but penned before the war and before Nesterov's demise), argued that while it was utterly integral in the face of impending war to perfect the technology of the aircraft and to produce a significant number,

[25] "Aviator Nesterov," *Iskry*, no. 35 (7 September 1914), 1.

"man would still play the leading role."[26] The pilots, "energetic, courageous, enterprising," and – critically – "trained in the art of war in the air," would make all the difference. The author, Alexander Bitmer, a retired professor of military history, stressed that he was no aviation expert. His chief concern was to think through how the airplane transformed the relationship between man and machine. "No matter how perfect the apparatuses are," he argued, "no matter how well their equipment is set, the machine itself is powerless until man has been inspired to animate (*odukhotvorit'*) it." To succeed in the air, the government had to devote resources to finding the best and most talented men for the task. His priorities were clear: men trumped machines.

The booming penny press was well poised to capitalize on Nesterov's death. Before the end of the year, books bearing titles such as *Bitva v vozdukhe (Battle in the Air)* and *Voina v vozdukhe i nashi geroi-aviatory (The War in the Air and our Hero-Aviators)* had hit the streets.[27] Peter Nesterov was the star and, like the newspaper press, these publications highlighted the supremacy of the pilot over the machine. While Nesterov made "extremely risky flights," one author wrote, "a conviction among aviators [held] that there was no danger for him." All of Nesterov's turns were "strictly calculated and scientifically substantiated." This publication went so far as to argue that Nesterov's broken body stood as proof that his "calculations had been quite correct." A blow to the spine from the enemy's propeller had killed him instantly, but his "airplane had been set up so well that for some time it went right […] following the plan of the lifeless aviator."[28] Other publications went further still. In *Mirovaia voina: v rasskazakh i illiustratsiiakh (World War: Stories and Illustrations)*, it was claimed that Nesterov knew that he was unlikely to survive this maneuver but was determined to try ramming the enemy aircraft

[26] "Znachenie sovremennoi tekhniki. Aviatsiia," *Russkaia mysl'*, no. 10 (October 1914), 65.
[27] *Voina v vozdukhe i nashi geroi-aviatory* (Odessa, 1914); *Bitva v vozdukhe* (Moscow, 1914).
[28] *Voina v vozdukhe i nashi geroi-aviatory,* 3-4.

anyway. In stories like these, where he "knew he was going to certain death," Nesterov was knowledgeable about the aircraft to the point of confident self-sacrifice.[29] Ultimately, as the representation of the pilot gained control over the technology, he was also accorded a degree of control over death.

The dangers of early military aviation extended beyond faulty technology. Potentially deadly consequences awaited the pilot even if the machines all worked as they were intended. Specifically, it was initially unclear where pilots should be located within the existing legal taxonomy of military personnel under the international laws of war. This debate hinged around whether aviators should be considered spies or legitimate combatants, and the stakes were high: if pilots were indeed spies, then they did not qualify for the protections of prisoners of war and could be executed upon capture.[30] In many regards, the way in which the pilot was able to defy death in this legal world, despite the heavy use of airplanes for reconnaissance purposes, was no less impressive than his transformation as master over the machine.

Only for the briefest of periods were heavier-than-air military planes used exclusively for reconnaissance purposes. Mere months after an Italian pilot flew the first scouting mission during the Italo-Turkish war of 1911, another Italian pilot used a similar airplane to drop bombs on the Turkish troops. The Peace Conferences at the Hague that had preceded this war in 1899 and 1907 had only considered the threat posed by lighter-than-air balloons regarding the dropping of projectiles. The delegates signed off on a law forbidding these contraptions to drop bombs, especially if the target was an undefended town or city. This left the new military pilot adrift in a legal no-mans-land, and this issue came to a head for the Russians during the war between Bulgaria and Turkey in 1913, when a handful of Russian aviators volunteered for the

[29] *Mirovaia voina: v rasskaz i illiustratsiiakh*, vol. 7 (Moscow, 1915), 45.
[30] For more details on the laws of war and the right to execute, see chapter 3.

Bulgarian cause. One of these men, Nikolai Kostin, fell into Turkish captivity in February 1913. As *Novoe vremia (New Times)* exclaimed at the time: "The position of the pilot Kostin is truly tragic, since the Turks can look at him not as a prisoner of war, but as a spy."[31]

Kostin was spared execution when the Russian government diplomatically intervened, and he was returned home as part of a prisoner exchange in April. There was, however, a genuine fear expressed in both the popular press and legal journals that his fate would – and arguably should – have been far bleaker. *Ogonek* kept their readers abreast of the story, claiming that "Kostin's fate excited the entire aviation world." The magazine cut through the web of legal jargon and interpretation rather bluntly: "the Turks consider Kostin a spy; in reality, he is an ordinary prisoner of war."[32] The legal minds of the time put forward a more nuanced approach. In an essay published in *Vestnik pravda i notariata (The Herald of Law and Notary),* E. Eliasberg argued that Turkey had technically not been out of line to demand Kostin's head; while international law had certainly not kept pace with the technological developments, the Hague convention of 1907 did ultimately encourage the interpretation that the reconnaissance pilot should be considered a spy. [33] Other voices chimed in to rue the fact that precautions, such as the addition of shoulder straps (the absence of "noticeable insignia" was one criterion of a spy), had not been taken to help legally set them apart from their covert compatriots.[34]

[31] "Sobytniia dnia," *Novoe vremia* (26 February 1913), 4.
[32] "Russkii aviator v plenu u turok," *Ogonek*, no. 8 (24 February 1913), 14.
[33] "Iavliatsia li aviator-razvedchik zakonnym nepriiatelem ili shpionom?" *Vestnik pravda i notariata*, no. 10 (1911), 296.
[34] "O letchiki Kostine," *Novoe vremia* (28 February 1913), 4.

In the aftermath of Kostin's his safe return, a follow-up article in *Ogonek* reiterated how Russian society, deeply invested in the case of their pilot, had been fearing the worst; it would have made sense for Turkey, who had been humiliated by Christian Bulgaria, to take revenge on a man who had not only been a personal thorn in their side but hailed from a nation who had been strongly supportive of their enemy.[35] Yet it transpired that Kostin had been kept alive in "quite tolerable" conditions. As evidence, *Ogonek* published a photo [figure 16] showing Kostin sitting comfortably alongside the Russian Consul of Adrianople and the defeated Turkish commander. As such, within an extremely short space of time, Kostin's body had transformed from one that was threatened to one that was celebrated alongside men who far exceeded him in rank and responsibility. It is notable that Kostin is dressed as an aviator in the *Ogonek* photograph: the leather jacket and hat had become well established as their unofficial uniform. The cultural caché at the pilot's command is underscored further by another portrait on the left of

РУССКІЙ АВІАТОРЪ-ГЕРОЙ НА БАЛКАНАХЪ.

Со снимка любезно присланнаго «Огоньку» изъ Парижа г. В. Лебедевымъ.

Летчикъ Н. С. Сановъ, участникъ греческихъ побѣдъ, отличившійся передъ взятіемъ Янины при штурмахъ форта Бизани.

ОСВОБОЖДЕННЫЙ ИЗЪ ТУРЕЦКАГО ПЛѢНА РУССКІЙ АВІАТОРЪ.

Со снимка для «Огонька» К. К. Булла.

Судьба авіатора Костина, залетѣвшаго въ турецкій плѣнъ въ осажденный Адріанополь, долго волновала русское общество. Въ послѣдніе дни передъ паденіемъ крѣпости никакихъ извѣстій не получалось объ его участи, и уже опасались, что турки, ожесточенные успѣхами христіанъ и сочувствіемъ Россіи побѣдителямъ, расправились съ плѣнникомъ, не разъ тревожившимъ осажденныхъ своими налетами. Къ счастью, Костинъ не только оказался въ живыхъ, но и содержался въ плѣну вполнѣ сносно. Доказательствомъ его относительной свободы и добрыхъ отношеній между властями крѣпости и русской адріанопольской колоніей является нашъ снимокъ, гдѣ плѣнный авіаторъ, невольный заложникъ турокъ—русскій консулъ и не менѣе ихъ плѣнный, благодаря осадѣ, турецкій комендантъ мирно сидятъ въ рядъ, покорные общей невеселой участи.

Авіаторъ Н. Д. Костинъ въ Адріанополѣ наканунѣ взятія города союзниками-славянами.

1) Н. Д. Костинъ. 2) Русскій консулъ г. Клеменко. 3) Комендантъ Адріанополя Измаилъ-паша. 4) Кавасъ русскаго консула.

*Figure 17: "The Russian pilot freed from a Turkish prison,"* Ogonek*, no. 17 (28 April 1913), 6.*

[35] "Osvobozhdennyi iz Turetskogo plena Russkii aviator," *Ogonek,* no. 17 (28 April 1913), 6.

another aviator-hero (*aviator-geroi*), N. S. Sakov, who had "distinguished himself" during a string of Greek victories.[36]

While the daily press put forward a narrative that emphasized the intervention of the Russian government, Kostin's own story implied that the decision to save his life and elevate his station had been a Turkish initiative. He shared his experiences – "the horror of captivity, the fear of execution, the joy of release…" - in *Sinii zhurnal (The Blue Journal)*, a popular publication that married playful entertainment with serious content.[37] According to Kostin, had it not been for the personal intervention of Ismail Pasha (the commander sat to his left in the *Ogonek* photograph), he would have been left to the whims of the Young Turkish Committee, who "insisted that I should not be recognized as a prisoner of war, but considered a spy. So, the death penalty."[38] According to his testimony, Ismail-Pasha not only saved Kostin's life, but provided him with food "when everyone was starving, when a piece of bread was valued above gold." In a sense, it did not really matter whether deliverance had been served by the Russian government or a benevolent enemy commander: Kostin had cheated death.

Although the major use of the airplane throughout WWI was reconnaissance, Kostin's exceptional treatment became the norm.[39] The privileged place of pilots even permeated the fictional stories relayed in popular journals. For example, an issue of *Voina (War)* from early 1915 put forth a thrilling tale of a Russian pilot who, despite being "talented, insanely courageous, and famous" had fallen into German captivity.[40] He was kept for a while in common barracks with other prisoners of war, who were waiting to be transferred to a forced labor

[36] Among other things, Sakov was first man to be shot down in combat, an experience he survived.
[37] *Sinii zhurnal*, no. 22 (31 May 1913), 6-7. For a fuller description of the journals of late imperial Russia, see Christopher Stolarski, *The Rise of Photojournalism in Russia and the Soviet Union, 1900-1931* (PhD. Dissertation, John Hopkins University, 2013), 63.
[38] "V turetskom plenu," *Sinii zhurnal*, no. 22 (31 May 1913), 7.
[39] "Primenenie vozdukhoplavatel'nykh apparatov pri razvedke," *Voennyi sbornik* (March 1914), 9-32, 11-12.
[40] "Polet s passizhirom," *Voina,* no. 66 (December 1915), 7-8.

assignment. At this point, the pilot was taken aside, where a "tall and masculine (*muzhestvennyi*)" German lieutenant expressed how "ridiculous" it would be to make a well-known pilot build railways. Somewhat implausibly, the lieutenant decided that the only suitable thing to do was make Goltsev fly reconnaissance for the Germans, hoping that a revolver held to the back of his head would be enough to dissuade him from flying back to his own side. It was not: the Russian pilot, having incapacitated his overseer with fear by performing a series of death loops, simply flew back to his division to rejoin the Russians' righteous fight.

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When Lev Matsievich died, his funeral was observed as a national day of mourning.[41] Crowds came out in force for the "first victim of Russian aviation," such that the whole of Nevskii Prospect, St. Petersburg's main thoroughfare, was utterly "clogged" with people (the estimated turnout ranges from the tens of thousands to 200,000). *Ogonek* reported that the number of wreaths laid upon his coffin exceeded 350, and an airship even joined in the procession from the skies above.[42] While portraits of living pilots were not absent from the illustrated press, it was death that catapulted Matsievich into the ranks of celebrity. Indeed, Scott Palmer suggests that "Matseivich's funeral compared favorably to the spectacles that had accompanied the recent burials of S. N. Trubetskoi and the popular actress V. F. Komissarzhevskaia."[43] While the fanfare that accompanied the deaths of pilots clearly

[41] James Dimitroff, "The Confluence of Aviation and Russian Futurism, 1909–1914" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Southern California, 1998), 86.
[42] *Ogonek*, no. 41 (9 October 1910), 18.
[43] Scott Palmer, "Wings of Courage: "Air-Mindedness" and National Identity in Late Imperial Russia," *The Russian* Review, Vol. 54, No. 2 (April 1995): 209-226, 212. On celebrity culture and death, see Matthew Klopfenstein, "The Death of the Seagull: Vera Kommissarzhevskaia and the Search for Transcendence in Late Imperial Russia," *The Russian Review* 80, no. 2 (March 2021): 270–93.

contributed to nation-building, they did not do so straightforwardly. This fame was also a consequence of their aforementioned ability to redefine certain precepts of death, to alter the outcomes of stories of captivity or narratives of technological failure. This agency was rooted in trends like changing notions of belonging that broke down along class and urban identities.

In trying to explain why such a large number of the public thronged the streets to pay their respects, Palmer makes a powerful case for narratives of national identity and pride. Not only did Matseivich's tragic daring speak directly to qualities accorded to the folkloric Russian *bogatyr',* the heroic knight, but more speculative forces were also at play. Deploying a fair degree of creative logic, the press argued that if an aviator could master the elements and scour the skies, Russia could come to gain control over the "forces of history and the present" – this promise of redemption for the Russo-Japanese War on the international stage is, for Palmer, what drew people to Nevskii Prospekt on 28 September 1910.[44] Palmer keeps this nationalist lens steady as he moves on to discuss how the media subsequently explained the crowds. Highlighting articles that read these crowds as indicative of a "desire for national unity," who saw aviation as a balm that could sooth the discord between political left and right, he presents the dead pilot's body as the personification of the hopes and dreams of a unified nation.[45]

Gregory Vitarbo has added an extra dimension to this interpretation by also highlighting the role played by class. He critiques Palmer for overlooking "the fact that this pageantry, this mass catharsis, was for a *junior officer*."[46] Vitarbo senses something else at stake: a facet of aviation made the public willing to pay a considerable amount of respect to a military man of relatively low rank at a time when love for the army was not high. He identifies two themes: the

[44] Palmer, "Wings of Courage," 216.
[45] Palmer, "Wings of Courage," 223.
[46] Vitarbo, *Army of the Sky*, 38.

emotional pull that the public felt for an enterprise that boasted a degree of meritocracy, and the high degree of cross-pollination between the civilian and military spheres during aviation's early years.

Although Palmer and Vitarbo both present Matsievich's burial as unique occurrence, the funerary ceremonies for other pilots who died in his wake also drew very large crowds. While it is not entirely unreasonable, given the scope of Matsievich's funeral (which had taken place during the heavily publicized First All-Russian Aeronautical Festival), that the hopes and dreams of a resurgent Russia were inscribed upon his corpse such that it brought thousands upon thousands to the streets, it is harder to extend that logic out to aviation's subsequent victims. For the Matyevich-Matseevich brothers, *Novoe vremia* reported that the "whole of the military aviation school, the military detachment, and many people (*mnogo publiki*)" had lined the streets.[47] *Vozdukhoplavatel' (The Aeronaut)*, a journal aimed squarely at fans of flying, reported that "a sea of heads" with an "unusually solemn atmosphere" flanked the entire funeral route, "the station, squares and streets were occupied by thousands of people who stood reverently with their heads bare."[48] No matter the city, people turned out. When Lieutenant Zolotukhin died on 15 August 1911 in the town of Elets, a massive crowd attended his funeral.[49] In January 1912, staff-captains F. Leon and V. Ianish died when the gas tank on their airplane exploded. The funeral that took place at the cathedral in Sevastapol drew the town leaders, the head of the local military units, "the entire composition of the aviation school" and a sizeable number of public.[50] This kept up through to the outbreak of the war; in May 1914, Moscow staged its first funeral for

[47] *Novoe vremia* (3 May 1911), 3.
[48] *Vozdukhplavatel'*, no. 5 (May 1911), 324.
[49] "Eshche zhertva russkoi aviatsiia," *Petersburgskaia gazeta* (16 August 1911), 3.
[50] *Vozdukhplavatel',* no 12 (December 1912)*,* 145.

a military aviator. The coffin holding the body of M. Liashenko was "buried" in wreaths, a guard provided military honors, and crowds of the general public thronged the event.[51]

Given the novelty of aviation, and the platitudes heaped upon the men who were dying to further this new technology, it is not surprising that the illustrated press covered these events. What is notable, though, is how these publications seemed to actively highlight the public presence. On *Iskry's* spread for Matyevich-Matseevich, the largest image showed off the size of the crowd [figure 17].[52] This was also the case with Liashenko [figure 18]. These were brave men, military men – but pride of place was given over to their popularity. Indeed, the presence of crowds at aviator funerals did not cease as the war continued to rage, nor did it after the February revolution brought down the tsarist autocracy. In September 1917, *Iskry* devoted a page to portraits of men who had "fallen on the field of glory."[53] A young pilot, Vasilii Vdovenko, was singled out, having died – of all things – while taking part in a series of flights put on for the benefit of families of deceased aviators. Not only did he have the largest portrait at the top of the page, but next to it was a photograph of his funeral procession [figure 19]. His turnout seems substantial, and the way the image is cropped implies that the crowd could have potentially continued forever.

