

Centenary (Russia)

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Summary

In Russia, the eve of 2014 and the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War were the expression of a large-scale state intervention in the structures of historical memory under the influence of the changed geopolitical situation. Under the slogan of the restoration of “historical justice,” intensive work was carried out to replace the negative military experience with new patterns of interpretation: Soviet interpretations were replaced by codes of memory that emerged in the conditions of Russian emigration. Memorials, museum exhibitions, theatrical productions and films, and even scientific conferences and publications became spaces and mediums for broadcasting the “useful past.” The memorial boom, which was already in decline by 2015, did not contribute to the enrichment of the image of the past, but rather to its emotionalization in order to strengthen the “imagined national community.”

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Introduction

For decades, Russia’s [memory](#) of the First World War has remained highly specific. Initially, the memories of the tragic events of 1914-1917 were replaced by the experience of the [revolution](#) and the [Civil War](#), and later, by the commemorative monolith of the Great Patriotic War, which remains the supporting structure of Russia’s national identity. A key role for modern memory was also played by the split of memorial traditions into the Soviet historical memory that emerged in the post-revolutionary period, which designated the First World War as a massacre of imperialists for the redistribution of the world, and into an emigrant memorial tradition, which cultivated the tragedy of the old Russian army and sought to adopt European practices of dealing with the past. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the models of interpretation of the Great War developed in the circles of Russian emigrants

gradually replaced Soviet interpretations.

Prior to the early 2010s, the First World War in [Russia](#) did not function as an emotionally charged place of memory. Memories of the war were strongly segmented in family legends, historical [novels](#) ([Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn \(1918-2008\)](#), [Valentin Pikul' \(1928-1990\)](#), etc.), and more intensively in academic works. The surprising boom in commemorative events held in 2014 to mark the centenary of the beginning of the conflict was a reaction not so much to a social order as to the instructions from the head of state in connection with the so-called "patriotic turn" and the country's changed positioning in the international arena. At this stage, the public acted as a passive receiver of the information broadcast from above. A peculiar *tabula rasa* allowed the state authorities to hide behind a convenient formula of the "forgotten war," to circumvent existing interpretations, and to establish their own vision by directive means.

Inventing the Anniversary: Historical Policy and its Operators

The political situation is underlined by the short-term planning, intensity, and scope of the state memorial campaign. In July 2012, the Russian president instructed the [government](#) to establish an organizing committee to develop a special plan of events to be funded directly or indirectly by the state.¹ The leitmotif of this activity was to "*uvekovechivanie geroev Pervoj mirovoj vojny*,"² which imparted an unambiguously passionate and militaristic attitude to all events. In support of this, a new law was adopted in December 2012, declaring August 1 the "*dnem pamiati russkikh voinov, pavshikh v Pervoj mirovoj vojne*."³

In actuality, the development and testing of new interpretations of the past began immediately, which was intended to force inconvenient moments in history from public rhetoric: military defeats, the unfavourable separate peace, and the loss of territories. "Useful" interpretations for strengthening national identity were proclaimed at the level of state leadership. Their initial internal contradictions demonstrate a distinctive work-in-progress. The first variant of a new reading of the results of the war, expressed in the speech of the president in the Federation Council in June 2012, was the interpretation of Russia's position as "loser to the loser" or "loser winner."⁴ This made it possible to create an image of a "stolen victory" and to blame the Bolsheviks for the defeat, which triggered sharp criticism in the ranks of the pro-Soviet public. A more neutral formulation was voiced in the president's speech in March 2013 at the first meeting of the *Rossijskogo voenno-istoricheskogo obshchestv* [Russian Military Historical Society, RVIO]:

*Voobshche éto liubopytnaia situatsiia, no Vy kak spetsialist – a zdes' vse spetsialisty – znaete, Rossiia ved' ne proigrala Pervuiu mirovuiu vojnu – ona ob"iavila sebia, po suti, proigravshej, prosto vyshla iz vojny za neskol'ko mesiatsev do togo, kak sama Germaniia podpisala akt o kapituliatsii. Éto prosto unikal'naia situatsiia, mne kazhetsia, v mirovoj istorii. I sdelala éto Rossiia, konechno, po vnutripoliticheskim soobrazheniiam. Tol'ko po vnutripoliticheskim.*⁵

This interpretation no longer refers to specific perpetrators. The revolutionary chaos and disorganization of regular forces is replaced by the vague term “internal political reasons.”

It is necessary to emphasize the influence of the geopolitical situation on the anniversary programme: in connection with the accession of Crimea and the support of one of the parties in the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, Russia has effectively found itself in international isolation. The lack of invitations for the president of Russia to all-European [mourning](#) festivities, for example in [Belgium](#), demonstrates the dependence of modern commemorations on the political situation. The European organizers of the ceremonies were guided not by a historical narrative or the idea of reconciliation with the past, but by the spirit of the current sanctions policy towards Russia. The position of the European leaders negated the long-standing efforts of their Russian counterparts, who constantly stressed the contribution of the pre-revolutionary army to the allied efforts and thus to the victory of the Entente, provoking, in fact, a sharp nationalization of the memory of the Great War.