While Vitarbo's emphasis on class to explain the funeral crowds is valuable, so too is the related phenomena of late imperial celebrity. The comparatively low ranks of the pilots and their lack of blood ties to the aristocracy surely endeared them to the masses, but those ties were fostered through media exposure. The illustrated journals often featured pilots going about their routine activities – relaxing besides their airplanes in dashing leather jackets, showcasing new

[51] "Pamiati aviatora," *Iskry*, no. 17 (4 May 1914), 136.
[52] "Gibel' brat'ev B. V. i V. V. Matyevichei-Matseevichei v Sevastopole," *Iskry*, no. 17 (1 May 1911), 130.
[53] "Pavshie na pole slavy," *Iskry*, no. 35 (10 September 1917), 275.

models, and setting up their cockpits for practice flights. The audience were provided access to the pilots' everyday, it just appeared to be a more dramatic everyday. Writing on opera singers, a different subcategory of late imperial celebrities, Anna Fishzon argues that "celebrity culture" did not "suggest simply the existence of widely recognized individuals but refers to a society in which ubiquitous, commodified representations and narratives featuring those individuals play an important and often seminal role in the organization of identities, self-understanding, and desires."[54] From this perspective, turning out for pilots' funerals enabled a sense of collective identity rooted in a complex combination of pride in Russia's technologically advanced future and a celebration of the sorts of men who were willing to sacrifice their skill and bravery.


*Figure 18: The burial of brothers B. V. and V. V. Matyevich-Matseevich in Sevastopol."* Iskry, *no. 17 (1 May 1911), 130.*

[54] A. Fishzon, *Fandom, Authenticity, and Opera: Mad Acts and Letter Scenes in Fin-de-Siècle Russia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 49.


*Figure 19: "The pilot's funeral."* Iskry, *no. 17 (4 May 1914), 136.*


*Figure 20: "Funeral of the military pilot Vas. Vdodenko."* Iskry, *no. 35 (10 September 1917), 275.*

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The efficacy of catchall nation-based discourses is further complicated by other aspects of media coverage, which were notably darker. On 12 October 1910, *Russkoe slovo (The Russian Word)* reported that one of Petersburg's cinemas had planned to show a "sensational picture (*sensatsionnaia kartina*)" entitled "the death of Matsievich."[55] The police had intervened, preventing this "untimely" piece of work from being shown.[56] The printed media were also apt to indulge in this grisly sort of reporting in later accidents. Liashenko's body (and that of a fellow unfortunate civilian passenger, K. Savitskii) was described in *Iskry* as "mutilated beyond recognition."[57] *Vozdukohplavatel'* went even further in their lengthy report which related the deadly fuselage tank explosion that killed Ianish and Leon. Here, it was not sufficient to simply say that their corpses were "mutilated"; each man had the specific corporeal abuses the fire had wrought listed out in intricate detail.[58] On one occasion, *Iskry* even printed two photographs that showed the dead body of Lieutenant Kleshchinskii, who perished in an accident alongside his mechanic in October 1912. One image showed his corpse visible amidst the wreckage of the plane, the other captured the moment Kleshchinsky's body was removed by his fellow pilots-in-training.[59] These indulgences of shock, curiosity, and horror are hard to square within rubrics of patriotic respect.

This seam of shadowy voyeurism hints at a netherworld of alternative cultural themes underpinning the fame of the dead pilot. Though they could be hinted at in real-world accounts,

[55] On the culture of sensationalism and death, see Otto Boele, *Erotic Nihilism in Late Imperial Russia: The Case of Mikhail Artsybashev's Sanin* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009). Louise McReynolds, *Murder Most Russian: True Crime and Punishment in Late Imperial Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012).
[56] "Khronika," *Russkoe slovoe*, (12 October 1910), 3.
[57] "Pamiati aviatora," *Iskry,* no. 16 (27 April 1914), 127.
[58] *Vozdukhplavatel'*, no. 12 (December 1912), 145.
[59] "Gibel' aviatora," *Iskry,* no. 40, (13 October 1913), 315.

these ideas of transcendence and transgression are more readily visible in fictional works. While the majority of material concerning military aviation in publications like *Voennyi mir* and *Vestnik vozdukhplavaniia* were aimed at an audience with a specific interest in the topic and spent ample time on the minutiae of different builds and technologies, literary accounts of pilots' deaths – from literati prose to the pulpy sensationalist stories that flooded the boulevard – leant on tropes like ominous dreams and the spiritual nature of the union between man and airplane. This line of thinking is indebted to Anindita Banerjee's work on late imperial science fiction, which contains a compellingly ambivalent reading on how modernity framed Russian aviation. She argues that the vision of the future aviation set up was deeply conflicted, whereby the "collective destiny of the national community could not be so easily conflated with the figure of the individual physically flouting traditional hierarchies of space."[60] Flight – in reality as in science fiction – was stricken through with doubt, and she aptly demonstrates how the media framed airmen as "Fausts of the new century," individuals who had made pacts with the devil to order to indulge their deviant experimentations. This argument sparks some alternative readings of the image at the start of this chapter titled "In the Battle with the Elements." Is the pilot ignoring the spectral skeleton clinging to his back, or was perhaps the passenger invited on board?

Complicit whispers like these couched early aviation as an intoxicating blend of mortal indiscretion and rank bravery in ways that bear some strong resemblance to the *fin-de-siècle* phenomena of decadence. "Decadence" was the overarching term that artistic and literary critics used to describe a vast span of degenerative habits that accompanied modernity in the late imperial era. Although similar sentiments could be found across Europe, especially the notion

[60] Anindita Banjeree, *We Modern People: Science Fiction and the Making of Russian Modernity* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2013), 44.

that urbanization had a deleterious effect on both the morals and the physical health of a population, in Russia these ideas hit harder and lingered longer.[61] Mark Steinberg goes as far to argue that for some critics, the "spirit of the age" was defined by a "vague perception of shadowy malevolence in the cultural air."[62] These crystalized out into more defined forms, such as trends for the occult and mysticism. Both of these spiritual offshoots were diverse, but a substantial portion of their appeal lay in the opportunity for those who partook to "explore their relationship to death."[63] They placed a particularly heavy emphasis on the interpretative power of dreams.

In many stories about aviation, both pilots and their loved ones frequented dreamworlds, and these visits had meaningful – and almost always morbid – consequences over their lives. One of the more famous short stories about aviation in the late imperial period was penned by Leonid Andreev. Written in 1913, *Flight* (*polet*) was inspired by the flurry of altitude-record attempts.[64] We meet his protagonist in bed one morning, flitting between dreams, some joyful and others terrifying. The aviator's wife, Tatiana, is plagued by nightly horrors – and the day she confides in her husband about her nightmares is the day that he dies. Lesser-known artists also hewed to this trope. Nikolai Eliseev, a playwright who did not enjoy much success, penned and published eight short dramas in 1915. One of these was called "Fight in the Air," and was directly inspired by the real-life feats of Peter Nesterov.[65] In this play, a large portion of the drama occurs in the leadup to the protagonist's fateful flight, where the pilot and his wife both

[61] This can be explained in part by Russia's political woes. For example, Bernice Rosenthal points to the defeat in the Crimean War (1845-1855), the shortcomings of the emancipation settlement, the rise of the terrorist movement, the assassination of Alexander II, and the unprecedent rate of industrialization in the 1890s. This laid the groundwork for the humiliation of the Russo-Japanese War and the 1905 Revolution to be perceived by some as not just military and political fiascos, but as "an all-pervasive crisis and the imminent end of the old world." Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, "Introduction," *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*, ed. B, Rosenthal (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 7.
[62] Mark D. Steinberg, *Petersburg Fin de Siècle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 159.
[63] Julia Mannherz, *Modern Occultism in Late Imperial Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 6, 41.
[64] L. N. Andreev, *Polet: rasskazy i p'esy* (Moscow, 1916), 5.
[65] N. V, Eliseev, *Kak podymalas' Rus' v tiazheluiu godinu* (Petersburg, 1915), 39. URL: https://www.prlib.ru/item/335792

confess to having strange and unsettling dreams. His wife dreamt that she was out in the woods, when a butterfly knocked its wings – beautiful wings, "burning with precious stones" and evoking a strong sense of glory and wonder (*slava*) - against the glass. But when she opened the windows to let the butterfly inside, its wings faded and then fell off, leaving it "strangely broken" and helplessly dead on the damp ground. As for the aviator, in his dream he was instructed to fly by his general, but when he exited his tent the "whole sky was on fire […] Clouds were burning, clouds were burning, but at the same time there was deathly silence, suddenly a dull howling wind was heard and like a distant cry of a woman ... I looked closely and saw that the whole field was dotted with mass graves and a woman in black was sobbing over one of them ..." He then saw the face of his deceased mother, who said, "do not be afraid… soon we will meet." Shortly after he shares his dream, he is ordered to go and destroy an Austrian airplane. Despite his wife's desperate pleas – "my dream" she shouts at his back – he obeys his superiors, besting the airplane but losing his own wing in the process and falling to his death.[66]

Another example can be found in the work of Vasilii Kamenskii, futurist poet and avid aviator. As James Dimitroff demonstrates, prophetic dreams play an important narrative role in one of Kamenskii's lesser-known plays, *The Life of an Aviator* (*Zhizn aviatorskaia*), which was completed in late 1911. At the height of the drama, on the evening before the Princess Maria (a character based on the Princess Shakhovskaia, who learned to fly at Gatchina in 1911) was to take her last flight to qualify for her pilot's license, Maria discusses her "frightening dreams" and "bad omens" with the other protagonists. This sense of unease carries over into her final and fatal voyage the following day. For Dimitroff, it is the dream that transforms the plane from a "vehicle

[66] Eliseev, *Kak podymalas' Rus'*, 38.

of salvation" into an "instrument of death."[67] Kamenskii was not born into a particularly well-off family, and his decision to kill off his female co-protagonist, a character who was closely based on real-life royalty, brings together the shock and sensationalism of aviation technology with some more novel fears about changing gender and class roles.[68] While it is Maria's wealthy and privileged background that no doubt facilitated her access to the airfield, she is a very different sort of female character to those portrayed in Eliseev and Andreev's plays, where the women are wives and their dreams concern their husbands.

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The dual national and transnational currents of trends like decadence and the occult opens the door to reflect on similar movements, not all of which broke down so strongly along national lines. Another crisis pervading Europe, particularly in relation to war, was technological: the looming threat of a conflict where defensive weapons like mounted machine guns would be overpowered to an extent that rendered traditional offensive tactics useless. Some of these fears had already been realized during the Russo-Japanese War, which had featured trenches and set-piece battles where territorial gains had been measured in inches rather than miles; when the lattice of trenches emerged on the western (and to a lesser extent the eastern) front during WWI, they did not do so out of the blue. The prospect and the subsequent reality of a war largely fought by an infantry driven under the earth to evade metals and explosives worked to make the aviator,

[67] James Dimitroff, "The Confluence of Aviation and Russian Futurism, 1909–1914" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Southern California, 1998), 330-335.
[68] Maria's real-life counterpart, Princess Shakhovskaia, was reported by *Novoe vremia* in August 1911 to be one of six students who was learning to fly at the time. She passed her exams in June 1912, and was the fourth Russian woman to do so. Dimitroff, "The Confluence of Aviation," 29.

soaring above such protracted scenes of horror, appear glorious in a way that transcended any country-based insignia. Stephen Kern makes the insightful point that much of the impressive agency ascribed to the pilot had a lot to do with visuality – the man in the cockpit was in the privileged position of being able to *see* the enemy and to fight back. The soldier wading through the mud of the trenches, on the other hand, had to deal with shells that "fell and killed far beyond" eyesight.[69]

These ideas were also were reflected in works of fiction. At one point in Eliseev's "Fight in the Air," the aviator's wife Elena professes a desire to join the sisters of mercy, because she feels guilty for sitting idly by as her husband "is writing new pages of history." The aviator replies: "it is those who are at the front, those gray heroes that lie in water-filled trenches under a hurricane of lead rain, they are the ones doing it…" But Elena pushes back against this, asking "what could be higher and more beautiful than the exploits of an aviator?" The pilot's description of modern warfare, which is terrifying, effectively situates the pilot as the object of envy for being able to escape such a fate. This was a distinctly transnational phenomena, and it helps to explain how much of Russia's newspaper space was given over to foreign pilots – especially the French, who were widely considered to be the leaders within the aviation field. The mainstream press told stories of foreign pilots, who were presented as no less heroic, daring, or patriotic for their lack of Slavic blood. Likewise, the specialist magazines like *Vestnik vozdukhoplavaniia* devoted weekly sections to the state of aviation abroad. This also reflected a real-life transnational exchange, as before the airfields in Gatchina and Sevastopol were up and running, Russian pilots travelled to France to be trained.[70] In consecutive years of *Niva* (1913

[69] Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1800-1918* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983); 308.
[70] Vitarbo, *Army of the Sky*, 24.

and 1914), the number of portraits devoted to French pilots outnumbered images of Russia's own. When Matsievich died, his obituary in *Sinii zhurnal* was penned by the famous French pilot, Louis Blèriot.[71] The Frenchman's writing was generous and touching as he celebrated Russia's pilots as "knights of the air without fear or reproach."

The framing of pilots as knights of the air/sky (both phrases are common in contemporary and historical works) looms large in early aviation and is one of the more powerful transnational tropes for both contemporaries and historians.[72] For Linda Robertson, writing on American pilots, the power of this image lay in its capacity to reassure the public in the face of mass and mechanized slaughter. Designating the pilots as "knights" brought the individual to the fore, and presenting pilot and plane in the familiar storybook guise of chevalier and horse helped to make sense of the new technology.[73] There were national iterations to this chivalric idea. Peter Fritzsche identifies a specific German model of the knightly myth, where as much as "flying restored glory and adventure to war" and reintroduced an element of man-on-man combat, the German pilot was ultimately celebrated for his technical competence, self-discipline, and the ability to act with "ruthlessness, cold-bloodedness, and daring."[74] However, these national strands faded in comparison to the common denominators of pilot identity, which were rooted in the exciting and ambiguous union of man and machine. For some fictional stories, this was an intimate relationship that stretched out to the point where man *melded into* the machine. This is the fundamental premise of Andreev's *Flight,* a story that, in the words of historian John

[71] "Eshche odin," *Sinii zhurnal*, no. 19 (30 April 1911), 13.
[72] In a poem penned in memory of Nesterov and published in the popular journal *War in the Air*, Sergei Gorodetsii hailed aviators as the "knights of godly heights" [*Slava vitiaziam Bozh'ikh vysot*]. *Voina v vozdukhe*, pullout from the journal *Voina*, no. 11 (1914), 3.
[73] Linda R. Robertson, *The Dream of Civilized Warfare: World War I Flying Aces and the American Imagination* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2003), 195.
[74] Fritzsche, *A Nation of Flyers,* 96.

Morrow, is about "the ecstatic union of man with machine."[75] Andreev's hero, Yuri Pushkarev, is a paragon of virtue; he loves his young family, has a quiet and understated personality, and constantly pushes himself to overcome his own nerves. At the apex of the story, as Pushkarev is pushing his plane ever higher, he faces a brief moment of dilemma – although he exalts in being alone, in what he provocatively calls "my holy dwelling," he is briefly tempted back to earth by a memory of his wife. But he manages to push aside the tug of the temporal by concentrating on the magical union he feels with his airplane, and consciously makes the decision not to return to the earth. "Now he and his winged car (*krylataia mashina*) were one, and his hands were so firm it was as though they were not corporeal, but like the tree of the steering wheel on which they lay. And if live blood poured in the hot veins of his hands, then it poured also into that tree and into the iron; at the end of his wings were his nerves, stretched to breaking point, and at the end of those wings he felt the sweet freshness of rushing air, the tremble of sunlight." At this point, Pushkarev feels like he is no longer actively flying the plane, but merely *thinking* the plane right, left, up, and down. Andreev presents a scenario where the veil separating the flying machine from the natural elements has been breached via the conduit of the pilot: "and then it seemed that he was not a man at all, but a clot (*sgustok*) of fire rushing into space."[76]

Though sensational and spiritual, the road to Andreev's literary representation had been paved by the press' reporting of real-life accidents, where they often presented crumpled and wrecked airplanes as stand-ins for aviator's bodies. For aviation's "first victim," Lev Matsievich, *Ogonek* published an image [figure 20] of his destroyed plane, a jumble of wood and canvas. The

[75] John H. Morrow, *The Great War in the Air: Military Aviation from 1909 to 1921* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993), 27.
[76] Andreev, *Polet*, 18-20.


*Figure 21: "Matseivich's airplane after the crash."* Ogonek*, no. 40 (2 October 1910), 12.*

image shows men gathered around the crash site, heads bent in subdued respect, their parade interrupted by an additional collaged photograph of the temporary wooden cross that was placed at the crash site in his honor. The material parallels between the cross and the skeleton of the airplane are echoed in the language the article used to the describe the accident. The first-hand account described how the airplane had jerked mid-air, ejecting Matsievich, before cutting to the moment where they hit the ground: "they were lying next to each other, crippled (*iskalechennye*), mutilated (*izurodovannye*) – Captain Matsievich and his "Farman," who had served him so faithfully up until now."[77] When Liashenko died in 1914, *Iskry* also published two images that told a more symbolic story of the accident [Figure 21]. The first one was a photograph of Liashenko's comrades at the Sevastopol air school picking through the debris of his felled plane. The second was of the site where the plane had crashed, where a sign was erected to mark out the place.[78]

[77] "Aeroplan Matsievicha posle pazdeniia," *Ogonek,* no. 40 (2 October 1910), 12.
[78] "Pamiati aviatora," *Iskry,* no. 16 (27 April 1914), 127.

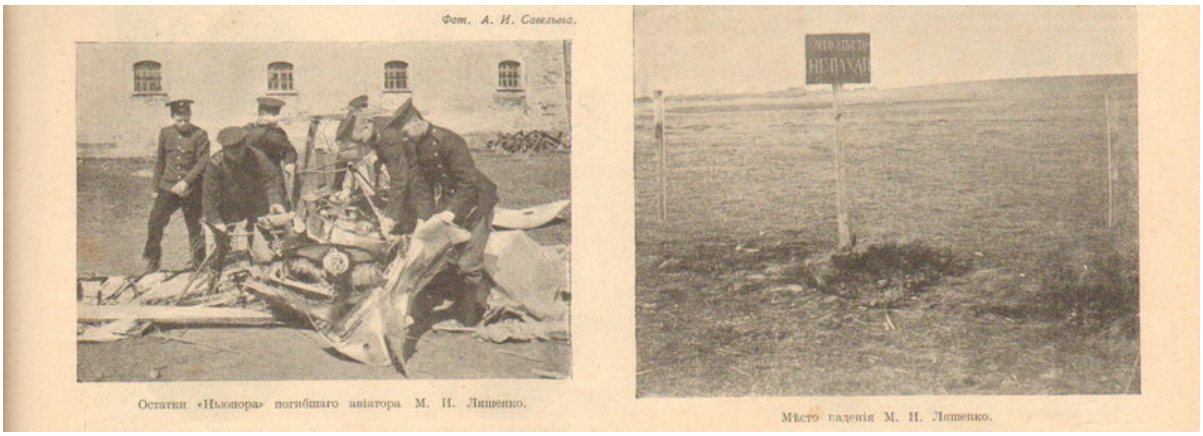


*Figure 22: "The Wreck of Liashenko's 'Neuport' [the model of airplane]" and the "Place of the Crash."* Iskry*, no. 16 (27 April 1914), 127.*

When Kleshchinskii and his mechanic died in 1912, *Iskry* published two images of the pilot's corpse.[79] However, no doubt aware that they were pushing up hard against the publication conventions of the day, the two images that depicted the corpse were less than half the size of the photograph below showing the wreck of the airplane [Figure 22]. Like *Ogonek's* coverage of Matseivich's death, this included an additional, smaller image spliced over the top - in this case, a portrait of Kleshchinskii vital and alive. This image, more so than any of the others, shows off the symbolic power of the shape of the airplane. With the tail of the airplane silhoutted against the sky, propellor rearing up and dwarfing the standard crowd of men, this moment captured the terrifying and transcendent ambiguity of the modern machine. The decapitated cross-shaped plane, and the defiant cross-shaped propellor, made this a particuarly sacred and sacrificial sort of ambiguity. In a wonderfully self-aware nod to the power of this spectacle, the photographer even chose to frame another tripod in the foreground of the shot.

[79] "Gibel' aviatora," *Iskry,* no. 40, (13 October 1913), 315

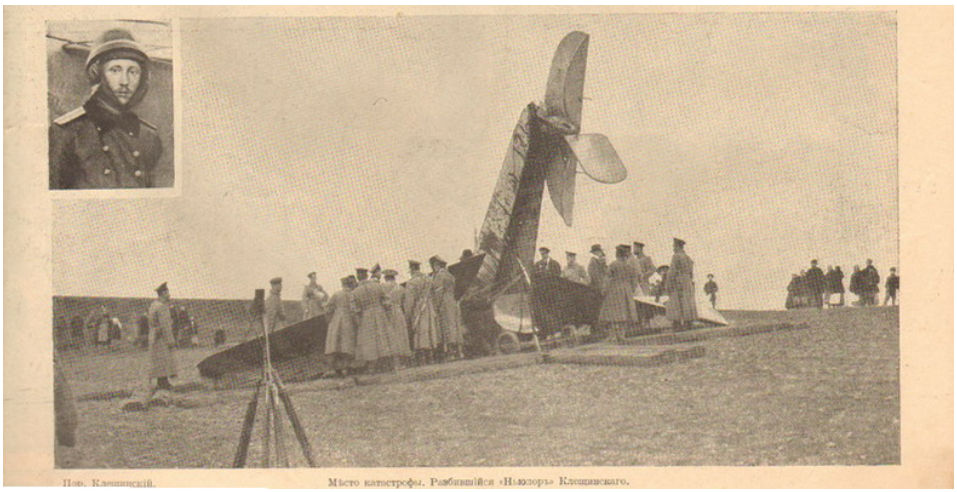

*Figure 23: "The place of catastrophe."* Iskry, *no. 40 (13 October 1913), 315.*

Thinking through the symbolic power of the shattered airplane helps to flesh out and deepen Vitarbo's argument that crowds turned out for funerals because of class considerations. These new heroes had elevated themselves not just because they had skill and daring that family connections and tsarist favors could not buy, but also because novel technological machines had provided them with platforms on which those skills could be demonstrated. When we consider the ideas and artistic sentiments that were also circulating in this era, such as those that Mark Steinberg explores in his research into worker-poets, then it is possible to imagine how the visual repertoire which exchanged bodies for airplanes also established those platforms as the backdrop for a new sort of sacrificial figure. Steinberg's protagonists thought long and hard about how machines were a source of pride and identity for the urban working class, but the cost was high, for factories were also places of physical and metaphysical injury. The machine was thus a source of suffering and salvation, and writers pushed out that line of thinking all the way out to reimagining crucifixions. Accidents were made into sacrificial deaths, and, in Steinberg's words, produced "images of glorified, even transfigured individual workers coming to lead the people

and redeem humanity pervaded workers revolutionary writing."[80] This was particularly evident in the work of Alexei Gastev and Mikhail Gerasimov. Gastev wrote poems that featured men growing out of iron into giants, such that they were able to physically look down upon the factory and the foundry. Gerasimov went even further on the sacrificial and resurrection themes, as is evident in his poem "Krest" (Cross): "A sudden cry, a figure lay / Crucified on a golden sheet / Embraced by serpentine flames / Burning on a fiery cross / He died amidst mechanical sounds / […] a bloodied angel thrust forward into the distance."[81] The same ideas that motivated Steinberg's writers brought Vitarbo's crowds to the street, and the aviator, like fictional heroes of revolutionary poetry, became a figure that in death was able to marry the glorification of an individual with the promise of a future that reached beyond the social stratifications that had defined the old world. These sentiments were strong enough to reshape the landscape of death.

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When Matsievich died, a "modest white cross" was placed over his grave. His inscription was simple: "Captain L. M. Matsievich, ship's engineer, died while flying an airplane on September 24, 1910."[82] While Matsievich's funeral was extravagant, there was nothing particularly remarkable about his grave. This practice did not last long. After the crash that killed Matyevich-Matseevich and his brother in April 1911, *Vestnik vozdukhoplavaniia* printed an image of the cross that had been erected "by friends" at the crash site. This cross had been

[80] Steinberg, *Proletarian Imagination,* 112.
[81] Steinberg, *Proletarian Imagination,* 238-9. For more on worker poets, see Richard Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams* (Oxford, 1989), chapter 2.
[82] A. Sumskoi, "Gibel' i pokhorony L. M. Matsievicha," in *Piloty ego Velichestva,* ed. S. V. Gribanov (Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf, 2007), 117.

secured in place using stones from the wall that had claimed their lives.[83] In 1912, a far more arresting piece of material from a fatal aviation scenario made its way into the rituals of remembrance. Staff-captains F. F. Leon and V. N. Ianish were buried together in a communal grave at Sevastopol that was not topped by a traditional crucifix, but by a propeller [Figure 23].[84]


*Figure 24: "Mass grave for the fallen pilots."* Iskry*, no. 7, (12 February 1912), 51.*

One year on, to mark the anniversary of their deaths, this (presumably) impromptu act of placing the propeller atop the grave was made permanent in stone [Figure 24]. Moreover, with money solicited from the officers of the aviation school, another propeller-cross was added to the neighboring grave that contained the bodies of two more men – another pilot, Albokrinov, and

[83] "Gibel' B. V. Matyevicha-Matseevicha," *Vestnik vozdukhoplavaniia*, no. 9 (May 1911), 23.
[84] *Iskry*, no. 7 (12 February 1912), 51.

his mechanic Sanin. *Ogonek* did not offer up much by way of explanation for this radical departure from tradition; the short text that accompanies the image simply states that "original and symbolic crosses made from propellers bring to mind the dedicated service of the air fleet's dead pioneers."[85] Although the caption's tone is matter-of-fact, altering the structures on top of graves was strikingly "original" indeed. The propellor-crosses call to mind David Nye's concept of the "technological sublime," which he defines as "an essentially religious feeling, aroused by confrontation with impressive objects."[86]

*Figure 25: "Memorial service and the consecration of monuments at the graves of staff-captains Leon and Ianish, and their subordinate Al'bokrinova and mechanic Sanin."* Ogonek*, no 6 (10 February 1913), 17.*

By 1914, these "original and symbolic crosses" had caught on such that when Liashenko died in May, a propeller in the place of a crucifix was drawn onto the train that bore his coffin back to his hometown in Poltava. The caption in *Iskry* reads "Last favor to a friend. Lieutenant Pestov draws a cross on the door of the car." Here, "cross" has been substituted in for

[85] "Panikhida i osviashchenie pamiatnikov na mogilakh shtabs-kapitanov Leona i Ianisha, i podporuchina Al'bokrinova i mekhanika Sanina," *Ogonek*, no 6 (10 February 1913), 17.
[86] David Nye, *American Technological Sublime,* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), xiii.

"propeller," as though the transition was at the point where no further explanation was warranted [Figure 25].[87] This conversion had also become shorthand for *Ogonek* – when Peter Nesterov died at the outbreak of the war, the magazine started one of his many obituaries with a sketched aviation propeller in place of a cross of mourning. [88]


*Figure 26: "Last favor to a friend. Lieutenant Pestov draws a cross on the door of the car."* Iskry*, no. 17 (4 May 1914), 136.*

In both of the photographs showing Leon and Ianish's graves, the propellers stand out as unique and distinct against the sea of traditional crosses in the background. This changed during the First World War, when pilots started to die more regularly. (In 1914 at the outbreak of the war, Russia had 224 aircraft, and 300 military pilots.33 had died by January 1, 1915.)[89] In the major military cemeteries, these propeller crosses became commonplace. Writing about one of the many graveyards in Kronstadt in his memoirs, Valerii Ozerov recalls that back before the words "pilot" (*letchik*) and "plane" (*samolet*) were in common use, the older aviators' graves

[87] "Pamiati aviatora," *Iskry,* no. 17 (4 May 1914), 136.
[88] "Aviatorov Nesterov," *Iskry*, no 35 (7 September 1914), 1.
[89] Vitarbo, *Army of the Sky,* 207.

were fascinating – "a propeller was put instead of crosses" and, on occasion, "motors from the broken airplanes" were also placed on top of the graves.[90] These propeller crosses are particularly evident in a series of postcards released in 1915 to celebrate the All-Russian Monument to the War of 1914.[91] They featured scenes from inside the Moscow City Fraternal Cemetery, including the "aviator's corner" [figure 26].[92] A decade later, in 1925, *Ogonek* published an article on that same "aviator's corner." The author of the piece, S. Arefin, was struck by the sheer number of such graves; not only was there an "aviator's corner," but also an "aviator's alley." By 1925, the flowers were long gone, and the graves were "warped from bad weather and rains, cracked at the glued seams… many graves in this corner have already lost their propellers."[93] Despite the disrepair, there were two things Arefin noted. First, in addition to

*Figure 27: Postcard series "Moscow city fraternal cemetery: general view of the mass graves." (Moscow, 1915).*

[90] Valerii Ozerov, *Kronshtadt – Feodosiia – Kronshtadt. Vospominaniia* (St Petersburg: Ostrov, 2011), 44.
[91] Postcard series "Moskovskoe gorodskoe bratskoe kladbishche: obshchii vid bratskikh mogil," (Moscow, 1915). On the history of the postcard, see Alison Rowley, *Open Letters: Russian Popular Culture and the Picture Postcard 1880-1922* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1913).
[92] The cemetery held over 17,500 victims of the First World War, and 10,000 more from the civil war. The final burial took place in 1925, the same year the article was penned. Thereafter, the cash-strapped Soviet Government was unwilling to pay for its upkeep. Its ultimate destruction and transformation into resident buildings became the stuff of "urban legend." For the history of the graveyard, see Karen Petrone, *The Great War in Russian Memory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011); 2-3.
[93] "Ugolok propellerov," *Ogonek*, no 18 (26 April 1925), 11-13.

the propellers, and extending out the idea that the bodies of the pilots were seen as somewhat melded with their planes, other parts of broken equipment also littered the burial area: “Parts of the crashed planes — some tubes, trims, wires, the remains of a wing, and even a whole skeleton of a motor with seven spigots of cylinders in the shape of a star speak of those air dramas that resulted in all these graves.” Indeed, in the 1925 images [figure 27], it is possible to see an airplane tail used in the place of a cross. This grave belonged to V. K. Welling, who had died in 1923. Secondly, Arefin noted that the pilots’ graves were marked differently from others. Rather than the “usual” way of inscribing “died” (*skonchalsia*), these men had their deaths noted with *pogib,* which translates better to “perish”; other popular notations included “perished in battle” *(pogib v boio),* “killed in aerial combat” *(ubit v vozdushnom boio),* or “crashed during flight” *razbilsia vo vremia poleta*. Linguistically as well as symbolically, the aviator stood out among thousands of other graves.

During WWI, this practice that – as far as I can tell – started in Russia had spread throughout the European continent. When Baron Manfred von Richthofen was killed in April

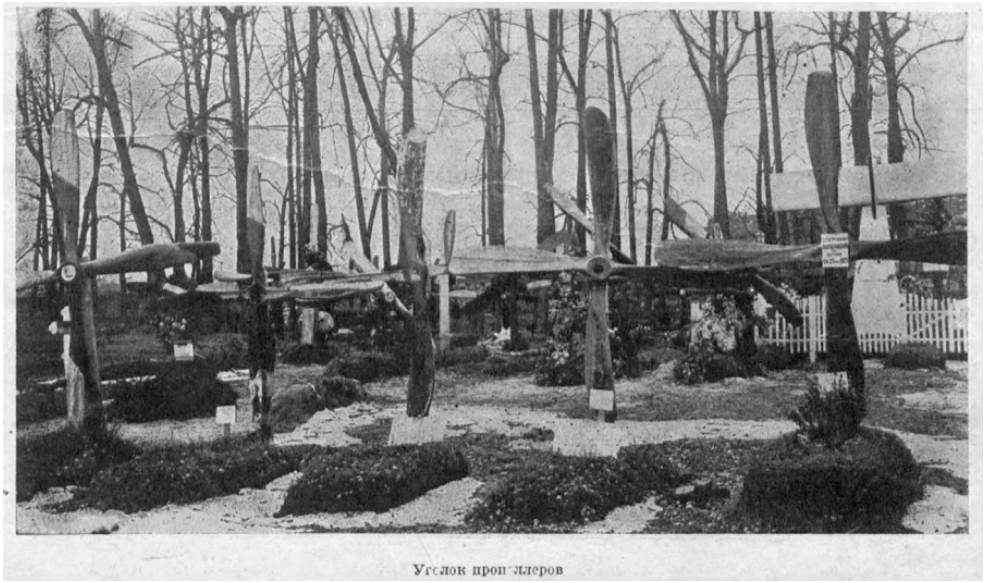


*Figure 28: “Corner of Propellors.”* Ogonek*, no 18 (26 April 1925), 11.*

1918, the propeller of his plane was truncated and became the cross that sat above his grave. Moments like these marked pilots as belonging to a transnational cohort of aviators. This practice was common on both the western and eastern fronts, and there was little discrimination as to whether the dead pilot had been the Red Baron or a relatively unknown pilot tasked with reconnaissance. A Russian pilot, Sukhach, was buried under a propeller-grave in Galicia even though his feats had not made it into the mainstream news.[94] This practice was not simply performed for the press, but genuinely reflective of a transnational sense of camaraderie. After an air battle in 1915 where two Austrian pilots died, the following day the Russians flew planes over the Austrian airfield. The note read: "A funeral was held with all military honors. Two propellers, almost new, were installed over the grave. […] The grave was also decorated with a wreath of artificial flowers with a white ribbon and with the inscription: 'The Russian squadron is in admiration of your courage.'"[95] One of the best images of such a grave was taken in 1915 in Jaroslaw, Poland [Figure 28]. This photograph shows the names of two German aviators inscribed on a propeller-cross. As in the early Russian instances, the softness of the propeller lines are made all the more striking by the forest of traditional wooden crosses in the backdrop.