The culmination of Russia's new heroic-patriotic rhetoric was the president's speech at the [museum](#) on Poklonnaya Hill, where a [monument](#) to the [heroes](#) of the First World War was unveiled:

*... Rossiia byla vynuzhdена vstupit' v Pervuiu mirovuiu vojnu. I segodnia my otkryvaem memorial ee geroiam – rossijskim soldatam i ofitseram ... bol'shuiu rol' v dukhovnom pod"eme nashego naroda sygrali togda velikie tsennosti russoj armii, geroicheskij opyt pokoleniia Pervoj mirovoj vojny ... Sejchas my vozrozhdaem istoricheskuiu pravdu ... i nam otkryvaiutsia neschetnye primery lichnogo muzhestva i voinskogo iskusstva, istinnogo patriotizma rossijskikh soldat i ofitserov, vsego rossijskogo obshchestva ... A v nashikh serdtsakh priobretaetsia ta sviashchennaia pamiat', chto zaslužhili po pravu te voiny Pervoj mirovoj. Spravedlivost' torzhestvuet: na stranitsakh knig i uchebnikov, v sredstvakh massovoj informatsii ... Svetlaia pamiat' geroiam Pervoj mirovoj vojny! Slava ruskomu oruzhiu i nashemu soldatu-geroiu!*⁶

Thus, a certain symbolic order was broadcast “from above”: with the help of the metaphor of the forgotten war, previously accumulated knowledge was declared irrelevant, the search for heroes and the heroic was equated to the restoration of justice, and with the help of the

formula of “sacred memory,” an attempt was made to give deep historical roots to the modern militaristic discourse.

According to [Boris Kolonitskii](#), the choice of Poklonnaya Hill as the place of installation for the Russian monument to the heroes of the First World War contributed to the inclusion of the First World War “*v riad vazhnejshikh dlia rossijskoj identichnosti sobytij*.”⁷ It is worth noting that the symbolic reception of unity – the Patriotic War of 1812, the First and Second World Wars – recurred in many monuments inaugurated on the eve of 2014. For example, in Voronezh on 9 May 2013, a memorial stela was erected in honour of the heroes of the three wars. The triune design was based on the designation of the First World War as “*vtoroj Otechestvennoj*” [the Second Patriotic War] that existed at the beginning of the First World War. In addressing the propagandic metaphor of wartime, modern ideologists have created an unbalanced sequence, though with a certain symbolic logic: The Patriotic War of 1812 – The Second Patriotic War of 1914 – The Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945. One of the visualizations of this design was the St. George’s Cross, which is present in almost all the monuments erected by 2014 as an expression of the bravery of soldiers and officers of both world wars. The other is the monument “*Marsh slavianki*” [March of the Slavianski], erected in Moscow and dedicated to patriotic marching [music](#) which was popular during both world wars.

By the end of 2014, the reception of emigrant memorial traditions, which had originally developed within the boundaries of rhetorical figures, had begun to materialize. In December of that year, the authorities announced the transfer of the ashes of [Nikolai Nikolaevich, Grand Duke of Russia \(1856-1929\)](#), the first commander-in-chief of the Russian army during the First World War, to Russia from [France](#).⁸ The reburial ceremony was planned at the highest level – the order was signed by Prime Minister Dmitrij Medvedev himself, while the details of the event were worked out by a commission consisting of the minister of culture and the chairman of the State Duma.⁹ The fact that the reburial was aimed at symbolically completing the integration of emigrant interpretations of the First World War into the political discourse of modern Russia is evidenced by the choice of a new burial site – the chapel at the *Bratskoe voennoe kladbishche* [Fraternal Military Cemetery] in Moscow, which was restored for the 90th anniversary of the beginning of the Great War. It is of interest that this decision caused protest among representatives of the House of Romanov, who regarded the activities of Nikolaevich as unsuccessful, and insisted on the transfer of the ashes to the tomb of the imperial family, fearing that the reburial would become a political farce.¹⁰ The Russian authorities elegantly circumvented the conflict, referring to the will of the grand duke. As the Chairman of the State Duma Sergey Naryshkin remarked in an interview:

*V sem'e sokhranilos' zaveshchanie – **ustnoe** [author's emphasis] – velikogo kniazia o tom, chto on by khotel najti pokoj v rodnoj zemle, i khotel by byt' pokhronennym riadom s soldatami i ofitserami russkoj armii perioda Pervoj Mirovoj vojny. Nu, i nam s vami vypala chest' sodejstvovat' ispolneniiu ego voli, a, znachit, i vosstanovleniiu istoricheskoi spravedlivosti.*¹¹