This practice, harkening back to the image of the knights of the sky, was framed by the American press as spontaneous acts of gallantry in a supposedly by-gone age. In August 1917, *Leslie's Illustrated Weekly Newspaper* reported that "The custom of marking the graves of aviators by the propellers of their broken machines adds a touch handed down from the days of chivalry."[96] In another American journal, *Air Travel*, Lieutenant Bennet A. Molter of the French army wrote that "The manly spirit among aviators is remarkable. The French have a true

[94] "Molgily nashikh geroev," *Iskry*, no. 40 (15 October 1917), 315.
[95] *Russkaia Armiia v Pervoi mirovoi voine. Polnaia entsiklopediia*. eds. V. Shunkov, A. Spektor, A. Mirnikov (Moscow: Liters, 2020), 164.
[96] *Leslie's Illustrated Weekly Newspaper*, vol. 125 (2 August 1917), 157.

chivalric regard for German pilots, a regard that time and time again has been demonstrated as reciprocal. When a German is brought down back of the French lines we always take a propeller from his machine and make a cross of it, bearing his name, above his grave. German pilots do the same with our flyers who are brought down back of their lines."[97] As the war progressed, it seems these crosses had become sufficiently commonplace to become pre-empted, in such instances where the airplane did not produce salvageable materials. Willy Coppens, a Belgian ace, wrote in his journal how a friend "chanced to go into the workshop and saw one of these crosses of propeller-walnut standing in a corner, beautifully polished. We had not lost a pilot for some considerable time, and he was not a little surprised. 'Whom is this cross for?' he asked; and the carpenter replied, simply: 'The next.'"[98]


*Figure 29: Propeller-Grave for German Flyers, 1915, Jaroslaw, Netherlands National Archive. URL: https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/en/research/photo-collection/sfa%3Acol1%3Adat405533*

[97] *Air Travel*, vol.1, no. 4 (December 1917), 189.
[98] Willy Coppens, *Days on the Wing* (London: Aviation Book Club, 1934), 127.

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Andreev's story *Polet'* concludes with the suggestion that when his protagonist Pushkarev died, he remained up among the clouds. His spirit, his essence, was no longer bound to the material realm: "he never returned to the earth. That, which had fallen spinning from above, the weight of crushed bones and meat (*miasa*) pressed into the ground, was no longer him, or any man."[99] There was no home soil that waited the pilot, no plot of earth where colors, insignia, or any other national apparel could be draped. He was elevated to a plane where his identity was not tied to any nation, not a man bound to serve any government, tsar, or king. [100] This spiritual, mechanical quest for transcendence at the moment of the pilot's death strikes at overarching narratives of nationalism right at the point of its beating military heart.

This study into the death cultures of early Russian aviators demonstrates the need to look beyond the framework of the nation in explaining their fame, impact, and wider cultural cache. An interpretative framework that simply situates the rise of Russian aviation within the overarching catchall of a moribund and outdated tsarist military fails to recognize the extent to which for the aviator, profession was valued above nation. Soon after the development of the military airplane, the pilot was presented as a figure in the press who was the master of his own fate, and who enjoyed a uniquely independent relationship to both the laws of war and physics.

This marrying of military and culture offers a refreshing interpretation on one of the mainstays of historical studies of modernity: ambiguity and ambivalence. As a category of

[99] Andreev, *Polet*, 20.
[100] Anidita Banerjee's key takeaway from Andreev's story is that by leaving "the baser realm of the body" for "the transcendental home of the spirits," the protagonist is inducted into a realm that is "simply human." Banjeree, *We Modern People*, 46.

analysis, modernity is wrought through with fear and excitement, lightness and darkness, and as such often collapses under the sheer weight of such dichotomies to become a study in ambiguity. This ambivalent stew is a substance so powerfully caustic that it has a tendency to break down assertive conclusions. There are familiar pushes and pulls present in this chapter, but in this instance, the more positive (though complex) aspects of modernity do decidedly win out. From the literary escapades that explored the edges of the pilot's body to the more morbid aspects of fascination, hope and excitement ultimately underpinned the pilot's celebrity. Above all, this was made evident in the propellor-gravestones, material testaments to a new technology that were intended by design to last for generations.

## CHAPTER FIVE

## NAMING RUSSIA'S RANK-AND-FILE

The *Savior-on-the-Waters*, nestled on the banks of St. Petersburg's palatial English Embankment, had a short but interesting life. The memorial church was built in 1910 to commemorate not a victory, but rather Russia's resounding defeat at the naval battle of Tsushima. The political convulsions which followed the conflict in the far east had brought the Romanov dynasty to a teetering edge, and the move to erect a monument to its devastating coda was not an immediately straightforward solution. Although the architecture and décor leant heavily on the conventions of ancient *Rus'*, as was conventional in this era, the interior walls were adorned with plaques that listed the name of every single sailor who had perished – a total of 8,629.[1] In Russia, this was the largest state-sponsored undertaking of its kind to date**.**

N. M. Iakovlev, a member of the committee tasked with this project, was the first to admit that such a comprehensive accounting was no simple undertaking. In January 1910 this committee had written to the Naval Ministry requesting a list of the names of the dead, and it was over a year before Iakovlev felt that the lists were in a sufficient state to be published in *Morskoi sbornik* (*Naval Journal*), such that "the relatives of the victims could quickly correct all the inaccuracies of these lists, which are always a possibility in such a painstaking task."[2] Oftentimes, it took multiple actors to piece together the circumstances of certain individuals'

[1] On the church's architecture, see Nadieszda Kizenko, "The Savior on the Waters Church War Memorial in St. Petersburg," in *Picturing Russia: Explorations in Visual Culture,* ed. Valerie A. Kivelson and Joan Neuberger (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 124-127. On the prominence of Muscovite imagery and architecture in this period, see Wortman, *Scenarios of Power* vol. 2, chapter 7.
[2] RGAMVF, f. 417, op. 4, d. 6034, l. 47.

deaths. For example, between 20 October and 30 December 1909, sixteen different correspondences took place trying to ascertain if, where, and when seaman Wilhelm Rukhvi had died. The local administration of his home province, his family, and the Kronstadt Naval Base were all enlisted to help determine whether his name should be listed up on the boards – but also, whether or not the Aleksandrovskii Committee for the Wounded should grant his family benefits.[3] While this investigation did arrive at a satisfying conclusion, almost every aspect surrounding his existence and his demise had to be clarified. His first and last names had both been registered with spelling mistakes, and it was initially unknown where he had enlisted and on what boat he had been stationed. It took an interview with his brother to definitively establish that Wilhelm had been born in Wesenburg (present day Estonia), gone to war on the battleship *Tsarevich*, and died from wounds in Port Arthur on July 28, 1905.

The case of Wilhelm Rukhvi was not exceptional. In the years that it took to compile the lists, circulars had followed circulars, revising spellings and striking off men who were thought to have been dead but turned up alive.[4] As late as 1910, the Naval Ministry released a statement admitting that upon further inquiry, two new wartime deaths from the lower ranks had been discovered – Peter Chumichev and Sheraftyn Ibrazimov – but Stepan Viazovkin had been incorrectly included within that number.[5] These efforts ended up receiving little payoff: at the first opportunity in 1923, the Soviet government ordered that *Savior-on-the-Water* be blown up. Like so many other religious buildings of tsarist Russia, this naval memorial church was wiped from St. Petersburg's architectural landscape. Lingering on, however, were whispered rumours

[3] RGAMVF, f. 417, op. 4, d. 6034, l. 8, 49, 387.
[4] The Naval Ministry published 74 circulars listing the dead during the Russo-Japanese War itself, and another 56 between 1906-1909 correcting those previous lists. RGAMVF, f. 417, op. 4, d. 6034, l. 11.
[5] RGAMVF, f. 417, op. 4, d. 6034, l. 65.

concerning the plaques that had borne the names of the fallen. *Discarded into the Neva?* Or worse still – *used as butchers' blocks?*[6]

This chapter takes on the well-worn historical subject of war and memory via the less-travelled paths of naming, identity, literacy, and the information nexus that helped to bring structure to the early twentieth century – such as those sixteen pieces of correspondences that crisscrossed Russia seeking out the fate of Rukhvi. I do so with three core objectives in mind. My first objective is to build on the work of Melissa Stockdale and Karen Petrone, who have convincingly demonstrated that during WWI Russia was in no way "behind" the western powers when it came to provisions for remembering the dead.[7] Their work insists that Russia is part of this prescribed pan-European story. While there is a lot of value to this argument, it does reinforce the overarching idea that the "memory boom" in regards to war only began in earnest after 1914, and that the stakes were defined by the west. I argue that not only were there meaningful earlier manifestations of military memorialization in Russia, but that there were two specific trends within this movement that prompt some reassessments of war and memory across Europe and America in turn.

The first trend to highlight is spatial. This chapter analyzes the steps by which the rank-and-file came to be named on military memorials. Critically, for these privates and seamen, the men whose claims to discrete identities teetered precariously on the lowest rung of the military ladder, this push did not come from the center as much as the geographic fringes of the Russian empire – as a practice, it was deeply embedded in the assertion of power in precarious areas. The

[6] This is referred to as an "urban legend" in many online sources, e.g. http://www.encspb.ru/object/2804676342?dv=2853952566&lc=ru

[7] Karen Petrone, *The Great War in Russian Memory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 6; Melissa K. Stockdale, *Mobilizing the Russian Nation: Patriotism and Citizenship in the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 3-5. Melissa K. Stockdale, "United in Gratitude: Honoring Soldiers and Defining the Nation in Russia's Great War," *Kritika* 7, No. 3, (Summer 2006): 459-485.

second trend is the overlap between memory-preserving actions and the development of a state bureaucracy that had the power to surveille its citizens. The move towards celebrating the rank-and-file on plaques and monuments is overwhelmingly cast as an emotional overture by both historical actors and historical appraisers, a narrative rooted in ideals of belonging and appreciation of sacrifice. I do not mean to imply that this is a complete misdiagnosis, or that this aspect was insincere. Rather, I look to highlight how there were multiple overlapping imperatives within the dynamics of remembrance: the state's well-meaning desire to make sure that Rukhvi's name was righteously included on that plaque dovetailed with the more sober aspiration to make sure his widow was not incorrectly being paid a pension.

The first section sketches out the road that led to *Savior-on-the-Waters.* This path was far from linear. The names of the rank-and-file appeared gradually and inconsistently on war memorials, and they overlapped in some convoluted ways, as monuments built for anniversaries and centenaries were being erected alongside ones to the Russo-Japanese war that had just ended. It is in this section that I examine the spatial patterning of these monuments – many of the early memorials that bore the name of the rank-and-file and that were commissioned in the years preceding WWI were erected in colonial spaces, at borderlands, and on foreign soil. It is this aspect that invites us to rethink the dominant interpretations of naming the masses that prevail in western historiographies, which link the rise of this naming practice indelibly to the rise of democratic politics and a consideration for the individual.[8] I also address one of the themes of this dissertation from a different angle, namely the extent to which the treatment of the military dead was mediated by optics. Aaron Cohen has argued that the memorials which emerged in the wake of the Russo-Japanese War were well-thought-out maneuvers designed to mollify the

[8] Daniel J. Sherman, "Bodies and Names: The Emergence of Commemoration in Interwar France," *The American Historical Review* 103, no. 2 (April 1998): 443-446, 443.

public's faltering opinion of the Romanov monarchy.[9] The Tsarist government saw in the military dead a means to restore some of the prestige and political capital that had been destroyed by the loss to Japan and the 1905 revolution. As artefacts that were designed not only to be read, but to be lasting, memorial plaques offered a resounding degree of propagandistic potential. However, the fact that many of these memorials were erected far away the Romanov capitals, in places where loyalties were suspect (or absent entirely) and tensions rife, indicates that these optical performances were not so much designed to court the urban Russian audience as they were to persuade and intimidate the skeptical.

The second section takes a close look at the interactions between state and society that surrounded the efforts to engrave the names of the rank-and-file on the walls of *Savior-on-the-Waters*. Honoring these men was an important initiative, but one that existed alongside – and in tension with – other dynamics: getting the names right also provided ample opportunity for the state to scrutinize its population. I position this interplay to probe at one of the central historiographical debates that emerged from the (largely western based) "mnemonic turn" of the past few decades.[10] This debate concerns the location of agency regarding the construction and reception of monuments. In Russia, the state might seem a compelling candidate for lead role, and an obvious one, insofar as organization and purse-strings are concerned.

The alternative that I put forward is inspired by Jay Winter's notion of "social agency." Writing on WWI monuments in Britain, Winter suggests "that it is time to consider monuments

[9] Cohen, "Long Ago and Far Away," 389.
[10] Some of the most influential publications in the field include George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Antoine Prost, *Republican Identities in War and Peace: Representations of France in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries;*); Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1994); Alon Confino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method," *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 5 (Dec. 1997).

not solely as reflections of current political authority or a general consensus […] but rather as a set of profound and yet impermanent expressions of the force of civil society, that space which exists in the shadow of and in dialogue, with families on the one side and the state on the other."[11] Within the interdisciplinary field of war and memory, bound to navigate extremely complex feelings and with a foundational text – Pierre Nora's *lieux de mémoire* – that is mesmerizing and frustratingly translucent in equal measure, Winter's "social agency" is reassuringly archival.[12] In the years between the Russo-Japanese and First World Wars, I argue that it makes sense to consider such an agency as something that emerged through a process between state and society, and that the *paperwork trail* behind the lists of names inside the memorial church reflects a potent instance of "impermanent expression."

From the state's vantage point, there were multiple objectives to juggle and consider. Firstly, setting up memorials to thank soldiers for their sacrifice was an effective way of currying favor with the public. Secondly, the government – like others across the European continent – was striving for more informational about its population. The fin-de-siècle fascination with statistics aligned with the desire to ascertain which names belonged on the walls of Savior-on-the-Waters, and provided both impetus and opportunity for the state and its representative charitable bodies to check up on who was alive, who was dead, and who – importantly – was deserving of a pension. Thirdly, underpinning these considerations of imperial posturing and keeping tabs on the population were some powerful and sincerely held ideas that men of all ranks were deserving of a level of dignity in death – sentiments that were somewhat novel to the early twentieth century. These sentiments are evocatively illustrated in the diary of Lev Golubev, the

[11] Jay Winter, *Remembering War: The Great War Between Historical Memory and History in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 140.
[12] Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History, *Les Lieux de Mémoire," Representations* (Spring, 1989), No. 26: 77-24, 78.

man tasked by the government to organize the Russian dead in the far east. His retinue arrived at Port Arthur in 1907, the site of the war's great siege, and he was taken aback by the appearance of two of the large cemeteries. Both had been ransacked by Chinese locals within a year of the war's conclusion, but in the interim period the Japanese had restored them, constructing 1490 identical white crosses in the first cemetery. The second was not quite as large, but it still boasted a significant number. In his notes, Golubev wrote, "both of these cemeteries, despite the order in which they are kept, *make an extremely difficult impression due to the huge number of nameless crosses*."[13] In the booklet he published of his trip, he made sure to include a panorama that captured the scope of this stunted forest of gravestones [figure 29]. For all the multi-faceted

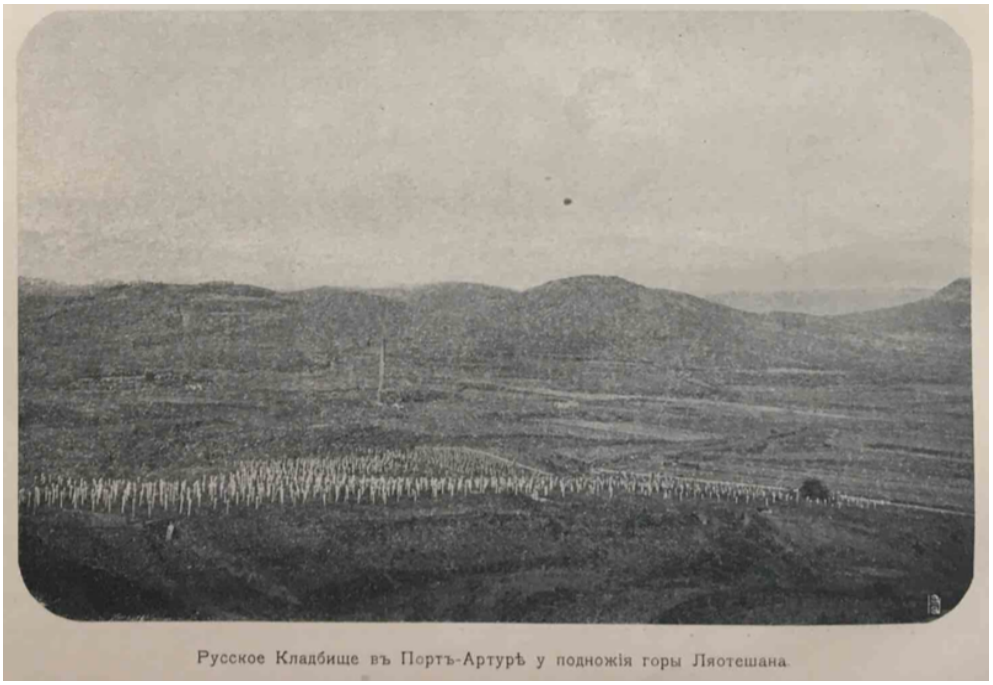


*Figure 30: "The Russian Graveyard in Port Arthur next to the Liaoteshan mountains. L.V. Golubev and L. M. Bolkovitinov, Doklad i otchet po obzoru kladbishch i mogil russkikh voinov v Manchzhurii (St. Petersburg, 1909), 54.*

[13] Italics my emphasis. L.V. Golubev and L. M. Bolkovitinov, *Doklad i otchet po obzoru kladbishch i mogil russkikh voinov v Manchzhurii* (St. Petersburg, 1909), 6;. Drew Gilpin Faust has written evocatively of how the rise of such military graveyards represented a paradigm shift, defined by the "force in their anonymity" and the way they projected not so much an individual loss, but the "enormous and all but unfathomable cost of the war" in question. Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Vintage Books, 2009), 249.

aspects of the Russian state's agenda, it is essential to keep Golubev's reaction in mind – it is reminiscent of the same sort of stultified horror surrounding the rumors about the fate of the *Savior-on-the-Water*'s name plaques.

The families on the other side of Winter's agency coin were not simply the passive recipients of governmental whim. Building off a far longer legacy of petitioning the state and the Tsar, the Russian public proved more than capable of redirecting the state's momentum to their own ends. As the state tried to ensure that they were not paying out pensions for dead men, cheap instructional booklets emerged instructing families how to make sure that they took advantage of everything the state had to offer.

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When conducting historical work, it is a rare and beautiful thing to be presented with two synchronous time periods that have been cut up and rearranged neatly next to one another. But in 1912, two groups of the military dead were being remembered at the same time despite the fact they had met their untimely ends nearly a hundred years apart. In the years preceding the outbreak of WWI, the memorialization projects of the Russo-Japanese War co-existed alongside another commemorative imperative: the 1812 centenary. Though the battle of Borodino had been a stalemate, Russia's clash with Napoleon's forces on the outskirts of Moscow had proved to be the turning point of the war, the first steps of a triumphant march that brought Tsar Alexander I all the way to the gates of Paris. To celebrate, a host of monuments were repaired or erected anew on notable battlegrounds or in their nearby towns.[14] In 1912, a total of thirty-six new

[14] Richard Wortman: "the field of Borodino fell into neglect until 1885, when Alexander III conducted large-scale maneuvers to mark the battle and ordered repair of many of the monuments." Richard Wortman, "Myth and

structures were erected around, or near to, Borodino itself. To quote Julie Buckler, over thirty of these were dedicated to "regiments, divisions, corps, artillery companies, and batteries of the Russian Army."[15] Thus, while the vast majority were designed to honor *groupings* of men, none shone an explicit light on the rank-and-file as meaningful and distinct individuals.

In an absence that speaks volumes, the vast majority of archival files on the 1812 centenary monuments simply do not register any interest on the subject of names beyond those of the top generals. For example, plans were underway in 1912 to erect a monument in the town of Kobryn, near to the site where Russia's army recorded their first outright victory over the French forces on 15 July 1812. Inscribed on the memorial was a list of the Russian regiments. The only names set into stone were those of the Tsar and General A. Tormasov, and the rest of the participants were acknowledged only via a list of divisions. In this instance, the lower ranks were acknowledged in their capacity as Napoleonic scalps – below the participating regiments, the battle "trophies" were listed: "4 banners, 8 guns, two generals, 76 officers, 2382 lower ranks."[16] The memorial church to the Russian war effort erected in Leipzig in 1913 followed a similar rubric. The committee responsible for the endeavor noted that the church needed to "to perpetuate the glorious memory of 24,000 Russian soldiers" who had died on the battlefields between 3-7 October 1813, but to do so on an individual basis was never put on the table. The only overture to broad participation were lists of participating regiments in the lower part of the church.[17] Another monument in Smolensk named the generals, indicated the total number of fighting forces, and the number of soldiers who lost their lives. A common thread joining these

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Memory – Imperial Evocations of 1812. Alexander I and the Russian People," in *Visual Texts, Ceremonial Texts, Texts of Exploration: Collected Articles* (Academic Studies Press, Boston, 2014): 145-179, 172.

[15] Julie Buckler, "Taking and Retaking the Field: Borodino as a Site of Collective Memory," in *Rites of Place: Public Commemoration in Russia and Eastern Europe* eds. Julie Buckler and Emily D. Johnson (Northwestern, 2013): 203-218; 213-214.

[16] RGIA, f. 1293, op. 168, d. 26, l. 2.

[17] RGIA, F. 1278, op. 6, d. 923, l. 3.

centenary memorials is that they were erected in memory of specific regiments. On August 26, 1911, for example, a memorial was unveiled to the Pavlovskii Regiment that named the dead and mortally injured officers but only listed the number of injured and dead lower ranks (injured: 312, dead 21).[18] Perhaps the closest the wave of Napoleonic War memorials came to referencing the rank-and-file was through architectural metaphor. Entitled "A Grateful Russia – To Its Defenders" and erected directly by the Borodino battle site, the striking monument is constructed out of stacked rows of artillery shells, an ominous nod to the monotonous destruction of military technology.

Even though centenary monuments were being built in 1912, at around the same time as *Savior-on-the-Waters,* the prospect of naming the rank-and-file from 1812 was an utterly foreign concept to the respective organizational committees. This was not simply due to the clear logistical difficulties. It is thus worth emphasizing that *Savior-on-the-Waters* was by no means the new norm, for other memorial churches to the Russo-Japanese War did not list the rank-and-file. Like the majority of large-scale monument efforts of the previous century, the Nikolai Cathedral in Kronstadt listed the officers who had died by name, but only noted the total number of lower ranks who had perished (8269). *Savior-on-the-Waters* represented what we might call the sharpest end of this new way of thinking about memorials.

As many excellent historical monographs on the subject have demonstrated, come the turn of the century, new ideas about self-identity and selfhood had become entrenched in ways that help explain why naming the rank-and-file had come about.[19] However, these notions were

[18] V. A. Ashik, *Pamiatniki i medali v pamiat' boevykh podvigov russkoi armii v voinakh 1812, 1813, i 1814 godov i v pamiat' imperatora Aleksandra I* (St. Petersburg, 1913), 19-20.
[19] Mark D. Steinberg, *Proletarian Imagination: Self, Modernity, and the Sacred in Russia, 1910-1925,* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002); Irina Paperno, 'What Can Be Done with Diaries', *Russian Review* 4, no. 63, (Oct 2004), 561–73.

clearly not being projected backwards onto personhoods past (albeit with the important caveat that the pragmatics of record-keeping must be considered alongside the impulse of moral imperative). As much as there was a change (in Russia as elsewhere) regarding the perceived value of an "ordinary man" – at some point, there was a transition whereby his claim to a name became somehow more vivid and vital, there were also aspects to this narrative that appear to be specific to Russia. Critically, a number of these initial efforts to name the rank-and-file were not done exclusively at a local level for community-building purposes, but to make statements in spaces that were politically precarious and geographically liminal – the colony, the borderlands, and graveyards located on foreign soil.

Some precursors from ancient Greece notwithstanding, it has been well established by historians of war and memory that the practice of inscribing names of *all* the men who died started in Prussia and France in the 1790s, before spreading slowly and sporadically across the continent during the nineteenth century.[20] Notable conflicts that furthered the process included the Crimean War, the American Civil War, the Franco-Prussian War and the two Boer wars. The practice in Western Europe originates with the ideals from the French Revolution that were carried across the continent by Napoleon's conquests. After the Wars of Liberation in Prussia, some churches put up plaques listing the names of the fallen from the local community.[21] Specifically local efforts also followed the Crimean War, such as a memorial that was erected in 1858 in Cheltenham, Britain, that listed fifteen rank-and-file on one side and twelve officers on the other.[22]

[20] Kirk Savage, *Monument Wars: Washington, D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape* (University of California Press, 2009), 239.
[21] Christopher Clark, "The Wars of Liberation in Prussian Memory: Reflections on the Memorialization of War in Early Nineteenth-Century Germany," *The Journal of Modern History* 68, no. 3 (1996): 550–76, 51.
[22] Amy Davidson, "War Memorial Landscape Heritage in England," *Garden History* 42 (2014): 58–72, 59.

In America, naming all the dead was similarly piecemeal. Thomas Brown locates the custom to specific communities in the wake of the Mexican War (1846-1848). In Chelmsford, Massachusetts, for example, an "elaborate shaft" was commissioned in 1859 that was "inscribed with the names of the dead and circumstances of their deaths."[23] During the Civil War itself, monuments bearing names became more common. Critically, these early name-based monuments were not state initiatives – they were either "soldier monuments," whereby the impetus came from one specific regiment, or "community monuments" undertaken by the local public – such as a brownstone obelisk that was dedicated in Berlin, Connecticut, bearing the name of each soldier who had died, as well as the date and the location.[24] The Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871) saw an uptick in terms of memorialization in general, but, similarly to the United States in the aftermath of the Civil War, the governments may have invested in memorials and graveyards (most famously at Gettysburg), but it was only those erected by "public conscription, municipal councils, departments and private committees" that made the effort to inscribe the names of the rank-and-file who had hailed from the area in question.[25] These were local and intimate gestures. It was only with the war that was supposed to end all wars that states stepped in to make the process both centralized and universal.

There are important changes within this greater shift towards naming. Initially, the rank-and-file were listed as part of memorials to particular regiments. In the United Kingdom, the

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[23] Thomas J. Brown, *Civil War Monuments and the Militarization of America,* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 16. On American Civil War memorialization, see also John R. Neff, *Honoring the Civil War Dead: Commemoration and the Problem of Reconciliation*, First Edition (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005); Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldier, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* (New Jersey: Princeton, 2018).
[24] Brown, *Civil War Monuments,* 18.
[25] Karine Varley, *Under the Shadow of Defeat: The War of 1870-71 in French Memory* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 61. See also this blogpost by the same author: https://francehistory.wordpress.com/2013/11/05/remembering-the-franco-prussian-war-dead-setting-precedents-for-the-first-world-war/ (accessed 22 Sept 2020).

Boer War marked a turning point, whereby the dead were "identified as both soldiers and citizens, as belonging to counties as well as regiments."[26] In Europe, it was not until after WWI that the practice of listing the dead in order of rank ceased. It is also worth noting that during these earlier efforts, as much as listing all the names of the dead represented a revolution, some things stayed the same. The dead were commonly listed in order of their rank, and those who held commissions were recognised as such. As Brown concludes, this system "correlated significantly with social status and largely mirrored the local order rather than advancing an alternative."[27]

In Russia, the sacrifices of the rank-and-file were not noted individually on public memorials after the Crimean War. A couple cropped up after the Russo-Turkish War. The "doctor's monument" in Sofia had the names of the 531 medical personnel who died in the war inscribed on stones around the outside. The monument to the grenadiers who had died during the battle of Plevna in Moscow is another notable example. However, the state explicitly framed this endeavor as a one-off, establishing at the same time a general rule that while officers could have "appropriate inscriptions" written on memorials, the rank-and-file would have to make do with the "*bratskaia mogila*," a simple "brotherly grave."[28] As such, Russia was relatively late to the memorialization game. However, looking for the belated replicate ghosts of mainstream European processes is not the best route to follow. When it comes to finding resonant aspects between named memorializations in western Europe and Russia prior to the First World War, the most salient overlap comes by way of imperialism. Colonial wars, a substratum of the memory-based historiography, have largely centered around British efforts to remember their dead in the

[26] K. S. Inglis, "War Memorials: Ten Questions for Historians," *Guerres Mondiales et Conflits Contemporains*, no. 167 (1992): 5–21, 7.
[27] Brown, *Civil War Monuments,* 29.
[28] V. V. Antonik, *Pamiatnik grenaderam, pavshim pod Plevnoi* (Moscow, 1986), 26.

wake of the Boer War.[29] Although much of the literature positions these memorials as a strict precursor to the memorial boom that erupted across the European continent after the end of WWI, some historians have productively emphasized the specifically imperial nature of these endeavors.[30] Jay Winter has argued that inscribing names on local memorials was "profoundly significant," because it "enabled ordinary people to locate this monumental moment in the history of the Empire within their own family narratives."[31] For Peter Donaldson, naming had come about due to the "combination of an increasingly literate public and a burgeoning populist press" that had "embedded the war firmly in the British national consciousness" and thus created this desire to remember.[32] Inscribing names helped the empire become more than an abstraction, something that was connected via blood and sacrifice.

Memorials that were built in imperial spaces themselves served a different purpose than those in the metropole. The British, for example, erected a host of stony testaments in India to native uprisings that had killed but failed. For example, the Hazara Expedition of 1888 was a campaign where the British fought against local tribal forces. The British dead were honored in a memorial to the Royal Sussex Regiment in Murree Hills, which listed the names of fifteen soldiers and three women.[33] These scenarios capitalized on the ability of monuments, in the words of Peter Robb, to "take possession of places." When monuments were placed in public

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[29] Mark Connelly and Peter Donaldson , "South African War (1899-1902) Memorials in Britain: A Case Study of Memorialization in London and Kent," *War and Society,* 29: 1 (May 2010); Peter McIntosh Donaldson, *Remembering the South African War: Britain and the Memory of the Anglo-Boer War from 1899 to the Present* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013); David Omissi and Andrew S. Thompson (eds), *The Impact of the South African War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 99-123.

[30] There are also some excellent studies on the post-WWI memorials to colonial troops: Hanna Smyth "'There is absolutely nothing like the carving of names': Imperial War Graves Commission Sites and First World War Memory." In Derek Mallett (ed), *Monumental Conflicts? Twentieth Century Wars and the Evolution of Popular Memory* (London: Routledge, 2017), 13-37.

[31] Jay Winter, *Remembering War*, 178

[32] Peter McIntosh Donaldson, *Remembering the South African War: Britain and the Memory of the Anglo-Boer War from 1899 to the Present* (Liverpool University Press, 2013), 2

[33] An image of this memorial can be found at Britain's National Army Museum.

areas, their implicit "praise of the dead helped prescribe the desirable characteristics of a would-be imperial race."[34]

*Figure 31: Image of the memorial at Andijan railway station. RGIA, f. 651, op. 2, d. 169, l. 4.*

One of Russia's earlier moves towards commemorating rank-and-file names came in 1901 in the city of Andijan, Turkestan.[35] The monument, a simple square obelisk erected by the train station, was funded by voluntary donations to commemorate twenty Russian soldiers who had died during an insurrection that took place on 17-18 May 1898. The names of the men were listed on the front side of the memorial, ordered by rank [figure 30].[36] The reverse side provided some context in language that explicitly delegitimized the insurrectionists: these men had died when their regiment was "attacked by Ishan-Madali's gang." The Andijan Uprising was "bloody but brief," to quote Alexander Morrison, and retrospectively considered to be a pivotal moment

[34] "Memory, Place and British memorials in early Calcutta, transcript of a lecture by Peter Robb," Ezra Rashkow et al., *Memory, Identity and the Colonial Encounter in India: Essays in Honour of Peter Robb* (Routledge India, 2017), 35.
[35] On previous memorial construction in Tashkent, see Sahadeo, *Russian Colonial Society in Tashkent,* 46.
[36] RGIA, f. 651, op. 2, d. 169, l. 4.

in Russia's colonial occupation of Turkestan.[37] On that night in May, 2,000 Muslim partisans under the leadership of Dukchi Ishan (also known as Madali) had attempted to take the Russian garrison by surprise.[38] However, simultaneous movements in other cities failed to materialize, and the far better armed Russian forces successfully put down the revolt, suffering only 20 injuries and 22 fatalities. The leader, Muhammad Ali Sabyr, was executed on 12 June.[39] In the words of Beatrice Manz, the Russian administration suffered a "major shock," for it had hitherto "considered the population relatively friendly to its rule."[40] Morrison goes so far as to characterize this sentiment as "paranoia."[41] With this context in mind, it seems that naming the dead Russian rank-and-file, and placing the monument beside a transport hub, was both a palliative to this fear and a warning against further revolt. The Russian authorities were exercising their colonial right to carve on to a public place and decide which names were worthy of being wrought into stone; the implication was that the names of the lowliest Russian rank-and-file would endure beyond the indigenous rebellion.