The alignment of “work on the past” with “historical justice,” which had already become canonical by that time, was organically adjacent to the metaphor of the triune nature of the wars. For this reason, Patriarch Kirill stressed, in an interview, the importance of the fact that the solemn burial ceremony of the grand duke was held in 2015, the 70th anniversary of the celebration of the victory in the Great Patriotic War.¹²

Accepting Invented Tradition: Memorial Spaces and Practices

The codes broadcast “from above” are reflected in the opening speeches of numerous international conferences in 2014.¹³ The image of the personal continuity of the heroes of the First World War and the Great Patriotic War proclaimed in the president of Russia's speech appeared to be accepted by the academic community. Therefore, as the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the Russian State Pedagogical University A. Vorontsov emphasized in his opening speech:

*Pervaia mirovaia vojna sygrala rokovuiu rol' v oslablenii Rossii. Edinstvennym npravstvennym opravdaniem vstupleniia Rossii v Pervuiu mirovuiu vojnu iavliaetsia zashchita Serbii. Xotel by otmetit', chto v Pervuiu mirovuiu vojnu na avanstsenu vyshli iarkie ofitseri, vposledstviu proslavivshie stranu v Velikoi Otechestvennoi vojne.*¹⁴

The image of the betrayal of the revolutionaries who stole the victory from Russia became the focus of the speech of the Rector of the International Independent Environmental and Political University S. Stepanov: “Rossiia v kontse 16 goda vojnu pochtii vyigrala. Rossii uzhe prinadlezhai Bosfor, Dardanelli, Konstantinopol' ... Ee vytashchili iz vojny i otniali pobedu – u Rossii otniali pobedu.”¹⁵ One of the major academic publications, with a foreword by Minister of Culture and Chairman of the RVIO V. Medinskij, was the anthology, “Rossiia i Evropa v ognе Pervoj mirovoj vojny” [Russia and Europe in the Fire of the First World War]. In the opening article by the academic A. Ageev, direct parallels are drawn between the two world wars: the reason for both is the aggression of [Germany](#), which sought “i v 1914, i v 1941 g. ... zavoevat' svoe mesto pod solntsem.”¹⁶ The reasons for the military defeats of Russia, which

was twice dragged into the world wars against its will, are the *“zafrontovye peripetii soznaniia”* in the form of the liberal opposition’s slander of the government, court intrigues, German [propaganda](#), and distortion of the front-line information flows.¹⁷ The anthology concludes with an unexpected transition to modern events and a retreat from strict scholarly formulations into the sphere of patriotic slogans: *“I sobytiia poslednego vremeni podtverzhdauiut, chto nam nel’zia ni na minutu otstupit’ ot dukha i pamiati nashikh velikikh predkov.”*¹⁸ O. Ajrapetov’s multi-volume publication “Russia’s Participation in the First World War” has acquired a fundamental and generalizing nature.¹⁹ The chronologically constructed work demonstrates the complex strains between the Russian front and the rear, potentially conflicting compromises within the military elite, and Russia’s difficult relationship with its allies. The research is based on many years of investigation by the author and interesting [archival](#) finds, but it is mainly written in line with traditional military-political history, leaving out the impact of socio-cultural history in the interpretation of the “patrimonial trauma of the century.” In general, it should be emphasized that the Russian book market reacted to the anniversary of the war not so much by publishing innovative academic research that could provoke heated discussion, such as Christopher Clark’s “Sleepwalkers,”²⁰ but by republishing diaries and memoirs of war veterans and publishing encyclopedias.²¹

During the perestroika years, social activists from Cossack formations launched a campaign to restore Moscow’s Fraternal Military Cemetery, which was constructed during the First World War and destroyed under Soviet rule. Opened in 2004, the memorial complex included a chapel and a number of memorial signs, mostly embodied in the form of small memorial slabs, walls, crosses, and steles. By 2014, there was an explosive growth in the number of monuments erected in Russian cities (more than thirty in total). The majority of the monuments unequivocally reflect the messages of the “patriotic turn” and are distinguished by the absence of allegories and abstractions, representing a belated embodiment of the triumphant traditions of the epoch of historicism. The semantic messages, expressed chiefly in anthropomorphic images, are formulated directly, unequivocally, and do not imply alternative interpretations or even the coexistence of several points of view. Most often, these are figures of infantrymen marching into a bayonet attack carrying flying banners, or the warriors of the old Russian army standing in the posture of a summit of conquerors. The heroic tragedy of the events is emphasized in some of the monuments through the image of wounded soldiers being cared for by [nurses](#). This is perhaps the only acceptable form of women’s presence in the heroic and militaristic pathos. The sculptures’ stylistics are unmistakably associated with the image of the White Army created in Soviet [cinematography](#), which is likely the reason why some of the monuments include the inscription *“Geroiam Pervoj mirovoj vojny”* [To the Heroes of the First World War].

A significant memorial space during the centenary period was the Kaliningrad region – the only territory in modern Russia where battles of the First World War geographically took place.²² Apart from the many years of activity for the restoration of graves, conducted with the active participation of the German authorities, the opening of several new monuments was timed to coincide with the centenary of the beginning of hostilities, the symbolism of which is quite remarkable. The key event of this “useful past” in the Kaliningrad region was the Battle of Gumbinnen, which took place in August 1914. It was presented in modern historical works, state ceremonies, and reconstruction performances as one of the significant Russian victories in the First World War. The author’s purpose in this article is not to create a military or strategic analysis of the battle; rather, the importance of its reinterpretation within the framework of the commemorative context should be noted. In Soviet and German interpretations from the interwar period, the battle was regarded as an ordinary event in East Prussian operations, which did not prevent the defeat of both Russian armies and their displacement beyond the borders of the German Empire. Modern official guidebooks for the Kaliningrad region emphasize this fact: *“Rezul’taty boia imeli vazhnoe strategicheskoe znachenie i povliiali na iskhod vsej vojny, chto pozvoliaet govorit’ o nem, kak o simvole znamenatel’noj roli, kotoruiu Rossiia sygrala v pobede sil Antanty.”*²³ In accordance with the new interpretations, the [commemoration](#) of the commander of the 1st Russian army in the East Prussian operation, General [Paul von Rennenkampf \(1854-1918\)](#), was changed. During the war and in the interwar period, he was considered to be one of those responsible for the catastrophe of Samsonov’s army at the [Battle of Tannenberg](#) and was even suspected of treason. This belief was one of the reasons for his violent death at the hands of the Bolsheviks in Taganrog in 1918.²⁴ To mark the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Gumbinnen in Gusev (formerly Gumbinnen), a memorial plaque was installed, the symbolic and verbal meaning of which unequivocally revises the previous interpretations and includes the figure of the commander in a new patriotic narrative: *“Generalu ot kavalerii geroiu Velikoj vojny Pavlu Karlovichu Rennenkampfu, voinu dolga, chesti i vernosti (1864-1918).”*²⁵

The symbolism of the Gusev memorial, *“Pamiatnik vojne, izmenivshej khod istorii”* [Monument to the War that Changed the Course of History], which was inaugurated on the same day, is not so unambiguous. This is probably the only Russian monument that fits into the European post-heroic tradition.²⁶ The sculptural composition by M. Shemiakin consists of three figures: a weary soldier crucified on the “wheel of fate” and two women – a widow and a mother – representing the grief of the families of those who died in the war. More unusual is the pronounced tragedy of the symbolic message and the lack of heroic components. The embodiment of grief and mourning in the monument is absolutely dissonant with the sculpture *“Shtykovaia ataka”* [The Bayonet Attack, by V. Surovtsev], which was unveiled

around the same time in the region and created in the spirit of the majority of anthropomorphic and dynamic monuments throughout the period surrounding the centenary.

The significant concentration of memorial events on the territory of the Kaliningrad region is explained not only by the historical significance of the region, but also by its current geopolitical position in Europe and, accordingly, the “showcase role” it plays for Russian memorial diplomacy.²⁷ A certain problem for modern political elites is the multi-layered identity of the region’s population, with its uncomfortable references to the German past, and, therefore, potential for conflict.

One of the key objects of the jubilee memorial intervention was museums, the majority of which are still public institutions.²⁸ It is museums that continue to be perceived by the general public as a repository of true memory, and that, through the use of visual images and authentic artifacts of the era, are able to transmit predetermined messages to the visitor under the guise of truth. Notable in 2014 was the unprecedented large-scale attention paid by the media, as well as by politicians and opinion leaders, to the anniversary [exhibitions](#) about the First World War.

Virtually all museum projects implemented in 2014 corresponded to the established discursive framework of the centenary. Through the names of the exhibitions, the selection of artifacts, and accompanying texts in the exhibition spaces, there was a re-coding of the meaning of the First World War from the symbol of the beginning of the revolutionary Soviet era, to the symbol of the violent and tragic “sunset” of the Russian Empire. Contrary to the rather developed academic direction of military and visual anthropology, museum projects have followed the path of the persistent glorification of negative experience. They exclude both general civilizational perspectives, often overshadowing the anti-human nature of the war, and the experience of non-combatants ([women](#), [refugees](#), [prisoners of war](#), the disabled), thus reproducing a militarized discourse. The glorification of military victories as one of the fundamental symbols of the state led to the contradictory integration of all sides of the war and political regimes conducting military actions into these symbolic fields.