A more ambitious naming endeavor took place in another part of Russia's vast periphery after the Russo-Japanese War. In the Black Sea port city of Akkerman (modern day Bilhorod-Dnistrovskyi, Ukraine), an "elegant black marble obelisk" was erected that listed, by name and without any distinction of rank, all 152 men from the province who had died [figure 31]. At the time of the unveiling, the head of the committee was tentatively confident that it was "the only" such monument in Russia.[42] Insofar as it did not organize the dead according to rank or regiment,

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[37] Alexander Morrison, "Sufism, Pan-Islamism, and Information Panic: Nil Sergeevich Lykoshin and the Aftermath of the Andijan Uprising," *Past & Present* 214, No. 1 (Jan 2012): 255-304, 257.
[38] Komatsu Hisao, "The Andijan Uprising Reconsidered," in *Muslim Societies: Historical and Comparative Aspects*, ed. Satu Tsugitaka (Routledge: London, 2004): 29-61, 29.
[39] Morrison, "Sufism," 267.
[40] Beatrice Forbes Manz, "Central Asian Uprisings in the Nineteenth Century: Ferghana under the Russians," *The Russian Review* 46, No. 3 (Jul., 1987): 267-281, 267. See also Hisao, 47.
[41] Morrison, "Sufism," 259.
[42] *Okrytie pamiatnika v Akkermane* (Akkerman, 1913), 21.

but simply considered them as citizens and members of the community, it certainly seems to have been. Though it mimicked the region-based focus of the British, French, and American nineteenth century efforts, this memorial was erected in an area that was notably lacking in a unitary cultural identity. Akkerman had been conquered by the Ottoman Empire in the fifteenth century and occupied multiple times by Russian forces before it was officially incorporated into the empire in 1812. According to a survey conducted by the American Relief Administration in 1919, out of Akkerman's total population of 35,000, 8,000 were Romanian, 8,000 were Jewish, and 5,000 were German. Russians were a substantial minority, but a minority nonetheless.[43]

*Figure 32: The Akkerman Memorial,* Okrytie pamiatnika v Akkermane *(Akkerman, 1913), 1.*

[43] John Kaba, *Politico-economic Review of Basarabia* (1919), 41.

In early 1908, the Akkerman City Duma had formed a commission to oversee the construction of a monument built to honor Vasilii Riabov, the rank-and-file hero whose brave but doomed espionage mission had captured the attention of the nation (see chapter 3). This was a little unusual, as Riabov was from Penza province, well over 1,000 miles away. A year later, this local council decided that the monument should not just be dedicated to Riabov, but to all the soldiers from Akkerman county who had died in the far east. The commission described these fallen men as "unacknowledged heroes." The front of the monument would be dedicated to Riabov, but all the other names were to be listed on the three remaining sides.[44]

When petitioning the state-sponsored Committee for Perpetuating Memory for an extra 1000 rubles, the Akkerman Commission laid out their reasoning for including the names. The "aim" of this monument project to the local dead was "to foster a patriotic feeling and strengthen the confidence among the people (*narod*) that Russian people (*liudi*) deeply and heartily value the loss of their sons, are proud of their courage, and honor their deaths."[45] This language not only distinguished between the local inhabitants and "Russians," but implicitly nodded towards a hierarchy of sacrifice whereby non-Russians lost their sons to Russia's cause. Through the organization process, the Akkerman committee made efforts to balance out Riabov's famous story against the more veiled narratives of the other men. Riabov's feats, and above all his dying words "for Tsar, Country and God," were described in a pamphlet, and 1000 copies were distributed among the residents of Akkerman. Notably, this document was circulated in both German and Russian. In addition, information was solicited about the soldiers who had died from among its residents. It would seem that the memorial was met positively by the local inhabitants.

[44] RGIA, f. 552, op. 1, d. 242, l. 74.
[45] RGIA, f. 552, op. 1, d. 242, l. 76.

Although the city Duma was 1000 rubles short of the total 2500 sum from donations by the start of 1910, half of the region's population had responded.[46]

Lending support to the supposition that this monument was designed – at least in part – with local ethnic tensions in mind was the prominent role of the Chairman of the Odessa Union of Russian People, a far-right political group, at the unveiling ceremony on 14 May 1912. In his speech, N. N. Rozdevich reiterated the importance of Riabov's story, before adding, "although we do not know the circumstances of the death of 152 Akkermans who died in the Russo-Japanese War, we can say confidently that their deaths were heroic."[47] Likewise linking the men from this region with a history of dissenting violence with a hero-soldier from the heartlands of Russia, another speaker at the unveiling ceremony assured the crowd that the 152 men had "followed in his [Riabov's] path." Turning to the effect of the engraved names themselves, the author of the pamphlet (and Chairman of the Akkerman monument's committee), G. Kostiurin, wrote:

> The common (*prostoi*) people appreciated perfectly the significance of the monument. The locals told me that Akkerman had not seen a crowd of people such as the one gathered on May 14. In particular, attention was drawn to a group of women who were profusely shedding tears at the monument: they were the widows and mothers of the victims. It was impossible to look without tears at one old woman who had lost her only son in the war.

[46] RGIA, f. 552, op. 1, d. 242, l. 74.
[47] *Okrytie pamiatnika v Akkermane,* 16.

> It seemed that she did not see the crowd surrounding her. She gazed pensive and pleading at the monument, on which, among others, stood the name of her "beloved." It appeared that she was not seeing cold marble before her, but the lovely features of her "falcon" who had died there, far away, in the fields of Manchuria .... and tears streamed abundantly down her elderly face.[48]

According to Kostiurin, the message that "death on the battlefield is really an honourable death" had been thoroughly been driven home, and that such a concept of honor had, with the help of Riabov, been woven tightly around the Romanov dynasty. And yet, as much as the point of this memorial on the borderland was patriotic education, less an authentic expression of community sentiment as it was an effort to manufacture one, this excerpt also reflects the power of setting a name in stone. It was a very moving experience that resonated with something critical to modern selfhood at the turn of the twentieth century.[49] For the poor bereaved woman, it seems that the name in stone meaningfully represented her son, such that the people who watched her believed that she was witnessing the transformation of her son's name into the "lovely features" of his personhood. Irrespective of whether the purpose was honest or manipulative (and it was surely degrees of both), the monument at Akkerman reinforced the idea that community-based naming was a potent tool.

A handful of named memorials to Russia's dead rank-and-file were even erected not on Russian soil at all but on foreign lands. These efforts, while on one level making a sincere effort to honor the dead, also seemed intent on clawing back for Russia a degree of the reputation that

[48] *Okrytie pamiatnika v Akkermane,* 19-20.
[49] On Russia's use of churches to project the idea of the nation beyond their own borders, see Wortman, *Scenarios of Power* vol.2, 249-56.

had been so thoroughly sullied at the Tsushima straights. In the aftermath of the war, memorials were thus put up in Japan and Shanghai that had foreign audiences in mind.

At the start of February 1910, the General Naval Staff was asked if it were willing to back a long-standing initiative to set up a monument in a Shanghai graveyard. The monument was to be literally over an officer's grave, but it was to list the names and ranks of all the men who had died during the evacuation after the war.[50] Right at the end of the fighting in September 1905, Russia's military agent in China, Major General Desino, had complained that 24 men – one officer and ten rank-and-file from the army, nine lower ranks from the navy, and five civilians who had been aboard military vessels – had been buried in a Christian cemetery in Shanghai without any crosses or monuments. In 1905, Desino had wanted to put up a monument over the officer's grave, and for the rank-and-file, "the same crosses that are set on the graves of foreign sailors." As a Christian cemetery in China, this was a graveyard largely utilized by foreigners; it would seem that a powerful tactic to getting money out of the War Ministry was to play on the idea that the eyes of Russia's international rivals were burning into the back of their head.

Back in 1905, Desino's appeals had not been well received.[51] A report penned in 1910 by the new military agent, Colonel Val'ter, lamented this, pointing out that the Russian bodies had ended up in the "cheap half of the cemetery." Adding insult to injury, while the other foreign powers represented in this cemetery had gathered their dead together – "the United States occupies a large corner plot" – the Russian graves were "scattered among the graves of others." Colonel Val'ter had acted decisively, apportioning money to purchase a plot of land within that

[50] RGAVMF, f. 418, op. 1-4, d. 5869, l. 1.
[51] RGVIA, f. 1, op. 1, d. 67223, l. 466.

cemetery sufficiently large for all of the Russians to be buried together, side by side. He also set money aside for a fence to go around the Russian area, and for "one common monument on which to make inscriptions of the names of all the buried." There were to be six white marble boards, onto which would be carved the name, surname, military unit and date of death. These surrounded a plaque that bore the words: "The mass grave of the ranks of the Russian Army and Navy, participants in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5, who died in Shanghai from wounds and illnesses."[52] This was not only written in Russian but translated into English; the Russian state's desire to do right by their dead was complemented by the incentive to *make sure other people knew* they were doing right by their dead. Two more sentences were inscribed on the back of the memorial, also with English translations: "[To] Their sons, who died in a foreign land," then, last but clearly not least: "Built by the care of the Russian Government." While this monument was built in China, the intended audience was the other western powers who had claimed space in this graveyard. Names were also considered in other places were the audience was not exclusively Russian. They had, for example, been proposed in the memorial church that was built in Harbin. While these never came to pass, boards for listing the names, surnames, and units of the fallen soldiers had been seriously considered during the planning stage in 1910.[53]

The Russian dead in Japan posed a more complex problem, due to sheer numbers and island-based logistics. This presents itself as one of the most compelling case studies in terms of post-war memorialization scenarios, because the Japanese authorities had buried the corpses, and provided the Russian government with a full and detailed report. As such, not only can we see what the Japanese presumed the Russians wanted done to their dead in 1904-05, but what the

[52] RGAVMF, f. 418, op. 1, d. 5869, l. 3.
[53] RGIA, f. 552, op. 1, d. 252, l. 74.

Russians actually did when the opportunity arose to alter the scenario five years later. In early 1909, the decision was made that the bodies of Russian soldiers and sailors across Japan should be consolidated all together in one graveyard in Nagasaki for the sake of easier upkeep. Colonel Samilov, Russia's military agent in Japan, travelled 6,080 miles across the islands, locating 464 graves scattered at 62 different locations. They overwhelmingly consisted of men who had died in prison camps or washed up on the shores after Tsushima. Unlike the consolidation efforts in Korea (as described in chapter 3), Samilov's reports in Japan foregrounded the importance of the names of the dead right from the start. In his report/letter of 9 June 1909, his very first sentence was: "I have completed a tour of all the places where our deceased ground and naval ranks were buried, and names have been identified."[54] One of the priorities of his tour of Japan was to check the names "on the spot," so as to negate the risk of bodies and names being confused during the transport process. Another objective was to make sure that the less-than-smooth translation and transliteration between Russian and Japanese had not separated men from their bodies. Instances where he was not able to check the names caused him regret. For example, before he could arrive in Mayzdur three sets of remains had been dug up by the Japanese Ministry of War, and he was only able to obtain the information from them that the bodies had belonged to the battleship *Orel.* He lamented: "In view of the transfer of these remains, it is not possible to check the names of the deceased before their arrival in Nagasaki."[55]

The primacy of names throughout Samilov's trip was reinforced by the places he decided not to visit. Some of the unknown seamen had washed up on Japan's western shoreline (this faced the sea where the battle of Tsushima had taken place), and Samilov decided not to undertake such a trip because this area was "not connected with a common network of railways"

[54] RGIA, f. 552, op. 1, d. 250, l. 76.
[55] RGIA, f. 552, op. 1, d. 250, l. 76.

and as such could delay the process for "another whole month." More to the point, the undertaking would bring no information, as it had already been established that these bodies were unidentifiable. In the Japanese report, these were listed as bodies that had been "discarded by the sea and buried." These bodies – more of which were constantly being discovered – were to be transferred to Nagasaki, but they were not worth seeing in person.

The few instances where it was decided not to relocate bodies to Nagasaki likewise indicate that the pre-existing existence of inscribed names was a significant factor.[56] Not including Nagasaki (the ultimate destination), there were six instances where it was decided to leave the bodies. The largest exceptions were the graveyards in Matsuyama and Hamader. In Matsuyama, where 97 bodies were located, the Japanese report noted that "the cemetery is well organized, the graves are marked with stone columns with Japanese inscriptions, and there is a stone monument with plaques on which the names are written in Russian." A similar case was made for the other large collection of Russian dead. 89 men had been laid to rest in the town of Hamadera (modern day Izumiyotsu). Though there was no "general list" of names here, these notes tell us that "the graves were put in a special cemetery on the seashore and marked with standing stone slabs, on which there are inscriptions in Russian and Japanese." The next largest exception was on the island of Oki, where, 12 unknown sailors had washed up on the shores and had been buried under a well-kept monument. The other exceptions were far smaller but involved named individuals: single officers were buried in the towns of Kumamoto and Shizoku, and there were two lower ranks in the town of Toyohashi.[57]

A such, the preconditions for *not* consolidating the bodies in Nagasaki were the presence of names and inscriptions that were in good condition. It was in scenarios where the inscriptions

[56] Another factor was the presence of Orthodox Churches in these locations. RGAVMF, f. 418, op. 1, d. 4475, l. 23.
[57] RGIA, f. 552, op. 1, d. 250, l. 78.

were less-than-perfect, or there had been no efforts at naming at all, that they were moved. This was the case in Fukuyama where, though the graves were marked with stone columns with inscriptions in Japanese and Russian, "the latter was poorly carved and barely visible." Modzi was a far more straightforward decision. Here, three rank-and-file had been buried in an old city cemetery, and in the part where the Russians lay was "scarcely visited" and the "graves were overgrown with grass."[58]

In most quarters, the Japanese were roundly applauded for their efforts in maintaining the graves of Russian men who had been committed to their soil. There were, however, certain voices that felt compelled to question their motives – and the fact that it shone a shoddy light on Russia's treatment of their own dead. In 1908, the local diocesan journal out of Ryazan published an article that held up the Japanese efforts to commemorate the Russian dead in Hamatera and Matsuyama in order to chastise the state of graveyards closer to home, which all too frequently seemed to offer "free access to animals."[59] According to Father Khoroshevskii, author of the piece, only three cemeteries out of 81 in the Russian diocese could be considered in "excellent shape." Khoroshevskii's point of reference was a trip made through Japan by the ranking clergy, Archbishop Nicholas in the previous year as a foil. The Archbishop had been "extremely delighted and surprised by the sight in which he found their graves," particularly by how the "modest wooden crosses" had been replaced by granite monuments, and "on each of them there is the name, rank, and designation of the military unit in which the deceased had served." Khoroshevskii, grinding his axe, reframed this observation as a shame-ridden rhetorical question: "what prompted them [the Japanese] to immortalize the graves of Russian soldiers with expensive monuments indicating the name and rank of the deceased?"

[58] RGIA, f. 552, op. 1, d. 250, l. 78.
[59] "Iazychniki i Khristiane," *Riazanskie eparkhial'nye vedomosti*, no. 12 (15 June 1908); 451-455.

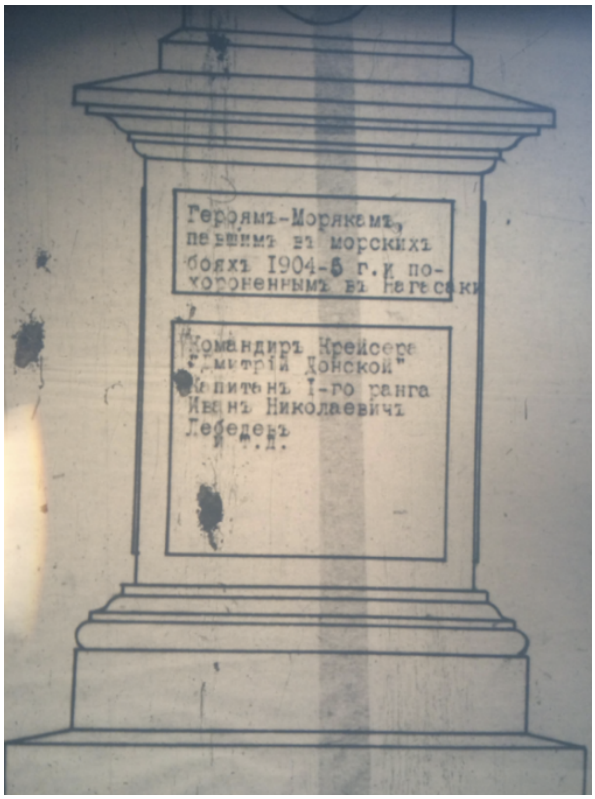


*Figure 33: Representation of the Nagasaki monument. RGAVMF, f. 417, op. 2, d. 166, l. 3.*

In the end, 220 bodies were relocated to Nagasaki, where a monument was raised with boards inscribed with the names of all the known men in the graveyard. Even when doubts were raised about the cost of this – 500 yen was considered a "significant expense" – the other option put forward, to build a chapel, still stuck to the naming principle. If there was to be a chapel, the architect wrote, then there could be "copper plaques bearing the names of the buried" on the inner walls, "next to an icon with an inextinguishable lamp."[60] The novelty of this endeavor is reflected in the decision of the Russian attaché not simply to describe the monument plaque in words, but to include a diagram that utilized a typewriter to highlight the clarity of the engravings [figure 32].[61] The fact that the first example name belonged to Captain Lebedev, who

[60] RGIA, f. 552, op. 1, d. 250, l.85.
[61] RGAVMF, f. 417, op. 2, d. 166, l. 3.

had commanded the fated battleship *Dimitrii Donskoi* and whose remains were therefore the most illustrious in the graveyard, does indicate that the glorification of the rank-and-file was not top of the priority list for this memorial initiative. And yet, they were included.

The fact that this memorial was in Nagasaki, where the Russian government was no doubt compelled by the war's outcome to put their best foot forward, does encourage the interpretation that foreign pressures played a role in the decision not to spare expenses. Nonetheless, the decisions surrounding which remains were moved to the capital does show that certain notions were gaining traction. One of these ideas was that a buried body without a name – *if that name was known* – had become vexing. By the same token, the architects working on the Nagasaki monument explicitly pointed out that when it came to making decisions regarding the font and size of the inscriptions, the fact that the unknown men were not going to be acknowledged on the monument needed to be borne in mind. Bodies without names created problematic blank spaces.

In summary, the road to the inscription of 8000 names on the walls of Savior-on-the-Waters was long, passing through vast swathes of geographic space. The most striking feature of this road was the interplay of instrumentalization and legitimate cultural concerns for the process. There seems to be little doubt that, to some extent, the dead were named in Akkerman to placate a politically precarious borderland region, in Andijan to intimidate, and in Nagasaki and Shanghai to save international face. Yet at the same time, once it was established that names were to be inscribed, the prospect of getting it wrong, of mismatching a name to a body, or having bodies left unnamed, was vastly troubling.

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This section places the *Savior-on-the-Waters* at the crossroads between the desire to remember those who had died at Tsushima and the broader web of bureaucracy, surveillance, and material benefits. To inscribe names was to honor, but the process of ascertaining whose name belonged on the walls of the memorial church enabled the state to investigate who was genuinely deserving of pensions. I argue that focusing on this intersection between memorial making and state surveillance adds some much-needed flesh to Jay Winter's ideal of "social agency," which he introduced while expressing frustration at the state of the field of collective remembrance. The problem, he wrote, is that it was suspended between "two extreme and unacceptable positions […] between those (following Bergson) who argue that private memories are ineffable and individual, and those (following Durkheim) who see them as entirely socially determined and therefore present whether anyone acts on them." In trying to theorize the "palpable, messy activity" in-between these two poles, Winter put forward the idea that monuments were "impermanent expressions of the force of civil society," and that these expressions were revealed in the interaction between the state and the family units.[62] Winter's writing is compelling but theoretical, for he offers no examples as to what such interactions might look like. The stage is set for the *Savior-on-the-Waters.*

Exploring expression in an "impermanent" state requires moving away from many of the mainstays of the war and memory literature – architecture, sculpture, reception, the contestations of public space – and towards the paperwork that gave the monument in question its list of names. The papers in the archives that worked towards finalizing the list of names are full of scratches out, revisions, and they were not intended to be viewed by the public as part of the

[62] Winter, *Remembering War*, 139-140.

monument. Less Pierre Nora and more Ann Stoler, these documents require "reading against the grain" by pulling out salient information from the reams of forms, questionnaires, and inquiries that institutions like the Aleksandrovskii Committee produced in order to verify the categories of life and death.[63]

Somewhat curiously, in the European and American historiography the "why's" of naming the rank-and-file have not generated much more debate than the "when's." Questions of democracy loom large, as do ideas of the nation. In his analysis of the American Civil War, Thomas Brown frames the process of naming as a reflection of a "commitment to the realization of the full humanity of each individual."[64] Others have pointed to the Anglo-American Victorian culture of self-representation, and the concomitant fear that a lack of representation somehow indicated a lesser existence.[65]

Among other things, considering *Savior-on-the-Waters* within this framework enables productive engagement with Aaron Cohen's work, whose publications – and specifically a recent monograph on Russian War Memorials – puts forward a compelling argument for the pre-eminence of the Romanov dynasty and the centralized state within all imperial memorialization processes. Cohen argues that the roots of "monumental expressions of war-related bereavement" were tightly round around the wars of late imperial Russia, and "remained the preserve of the Romanov dynasty in the face of weak or non-existent local initiative."[66] As the previous section established, it does largely seem that even monuments like the one installed at Akkerman, which

[63] Ann Stoler, "Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance," *Archival Science* 2, (2002); 87-109, 100.
[64] Thomas Brown, *Civil War Monuments,* 19; Kirk Savage makes the point that names also erased differences, such as race. Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldier, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* (New Jersey: Princeton, 2018), 176.
[65] Alice Fahs, *The Imagined Civil War: Popular Literature of the North and South, 1861-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 101.
[66] Aaron J. Cohen, *War Monuments, Public Patriotism, and Bereavement in Russia, 1905-2015* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2020), xviii.

did show local initiative and celebrated the soldier among the community milieux as opposed to a member of regiment, did ultimately work to "reify Romanov political legitimacy."[67]

Cohen's interpretation is rooted in the idea that the government was the major beneficiary of memorial initiatives like *Savior-on-the-Waters*. Yet, the illustrated press coverage was not consistent in its coverage of the memorial temple, and some outlets presented a story that placed far more emphasis on the fact that this was a victory for the common man and civil society. In May 1910, *Ogonek* covered the ceremony for the laying down of the memorial church's foundation stone and placed its emphasis on the "highest" royal personas that graced the event, yet the magazine had nothing to say about the opening of the church.[68] *Iskry,* on the other hand, covered the opening of the church in August the following year. It also leant heavily into the


*Figure 34: The memorial church to the Russian sailors who died during the war with Japan.* Iskry*, no. 31 (14 August 1911): 2.*

[67] Cohen, *War Monuments*, 2.
[68] "Torzhestvennaia zakladka khrama-pamiatnika v pamiat' pogibshikh v Tsusimskom boio," *Ogonek*, no. 21 (22 May 1910): 18.

democratic storylines the Church proffered [figure 33]; the first of the two images showed the memorial boards, and the prominent place that they occupied within the church.[69] The caption read "the right wall of the temple. Under the icons are bronze plaques with the names of the dead." The second of the two photographs showed off the church's beautiful exterior and a ceremonial march taking place to celebrate its opening. However, it adopts a shoulder-height perspective from *among* the crowd of soldiers. The camera here does not claim a front row seat, indicating – perhaps – a solidarity with the lower ranks, rather than the princes, princesses, and generals. On the whole, though, moving the historiographical conversation forward requires looking beyond this monarchist outer shell to the papery substances swirling beneath.

If the case of Nagasaki demonstrated that the presence of bodies alongside records encouraged inscriptions, the *Savior-on-the-Waters* showed that the opposite could also be true. This church with the names on the inside was fundamentally shaped by the specific circumstances it commemorated: a naval battle that killed thousands and left very few bodies. Waxing lyrical on the opening ceremony, General Bogdanov described the *Savior-on-the-Waters* memorial as a "brotherly grave of the mind" (*myslennaia bratskaia mogila*).[70] Unlike the smaller memorials in the previous section, the names of these dead were not built over their bodies.

The effective severance between names and bodies was a central theme in a book published in 1915 by the committee which had built the church. Compiled by the project's chief engineer, S. N. Smirnov, the expensive tome combines towering overtures towards the Tsar and the royal family with an earnest desire to describe the processes at work behind the venture. The introductory "brief historical sketch," presumably written by Smirnov himself, provides some

[69] "Khram – pamiatnik russkim moriakam, pogibshim v voine s Iaponiei," *Iskry,* no. 31 (14 August 1911): 2.
[70] RGAMVF, f. 479, op. 2, d. 66, l. 35.

critical insights into the committee's rationale behind the naming.[71] The issue of names was framed explicitly within the context of the naval battle of Tsushima, and specifically the number of dead men who "did not have to be buried." With phrasing that reinforced the centrality of the absent body, the author vividly described how, irrespective of the state of the corpses – wounded, mutilated, burned – the "abyss closed over them" and the "sea waves scattered them." There was, and could never be, "a trace of their graves, a path to these graves, a cross above them." The absence of the body duly established, the narrative turns to one member of the committee, P. N. Ogarev, who introduced the idea that the "temple should be a *symbol* of a mass grave… where relatives and friends should come to pray for them." Ogarev went so far as to suggest that "donations for the creation of such a temple would be like that handful of earth, which, according to the custom of the church, is sprinkled onto the coffin of the deceased when it is lowered into the grave." Indeed, the call for donations itself concluded by equating contributions to a "farewell handful of earth." [72]

The text then moved to consider the issue of inclusivity, to the idea that all the names, "from admiral to junior seaman," should be made "immortal." Much of the rhetoric around this naming endeavour was in keeping with pre-existing memorial forms. Putting themselves in the shoes of an imaginary visitor, the author envisioned that seeing the "sad tablets with the names of the dead inside the church" would act to "inspire future generations." At one point, the text explicitly compared this lettered tableaux as a corollary to more traditional forms of remembrance, such as "laying flowers at Suvorov's memorial plaque" or at the icon of the battleship *Alexander III.* Yet, as in Akkerman, subtle overtures also indicated an awareness that the presence of the names encouraged distinctly new types of mourning. The author described an

[71] TsGIA, f. 2185, op. 1, d. 12, l. 25.
[72] S. N. Smirnov, *Khram pamiatnik moriakam pogibshim v voinu s Iaponiei v 1904-1905gg* (Petrograd, 1915), xii.

evocative scenario: "widows, children, fathers, mothers and friends whisper (*sheptat'*) words of prayer, leaning against a board with a dear name." The "endless rows of names" would be exciting for "everyone in which a human heart beats." Startlingly intimate and tactile, this script substituted the living body for the absent dead, positioning the inscribed name as the conduit.[73]

The reification of the names after the Church had been finished is reflected in the arduous process it took to ensure that the names on the wall were correct. The Aleksandrovskii Committee for the Wounded played a key role in helping to identify the men who had died. As such, they also feature prominently on the side of the "state," as per Winter's formulation. Founded by Alexander I in 1814, the Committee provided financial help to wounded soldiers and families who had lost relatives. The Aleksandrovskii Committee is often described as a "semi-official body"; they were a charity that enjoyed a great deal of royal patronage yet were not entirely supported by the state.[74] This provided a degree of flexibility. Although any wife or child (or, if the soldier had been single, a parent) who had lost a family member could apply for a one-time allowance from the committee, the amount they would receive was not established by any law, and the Committee could determine the allocation of its funds at its own discretion.[75] In 1900, for example, the committee had an annual revenue of 4,890,409 rubles, and a total expenditure of 3,316,795 rubles. Money was assigned on a case-by-case basis; some men or their families were awarded pensions for life (67% of the total amount), while others received a one-time payment (16% of the total).[76]

[73] It's hard not to think of Maya Lin's Vietnam Memorial when reading these descriptions.
[74] For example, Melissa K. Stockdale, "United in Gratitude: Honoring Soldiers and Defining the Nation in Russia's Great War," *Kritika* 7, No. 3, (Summer 2006): 459-485, 465.
[75] I. G. Doronin, *Kak vykhlopotat' ezhegodnoe posobie iz Aleksandrovskogo Komiteta ranenomu soldatu ili sem'e soldata pogibshogo na voine* (Vilno, 1914), 8.
[76] *Otchet Aleksandrovskogo Komiteta o ranenykh za 1900 god* (St, Petersburg, 1900), 26-27.

In order to receive money, the applicant had to shoulder certain burdens of proof – and it is here that the paperwork intersected with the confirmation of deaths that were being sought out by the Naval Ministry. In order to make a successful application, one's objectives, process, and timeframe for action had to be clear. For example, in 1855, staff-captain Sokhatsky was wounded when a bomb fragment hit his head at Sevastapol. He was awarded a pension through the Aleksandrovskii Committee of 210 roubles. However, he was later found guilty in 1884 of embezzling the state. One of the committee's "success stories" was that by 1900, it had managed to reinstate Sokhasty's pension to his daughter Juliana who, on account of her father's misdeeds, had been exiled to Tomsk province. But, to access her (now) dead father's pension, Juliana had to have her destitution certified by the Governor of the province, in addition to the military-medical scientific committee.[77]

This no-doubt daunting process gave rise to books that aimed to help injured soldiers and bereaved family members by clearly instructing them how to claim money from the committee. In order to apply for a one-off payment, the requesting party needed to present a document that confirmed the fate of the soldier in question, the applicant's own identity card, and proof of poverty (thus a need for benefits). It did not matter if the soldier had died or disappeared; a body was not needed, just a piece of paper.[78] Peasants could get these documents from the volost board, and families of soldiers from other classes could do so from the police. They were free and exempt from stamp duty. The criteria for a yearly allowance was somewhat more stringent. In these scenarios, the widow or orphan needed to present certification of a "lack of property" (that would not bring in more than 300 rubles of income a year), a certificate that proved the "number and age of children" (the example listed three young children), and finally, proof that

[77] *Otchet Aleksandrovskogo Komiteta,* 6.
[78] Doronin, *Kak vykhlopotat',* 9.

they were *not* already being taken care in an alms-house, or receiving help from another charity.[79]

According to the archival files , as the Naval Ministry drew up its lists for the interior walls of *Savior-on-the-Waters*, the Aleksandrovskii Committee interjected with queries – what happened to Alexei Antonov? (He died from injuries during the defence of Port Arthur.) Do you have any information regarding the fate of Ivan Konovalov? (He died in prison in Japan.)[80] Overall, the Committee presents as a combination of routine inquiries, rote documents, and fill-in-the-blank forms. These forms tasked for basic information – where the soldier or sailor had served, in what campaigns, the address on file – before moving onto the circumstances surrounding their death or wounding. The level of details they sought were striking. How had they been wounded? Where on the body? Were they serious or light? In which hospital had they been treated? The lists of the dead on the walls of *Savior-on-the-Waters*, neatly ordered by boat and rank, were a means through which the chaotic nature of the losses at Tsushima could be tamed. The Committee's standardized forms mirrored this process. If men scattered through the ocean could be placed back into reassuring formation, then a different committee form looked to collate the myriad ways of wartime death into three overarching categories: in action, in prison, *en route* home.

With thousands of miles separating the battlefields of the far east from Russia's capital, it is hardly surprising that this system was riddled with pitfalls – and it is not surprising to stumble over things like the number of men who had the surname Ivanov.[81] It is also clear, though, that certain individuals were adept at making these pitfalls work for their own benefit, and that the

[79] Doronin, *Kak vykhlopotat'*, 12.
[80] RGAVMF, f. 417, op. 4, d. 6034, ll. 74, 300.
[81] RGVAMF, f. 417, op. 4, d. 5845, l. 298.