In the conditions of the prevalence of mass culture in Russia, theater determines the collective interpretations of the past to a lesser extent. However, examples of stage productions from 2014-2018 are, for this analysis, an interesting indicator of attempts to understand the history of war by the conveyers of high art. In 2014, the *Moskovskij Xudozhestvennyj Akademicheskij Teatr* [Moscow Academic Art Theatre] produced the performance “19.14” (directed by A. Molochnikov), which was created in a cabaret style using grotesque techniques to represent the First World War and its consequences. Recalling

that in Russia there is as yet no *“traditsii, kak cherez iskusstvo govorit’ o Pervoj mirovoj”*²⁹ the authors turned to the image of the Western European “lost generation,” which is familiar to the educated part of the Soviet public. It is not the tragic and contradictory military experience of Russia that is being considered here, but rather the thorny path of French and German soldiers from *“utopichnykh fantazij k polnomu vnutrennemu opustosheniiu, potere nravstvennykh orientirov i samorazrusheniiu”*.³⁰ Contrary to publicly declared motives, we see the Russian creative intelligentsia fleeing from the unpredictable, its results, and the discussion of the past of their country, and, thus, to the proven and safe interpretations of the European experience of the Great War, given in the novels of [Richard Aldington \(1892-1962\)](#), [Henri Barbusse \(1873-1935\)](#), and [Ernest Hemingway \(1899-1961\)](#). Notably, [internet](#) reviews of the play “19.14” are clearly characterized by ordinary viewers as the stage embodiment of novels by [Erich Maria Remarque \(1898-1970\)](#), although the authors themselves claim that they worked with archival materials from France and Germany.

Alternative representations of the First World War in theatre are quite marginal and symptomatically embodied on stage by women playwrights. In 2018, by the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War, which took place in Russia rather inconspicuously, the *Teatra.doc* collective presented the production of *“Miloserdie”* [Mercy] (directed by A. Patlaj, stage play by N. Grinshtejn). The work was based on the diaries of sisters of mercy, materials of [censorship](#) commissions, *“kramolnyh”* [rebellious] [letters](#) from the front, and academic research on female [sexuality](#). In her interviews, the director does not hide the fact that her work is motivated by her pacifist beliefs and her desire to go beyond contemporary heroic interpretations of human and genuine manifestations.³¹

In general, *“Batal’on”* [Battalion] (directed by D. Meskhiev), the central [film](#) of 2014, was dedicated to the marginal theme of [women in war](#), and filmed for the centenary with the support of the ministry of culture of the Russian Federation, RVIO, and a number of large corporations. The story focuses on the history of the formation of women’s military units in Russia at the end of the First World War, which, in Soviet historiography, were presented sarcastically as fanatical, defending the abandoned government of [Alexander Kerensky \(1881-1970\)](#) during the October Revolution and dispersing at the first shots of the storming Bolsheviks. The 2014 film is split into two semantic blocks: the recruitment and training of a battalion in St. Petersburg, and its further participation in war. The first block is depicted in a plot and figurative manner in the film *“9 rota”* [The 9th Company] (directed by F. Bondarchuk, 2005). In light of this analysis, only the image of the hysterical and obstinate Kerensky, who, contrary to the advice of the general staff, ordered a senseless offensive in 1917, is interesting. The second block contains the key interpretations of the reasons for Russia’s

defeat in the First World War: the collapse of the army under the influence of German propaganda (fraternization and schnapps), the treacherous revolutionary activities of soldiers' soviets on the front, and, alien and deadly for the Russian nature, the democratization of the army. It appears that a carefully and naturalistically written image of [warfare](#) – [gas](#) attacks, death and injury from various types of [weapons](#), superimposed on women's images – strengthens the emotional impact of the images on the viewer and contributes to a better retention of the desired interpretation in their mind.

The image of the unbridled revolutionaries is also present in the film “*Geroj*” [The Hero], which was released in 2016 with the support of the same institutions. This film marks a departure from the traditions of Soviet cinematography, which depicted the representatives of the old army – the future White Guards – as a looting and drunken crowd against the background of noble revolutionary figures loyal to the revolutionary idea. In “The Hero,” these types of people simply change places. Despite the fact that the events of the First World War are presented in the film only indirectly, the central connecting line is quite significant here: pre-revolutionary Russia, embodied in white tones of high aristocratic culture and forced to enter the First World War, tries to preserve its ideals in 1917 in spite of the treacherous and feeble efforts of nouveau riche embezzlers, and the bloodthirstiness and immorality of the revolutionaries. Russia dies in the “*Ledianoj pokhod*” [Ice March] of General [Lavr Kornilov \(1870-1918\)](#), but is reborn in our time through the traditions preserved in [emigration](#).

Negative feedback from critics and audiences on both films is part of the general public's ambivalent reaction to the top-down interpretations of the First World War. On the one hand, the key media messages of the “forgotten war,” “great war,” “lost victory,” and “loser to the loser” were widely used: for example, they were full of works by students – participants in the All-Russian Olympiad in History, organized by the German embassy in the year of the centennial. On the other hand, within the framework of various communicative communities – scholarly discussions, forums of military history enthusiasts, reconstruction clubs, and family legends – altogether alternative versions are preserved and maintained. This author believes that the long-term effects of persistent attempts “from above” to turn the First World War into an integrative component of a homogeneous historical metanarrative have yet to be evaluated.

Conclusion

In a retrospective assessment of 2014 and the memorial events to the 100th anniversary of the beginning of the war, a decisive breakthrough emerges in the pen of the authors of Russian historical policy before the upcoming anniversaries, such as with the 70th anniversary

of the victory in the Great Patriotic War. Despite Kolonitskii's absolutely fair comment about the low content effectiveness of the 2014 memorial events, which did not add to the average Russian citizen's knowledge about the First World War,³² the success was, rather, to work out methods of transmitting the dominant discourse and imposing a "useful" image of the Russian past. The institutional embodiment of this success was the Russian Military Historical Society, revived especially for the centenary of the First World War, headed by the minister of culture, and financed from the state budget. It was on the wave of preparation for the 100th anniversary of the Great War that this quasi-public organization, which allows imitation of the participatory effect of memorial events, became the leading agent of historical policy in Russia.

The abrupt cessation of funding for [educational](#) activities after 2014, which has been widely discussed in the mass media, and the virtual absence of significant initiatives at the official level in the year of the centenary of the end of the Great War, was explained by the fact that 1918 is not as important for Russia as it was for European countries. This position was also demonstrated during the Russian leader's brief visit to Paris on [11 November 2018](#), where his participation in the mourning events served more of a political than a memorial function. It is highly likely that such a powerful intervention in the memorial field in 2014 is explained by the search for the foundations of the "imagined national community" (Benedict Anderson (1936-2015)) and the lack of consensual interpretations of the Russian revolutions and the early Soviet period, which would make it possible to link the heroic pre-revolutionary past and the victory in the Second World War, bypassing the themes of revolutionary violence, the humanitarian catastrophe Stalinist industrialization, and the Great Terror.

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Notes

1. O merakh po realizatsii osnovnykh polozheniy Poslaniya Prezidenta Rossii Federal'nomu Sobraniyu ot 12 dekabrya 2012 goda [On Measures to Implement the Main Provisions of the Address of the President of Russia to the Federal Assembly of December 12, 2012], issued by the Government of the Russian Federation, online: <http://archive.government.ru/docs/22233/> (retrieved: 22 November 2017). ↑
2. "... immortalize the heroes of the First World War" [translated by Joshua R. Kroeker, as are all following quotations]. ↑
3. "... day of remembrance of Russian soldiers who perished in the First World War." See Federal Law No. 285 of 30 December 2012, O vnesenii izmenenij v stat'iu 1 Federal'nogo zakona "O dniakh voinskoj slavy Rossii" [On Introducing Amendments to

Article 1 of the Federal Law “On the Days of Military Glory of Russia”], issued by Konsul’tantPlyus, online: http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_5978/ (retrieved: 16 September 2019). ↑

4. See: Putin obvinil bol'shevikov v natsional'nom predatel'stve [Putin Accused the Bolsheviks of National Treason], issued by Izvestiia, online: <https://iz.ru/news/528739#ixzz25hdy1sim> (retrieved: 15 April 2019). A little later, this interpretation also appeared in academic publications. See, for example: Ageev, A. A.: Prolog, in: Zolotarev, V. A. (ed.): Rossiia i Evropa v ogne Pervoj mirovoj vojny. K 100-letiiu nachala vojny [Russia and Europe in the Fire of the First World War. For the 100th Anniversary of the Beginning of the war], Moscow 2014, p. 17. ↑
5. “In general, this is a curious situation, but you as a specialist – and you’re all specialists here – know, Russia did not lose the First World War – it declared itself, in fact, lost, just withdrawing from the war a few months before Germany itself signed the act of surrender. This is just a unique situation, I think, in world history. And Russia did it, of course, for internal political reasons. Only for internal political reasons.” See Vstrecha Prezidenta s uchastnikami uchreditel'nogo s'ezda Rossijskogo voenno-istoricheskogo obshchestva [Meeting of the President with the Participants of the Constituent Congress of the Russian Military Historical Society], issued by the President of Russia, online: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/17677> (retrieved: 22 November 2017). ↑
6. “... Russia was forced to join the First World War. And today we open a memorial to its heroes – Russian soldiers and officers ... the great values of the Russian army then, the heroic experience of the generation of the First World War, played a great role in the spiritual rise of our people ... Now we are reviving the historical truth ... and we open countless examples of personal courage and military art, the genuine patriotism of Russian soldiers and officers, of the entire Russian society ... And in our hearts, we acquire the sacred memory that those soldiers of the First World War rightly deserved. Justice triumphs: on the pages of books and textbooks, in the media ... Blessed memory to the heroes of the First World War! Glory to the Russian army and our soldier-hero!”, see Rech' Prezidenta RF na Poklonnoje gore na otkrytii Pamiatnika geroiam Pervoj mirovoj vojny [Speech by the President of the Russian Federation on Poklonnaya Hill at the Opening of the Monument to the Heroes of the First World War], issued by the President of Russia, online: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/46385> (retrieved: 22 November 2017). ↑
7. “... among the most important events for Russian identity,” see Koloniŭskiĭ, Boris: Unpredictable Past. Politics of Memory and Commemorative Culture in Contemporary Russia, in: 1917. Revolution. Russia and the Consequences, Dresden 2017, p. 164. ↑
8. See Pakhaliuk, Konstantin: 1914-2017. Pervaia mirovaia vojna v prostranstve kul'turnoj pamiati sovremennoj Rossii. Nezabytaia “zabytaia” vojna [1914-2017. The First World