Aleksandrovskii Committee did not conduct their due diligence without due cause. On one occasion, the Naval Ministry reached out to Kronstadt to ask if they had any information on two sailors who, though listed as mortally wounded, had not been on the original lists of men who had left for the far east. While one had been a legitimate victim who was accidentally left off the lists, the other had never had any connection with Russia's Baltic seaports.[82] Other pieces of correspondence indicate that this problem was more widespread – in April 1906, a Committee based at Port Arthur Committee issued a harsh rebuke to the Naval Ministry. It had been discovered that people were "posing as sailors," despite "never having been to Port Arthur." This abuse risked the "completely incorrect distribution of benefits."[83]

Alongside the relatively standard inquiries were trickier cases, and it is here that characters and families – the opposing pole to the "state" – have one opportunity to emerge out of the archive. For example, in September 1910, Anatoly Chemodanov's wife wrote to the Naval Office to plead her case. In 1904, her husband had left on a ship for the far east, and she had not seen him since. Her husband's disappearance had caused more than grief; she did not know where his passport was, and as a result she was unable to work herself. She pleaded: "I cannot work in St. Petersburg, which is why I fell into extreme and hopeless poverty, and I am almost starving." She had two requests: a cash allowance, and a certificate confirming the death of her husband so that she could obtain the residence permit she needed to work.[84] The head of the archive was unable to help, because comprehensive records for the lower ranks had not been handed over.[85] It turned out that Anatolii Chemodanov was very alive and well – they sent the

[82] RGVAMF, f. 417, op. 4, d. 5845, l. 52.
[83] RGAVMF, f. 417, op. 4, d. 5845, l. 68.
[84] RGAMVF, f. 417, op. 4, d. 6034, l. 734.
[85] RGAMVF, f. 417, op. 4, d. 6034, l. 754.

local police to check – and living in the town of Sarapul.[86] There was to be no pension for his wife, and no inscription for Chemodanov. An essential precursor to consider here is the long legacy in the Russian empire of peasant petitions to the Tsar. During all eras except for the reign of Catherine the Great, peasants in Russia were able to directly petition the tsar with their grievances. As Andrew Verner has argued, it makes sense to approach these petitions as "complex negotiations," rather than transparent statements of the peasant will.[87] The language and approach were crucial tactics: as Emily Pyle has pointed out, while some peasants asked for aid during WWI by pointing to the law that guaranteed that aid, most peasants requested what they were due as a form of charity or benevolence. In doing so, they leveraged a "moral claim to aid."[88]

While literacy was clearly helpful, it was not necessary to participate in the petitions system. One of the instructional books on how to request money from the committee even included an example application that had been signed for on behalf of an illiterate widow.[89] The archive also contains cases where requests were sent in for information so that petitions for allowances could be made in the first place. For example, in September 1910, Armund Ivanov had a proxy write into the Naval Headquarters to ask for the details surrounding his son Fyodor's death. Even though the Ivanov family knew that Fyodor had died at Tsushima, he needed more information beyond this in order to petition for an allowance.[90] In his current circumstances, he was the sole provider for his wife and young daughter and yet "left without bread in my old age."

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[86] RGAMVF, f. 417, op. 4, d. 6034, l. 763. For an excellent framing of petitions as nnuanced sources, see Barbara Alpern Engel, *Breaking the Ties That Bound: The Politics of Marital Strife in Late Imperial Russia* (Cornell University Press, 2011), 6-7, 37-39.
[87] Andrew Verner, "Discursive Strategies in the 1905 Revolution: Peasant Petitions from Vladimir Province," *Russian Review* 54, no. 1 (Jan .1995): 65-90, 67.
[88] Emily E. Pyle, "Peasant Strategies for Obtaining State Aid: A Study of Petitions During World War I," *Russian History* 24, no. 1/2 (Spring-Summer 1997): 41-64, 42.
[89] Doronin, *Kak vykhlopotat',* 9.
[90] RGAMVF, f..417, op. 4., d. 6034., l. 298.

The author of his letter knew exactly what to emphasize – his family size and his lack of income – in order to get results. These exchanges can be seen as a particular pronged extension of a far broader universe of interaction between the public and the government.

Being literate, though, did help with the world beyond the government. During the Russo-Japanese War itself, the committee requested lists of the dead from the Naval Ministry so that they could inform family members of their potential charitable services.[91] Pen marks scrawled over the circulars' typeface show us something of the Aleksandrovskii Committee's process work. Pencil ticks were added beside men who were confirmed dead; their names marked with "bachelor" (*kholost'*) or "married" (*zhenat*) to determine where pensions might be paid.[92] The communication networks between the Aleksandrovskii Committee and the Naval Ministry were clearly less than ideal: the Committee prefaced this request with the observation that lists of the dead had already been published in the *Government Gazette* (*Pravitel'stvennyi vestnik*) and *Russian Veteran* newspapers.

The fact that newspapers were beating out the government in delivering this information opens up another space besides petitions for accessing the intentions and strategies of non-state actors. During the war, the *Bulletin of the Manchurian Army* regularly printed notes from relatives in the "letters to the editor" section asking for information about their loved ones. On 11 November 1904, for example, Nadezhda Kuryshkina issued a plea. She understood that her husband Ivan, a lieutenant colonel, had been killed, because his name had appeared on the list of losses from an offensive that took place on 28-29 September. She was writing to the *Bulletin* to appeal for more specific information. For Kuryshkina, it was pressingly important to learn the

[91] RGAMVF, f. 417, op. 4, d. 5682, l. 1.
[92] RGVAMF, f. 417, op. 4, d. 5682, l. 23-24.

exact day – 28 or 29 September – when Ivan had died. Any additional news about his demise, she begged the reader, would ease her suffering considerably.

On November 25, Kuryshkina appears again, and her story had evolved substantially over the course of this fortnight. She had received further information about her husband. He had not actually been declared dead on September 28; rather, his last known status was that he had "remained seriously wounded on the battlefield." This is a short letter, but Kuryshkina's emotions understandably run the gamut; flushed at the slim possibility that Ivan was alive but captured, yet also desperate to believe that if he was dead, then that he had not died *badly,* "abandoned" on the field. She ends the second letter by resolutely rejecting the identity of widowhood: "There were people who began to bother me by trying to issue benefits, but I wrote to them that I did not consider myself to be a widow." She had but one thing in mind: "I asked them to indicate where I should direct my search, but there was no answer."

In reaction to these unfortunate scenarios forced upon her, Kuryshkina prostrated in ink an embattled conscience that could only be pacified with concrete details. How could she mourn properly, if she did not even know the day that Ivan had died? If, hoping against hope, Ivan was a prisoner, how then was she supposed to deliver some "money and things" to him? Finally, how could she consider herself a widow amidst such uncertainty? While it is unclear whether Kuryshkina received answers, it is evident that she thought this information might be forthcoming in the *Bulletin of the Manchurian Army*. She felt like she was out of options – "I wrote to both the General Staff and the bureau of military prisoners, asking them to instruct me how to find out about his fate, but there is still no answer"; and she had even sent 35 rubles to that bureau to try and grease the machine that would make her case more appealing. According to a Soviet-era secondary source, the *Bulletin* had been the only newspaper that was actually

delivered to the combat areas, with a circulation falling somewhere between 1,200-6,000 copies.[93] This gave her reason, perhaps, to trust the information it solicited over the mouthpiece of the War Ministry, *Russkii invalid,* which Kuryshkina was desperate to dismiss: "there is confusion in their reports of loss all the time, and I base my tiny hope on it."

Kuryshkina's confusion was mirrored at the bureaucratic level, where the informational network surrounding notifications of death was far from watertight. When the naval ministry released lists of the dead, the first section was always devoted to errors that had occurred in the previous list. In the immediate aftermath of the war, some of the Aleksandrovskii Committee inquiries indicated they had no idea what had happened to certain people (what fate befell seaman August Ianov at Tsushima?), while others implied scepticism towards information possessed (had the sailors Ivan Bezruchkin and Mitforan Brianiiev really died on the "Petropavlovsk"?).[94] Stepan Tomiaak's records disappeared – after Port Arthur's surrender, he had returned to Russia badly wounded and was admitted to the St. Petersburg Naval hospital. Letters bouncing back and forth surmised that he had received pay for being part of a non-combat unit in late October of 1905 (thus, he survived), but there the bureaucratic machine broke down. In 1910, when the inquiries were being made, the appropriate papers had not been delivered to the naval archive, only to the treasury.[95]

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[93] M. S. Cherepakhov, *Russkaia periodicheskaia pechat' (1985- oktiabr' 1917): Spravochnik* (Moscow, 1957), 123.
[94] RGVAMF, f. 417, op. 4, d. 5845, l. 1- 2.
[95] RGAMVF, f. 417, op. 4, d. 6034, l. 293-6.

There were a lot of forces that moved the chisel which carved out the names of the rank-and-file. Whether these names ended up inscribed on the memorials that dotted Russia's periphery, or the interior on Savior-on-the-Waters, they reflect certain aspects of Russia's modernity. Photographs, like the one that Golubev included in his booklet, brought the distant wars closer to home and shaped people's growing expectation that they would be provided for information and closure. While the government worked to provide this sort of emotional respite, they did so in ways that could be leveraged as advantageous. They inscribed names as a way to posture and project a story. Overseas, this narrative spoke to the high honor that Russia bestowed upon its citizens. In colonial spaces, these narratives aimed to reinforce a hierarchy of which Russians were worthy, and which sacrifices were to be lauded. In St. Petersburg, the paperwork that stacked up beneath the names points to a "civil society" defined by a faltering but insistent bureaucracy, one that often broke down, but could also be made to work for those who knew what the system was about. More broadly, the case study of *Savior-on-the-Waters* indicates that Russia might not have been ahead of the curve when it came to memorializing the rank-and-file, but they did not lag behind its European neighbours to the west when it came to the desire to keep a solid record of its citizenry.

## CONCLUSION

The battle of Austerlitz occurs about halfway through Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. In the aftermath of this brutal fight, the victorious Napoleon surveys the fields of the killed and injured: "'*De beaux hommes!* – handsome men!' said Napoleon, gazing at a Russian grenadier, who lay on his belly with his face half buried in the soil, and his neck turning black, and one arm flung out and stiffened in death." He then happens upon Prince Andrei, one of Tolstoy's protagonists. Andrei, clinging to life by a thread, lies splayed across the ground; "*Voilà, une belle mort," There it is, a beautiful death*.[96] Tolstoy published *War and Peace* in 1869, four years after Alexander Gardner and Mathew Brady's photographs thrust the sorts of death that took place on a battlefield into the homes of the American public via the pages of popular magazines.[97] The ability to point out the differences between the idea of military death and its ugly reality is what makes this scene so effective. Tolstoy demands that readers really *see* those bodies, and this insistence renders Napoleon's exclamation that the dead men are "handsome" as absurd double-think, the French Emperor filtering out the aesthetic reality for the sake of ideological pleasure. Tolstoy uses this moment to mock Napoleon's rose-tinted view of the world, and to establish the fatal optimism that led to his eventual defeat, but there is also a broader conclusion to draw here: by the end of the nineteenth century, the veil separating the world of war and the world of civilians was consistently being punctured by new textual and visual modes of representation.

The fallacy that Tolstoy explores in this short scene sets up many of the lines of tension that I attempted to bring to light in this dissertation. There was an older way of speaking about

[96] Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace* (London: T.Y. Crowell & Company, 1889), 356.
[97] Alan Trachtenberg, "Albums of War: On Reading Civil War Photographs," *Representations* vol. 9 (Winter, 1985): 1-32, esp. 3-6.

military death, one that enabled those in positions of power – Kings, Emperors, Tsars, the occasional vaunted public servant – to dictate the narrative to the extent that they could forcefully assert, like Tolstoy's Napoleon, that *it is beautiful to die for your country*. From these vaunted heights, orders could be given to decorate the coffins of generals with wreaths as evidence to this end, while the bodies of the rank-and-file, which cried out claims to the contrary, could be effectively ignored. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw this edifice come crashing up against a cacophony of alternative voices. More men and women were able to read and write, more publications were able to print these viewpoints, and the camera established a new visual repertoire that was insistently accessible and boldly claimed to show an unvarnished reality.

This noise challenged the Russian government's monopoly over the narrativization of the military dead, but the government did not give up without a fight. Looking at the late imperial era through the lens of the military dead, we see how the multifaceted aspects of modernity facilitated new ideas about identity, homeland, and honor, but – as has been the case in many political regimes – these new ideas could potentially be harnessed by the entrenched powers just as easily as the destabilizing counter-currents. The story of the changing treatment of the military dead over the last decade of the Romanov dynasty is part of the far broader narrative of a regime that was ultimately too precariously positioned to survive the First World War, but it also works to demonstrate the complexity of that arc.

In this dissertation, I have mapped out some of the ways in which military death collided with modernity to produce unwieldy, complex trends and emotive moments. Because the Russo-Japanese War was the first conflict to be avidly reported by an international press, and as such made it harder for the rank-and-file to be ignored, the conflict serves as an excellent backdrop to

explore how these trends and moments intersected with the broader political, social, and cultural movements of the era. Tellingly, it was a war that produced two main dead heroes. The first was Admiral Marakov, who was killed in the first naval skirmish at Port Arthur before the tactical acumen of the Japanese high command could taint his formidable reputation. The second was Vasilii Riabov, the private who was captured and killed during a reconnaissance mission, but not before the Japanese had notified the Russians about his bravery in the face of death. The Russian government attempted to control the stories of both heroes, but Riabov's proved trickier than Marakov's. For the young Admiral, a statue was erected in a prominent place in the Russian capital; to this day, he looks out over the river Neva, part of a lineage of Russian seafarers that retroactively justified Peter the Great's grand vision of founding St. Petersburg and bidding for naval prowess. Commemorating Riabov was not so straightforward. As I discussed in chapter 5, some statues of him were erected, but other, more modern responses also took place: funding-raising campaigns sought to support the village school he attended, and a mass-marketing operation saw his face placed on everything from posters to tea towels. His fame, in large part due to his low rank, accommodated a greater range of interpretations, and as such there were backlashed murmurings – some posited, for example, that the Japanese had provided the "spy" Riabov with a better burial than his own side would have done.

Technology was a critical mediator of these processes, as it worked both to push certain movements forward and to deepen existing chasms. During the war, the printing press and the photograph were able to highlight the humanity and the sacrifice of the Russian rank-and-file to the point where their names were deemed worthy of inscription. The people who were invested in providing the men who had died in this war with an honorable resting place were able to leverage a sense of public outrage about the state of the burial sites that were erected so "far

away." This was both a criticism directed at the government, and an opportunity for the government to act in an attempt to position themselves in a favorable light. The introduction of aviators to the military repertoire opened up the public imagination to a whole new world of technological feats and possibility and helped to break down the previous structure of rank and hierarchy that had determined military honors: it was not aristocratic blood that mattered up in the skies, but the prowess of the machine and the bravery of the man sat in the cockpit.

Those same technological levers also worked to expose the existing colonial inequities that striated through the Russian far east. The Chinese bandits, the *khunkhuzy*, who were caught up in a war that was not theirs were prey to this, with terrible results. That key phrase from the laws of war that stated the difference between a combatant and a non-combatant rested on the "dictates of public consciousness" was a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it was this public consciousness that seemingly moved Russia in a positive, more inclusive direction where the individual was honored via the naming of the rank and file. On the other hand, this public conscious could be swayed by language and imagery that set up some people's lives as cheaper than others.

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It is a strange but pleasant co-incidence that I'm writing these lines on November 11. In Britain, this is Remembrance Day, where people don poppies on their clothing and pause their daily routine at the 11:11am to show their respect for the military dead. In a day full of ritual centered around the symbol of a war that is now so far in the past no living survivors remain, I would happily wager that the BBC will say something like "the nation comes together to mourn" during their evening news coverage more times than can be counted on both hands. The critical point here is that men in military uniform wield a value that extends beyond their tangible ability

to kill men in different military uniforms. Men in uniform are also an idea, and their ideational potential is at its most powerful when they were dead. It is a very old idea: it can be found in the story of Achilles, who set out to fight in Troy because he believed that if you were cut down on the battlefield, but your name was remembered, then oblivion – the worst consequence of physical death – could be mitigated.

At its heart, this dissertation has explored how that potential played out at a time when their blood collided with certain forces of modernity in the early nineteenth century – print culture, mass literacy, and urban space. I have argued that in late imperial Russia, this potential was a potent, but fundamentally unstable, foundation of nationhood. These cracks, political, cultural, and spatial, do not translate readily over to different times and different cultures, but there are notable echoes. One of my key sub-arguments has been that the military dead can act as a useful litmus test to see where the geographical and conceptual nation starts and ends. In Russia, the difference between the nation and the empire coalesced in the years after the Russo-Japanese War around the idea of "home soil." In Britain, the political act of poppy-wearing on November 11 has reached new heights of intensity after Brexit; Britain's military dead are being called upon to help carve out that new and narrower sense of national identity, but not without a backlash.

It has been thrilling to look at how these dynamics played out in late imperial Russia, and to try to capture those narratives of the military dead that resisted co-optation into the national story, collapsed in the face of their own contradictions, or were poorly contained by the Romanov regime. Like many dissertations, this study started out with grand plans that had to be scaled back as I learned just how long it takes to systematically scour through archives, build out a sufficient background of historical context, and articulate a coherent argument. Initially, I set

out to cover the whole time period from the Russo-Japanese War through to the end of the Russian Civil War – and even beyond. While I gained a profound respect for the unsung role that the Russo-Japanese War played within narratives of military death, I regret the opportunities that were lost by not pushing over the revolutionary divide. There is some very stimulating work to be done comparing the physical, cultural and symbolic treatment of the military dead in the nascent Soviet era to their earlier fated counterparts – a work I hope to read one day.

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