War in the Cultural Memory of Modern Russia. The Unforgettable “Forgotten” War], issued by Gefter, online: <http://gefter.ru/archive/22877> (retrieved: 15 April 2019). ↑

9. Perenosom iz Frantsii prakha Velikogo Kniazia Nikolaia Nikolaevicha zajmetsia spetsial'naia rabochaia grupp [The Ashes of the Grand Duke Nikolaj Nikolaevich Will be Transferred from France by a Special Working Group], issued by Dom Romanovykh, online: <https://romanovtoday.livejournal.com/74796.html> (retrieved: 15 April 2019). ↑
10. Prakh velikogo kniazia Nikolaia Nikolaevicha sleduet perezakhoronit' v Petropavlovskom sobore Peterburga, schitaiut v Dome Romanovykh [The Ashes of Grand Duke Nikolaj Nikolaevich Should be Reburied in the Peter and Paul Cathedral of St. Petersburg, the House of Romanov Believes], issued by Rossijskij Imperatorskij Dom, online: <http://www.imperialhouse.ru/rus/allnews/massmedia/4357.html> (retrieved: 15 April 2019). ↑
11. “The family has preserved the will of the grand duke, the oral testament [author’s emphasis], that he would like to find peace in his homeland and would like to be buried next to the soldiers and officers of the Russian army of the First World War. Well, you and I have the honour to contribute to the execution of his will, and, therefore, to the restoration of historical justice,” see Tseremoniia perezakhoroneniia prakha Velikogo kniazia Nikolaia Nikolaevicha projdet 30 apreliia [The Ceremony of the Reburial of the Ashes of Grand Duke Nikolaj Nikolaevich Will be Held on April 30], issued by TVKul'tura, online: https://tvkultura.ru/article/show/article_id/132562/ (retrieved: 15 April 2019). ↑
12. V Moskve sostoialas' tseremoniia perezakhoroneniia prakha velikogo kniazia Nikolaia Nikolaevicha i ego suprug [The Reburial Ceremony of the Ashes of Grand Duke Nikolaj Nikolaevich and his Wife Took Place in Moscow], issued by Rossijskogo voenno-istoricheskogo obshchestv, online: <https://rvio.histrf.ru/activities/news/item-1659> (retrieved: 15 April 2019). ↑
13. Mezhdunarodnaia nauchnaia konferentsiia “K 100-letiiu pervoj mirovoj vojny. Sotsium, vojna, mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia” [International scientific conference “To the 100th Anniversary of the First World War. Society, War, International Relations”], issued by Ural Federal University, online: <http://elar.urfu.ru/bitstream/10995/25643/1/iurp-2014-129-25.pdf> (retrieved: 15 April 2019). ↑
14. “The First World War played a fateful role in weakening Russia. The only moral justification for Russia’s entry into the First World War was the defense of Serbia. I would like to note that in the First World War, outstanding officers, who later glorified the country in the Great Patriotic War, came to the foreground.” See K 100-letiiu Pervoj mirovoj vojny. Vojna i mir, 1914-1918 gg. [For the 100th anniversary of the First World War. War and Peace, 1914-1918], issued by the St. Petersburg Administration, online: https://www.gov.spb.ru/gov/otrasl/c_science/news/56818/ (retrieved: 15 April 2019). ↑

15. "Russia almost won the war by the end of 1916. Russia already possessed the Bosphorus, the Dardanelles, and Constantinople ... It was pulled out of the war and its victory taken away – Russia was deprived of its victory." See Konferentsiia "Pervaia mirovaia vojna. Vzgliad spustia stoletie. Predvoennye gody" [Conference "The First World War. A Glance One Century Later. Pre-war Years"], issued by TVKul'tura, online: https://tvkultura.ru/article/show/article_id/103882/ (retrieved: 15 April 2019). ↑
16. "both in 1914 and in 1941 ... to seize its place under the sun." ↑
17. "intellectual peripetias of consciousness," see Ageev, Prolog 2014, pp. 15-29. ↑
18. "And the events of recent times confirm that we cannot for a single minute retreat from the spirit and memory of our great ancestors," see Surzhik, Dmitrii: Épilóg. Mir, kotoryj ne dal mira [Epilogue. A World That Did Not Give Peace], in: Zolotarev, Rossiia i Evropa 2014, pp. 787-789. ↑
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20. Clark, Christopher: The Sleepwalkers. How Europe Went to War in 1914, London 2012. ↑
21. Zalesskij, Konstantin: Pervaia mirovaia vojna. Éntsiklopediia [The First World War. Encyclopedia], volume 2, Moscow 2014; Rossiia v Pervoj mirovoj vojne, 1914-1918. Éntsiklopediia. [Russia in the First World War, 1914-1918. Encyclopedia], Moscow 2014; Peskov, Il'ia: Pervaia Mirovaia vojna. Samaia polnaia éntsiklopediia Velikoj vojny [The First World War. The Most Complete Encyclopedia of the Great War], Moscow 2014; and others. ↑
22. The specific role of the region is highlighted in Konstantin Pakhaliuk's article. See Pakhaliuk, Pervaia mirovaia vojna 2019. ↑
23. "The results of the battle were of great strategic importance and influenced the outcome of the war, which allows us to speak of it as a symbol of the significant role that Russia played in the victory of the Entente's forces." See Pamyatnik "Pamyati zabytoy vojny, izmenivshey khod istorii" M. Shemyakina [Monument "In Memory of a Forgotten War that Changed the Course of History" M. Shemyakin], issued by Putevoditel' po sledam Pervoj mirovoj vojny v Kaliningradskoj oblasti [Guidebook in the Wake of the First World War in the Kaliningrad Region], online: <http://fww-explore.com/objects/pamyatnik-pamyati-zabytoj-vojny-izmenivshej-xod-istorii-mshemyakina.html> (retrieved: 5 May 2019). ↑
24. Nagornaja, Oxana Sergeevna: Tannenberg, Battle of (Version 1.1), in: 1914-1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War, ed. by Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson, issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin 2017-12-21. DOI: 10.15463/ie1418.10310/1.1. Translated by: Goronwy, Trevor. ↑

25. "To the cavalry general, the hero of the Great War, Pavel Karlovich Rennenkampf, a warrior of duty, honor and loyalty (1864-1918)." ↑
26. See Mosse, George: *Fallen Soldiers. Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*, New York, Oxford 1990; Winter, Jay: *Remembering War. The Great War Between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century*, New Haven et al. 2006. ↑
27. See Koustova, Emilia: *In Search of a Lost War. World War I in the Russian Memory and Historic Policies*, in: *Note from the Observatoire franco-russe* 7 (2014), pp. 1-19. ↑
28. More detailed descriptions of the anniversary in Russian museum exhibitions are given in the article Nagornaja, Oxana Sergeevna: 2014. *An Invented Anniversary? Museum Exhibitions on the First World War in Russia*, in: Bromber, Katrin et al. (eds.): *The Long End of the First World War. Ruptures, Continuities and Memories*, Frankfurt a. M. et al. 2018, pp. 121-135, excerpts from which are partially included in this text. ↑
29. "tradition of talking about the First World War through art," see Rezhisser Aleksandr Molochnikov o svoem spektakle "19.14" [Director Aleksandr Molochnikov on his Performance "19.14"], issued by Moskovskij Xudozhestvennyj akademicheskij teatr, online: <https://mxat.ru/performance/small-stage/1914/19676/> (retrieved: 5 May 2019). ↑
30. "utopian fantasies to complete internal desolation, loss of moral standards, and self-destruction," see MXT imeni Chekhova postavil spektakl' o Pervoj mirovoj vojne "19.14" [The Chekhov Moscow Art Theatre Staged a Performance About the First World War "19.14"], issued by Moskovskij Xudozhestvennyj akademicheskij teatr, online: <https://tass.ru/kultura/1483496> (retrieved: 5 May 2019). ↑
31. Prem'era spektaklia "Miloserdie" [Premier of the Performance "Mercy"], issued by Worldpics, online: <https://worldpics.pro/premera-spektaklya-miloserdie/> (retrieved: 5 May 2019). ↑
32. Koloniŭskiĭ, *Unpredictable Past* 2017, p. 166. ↑

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[the First World War in Russia](#), in: Bromber, Katrin et al. (eds.): [The long end of the First World War. Ruptures, continuities and memories](#), Frankfurt 2018 Campus, pp. [121-135](#).

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External Links

- [Koustova, Emilia: In search of a lost war. World War I in the Russian memory and historic policies](#), in: [Note from the Observatoire franco-russe 7, 2014 \(L'Observatoire\) \(Article\)](#)
- [Pakhaluk, Konstantin \(in Russian\): 1914-2017. Pervaia mirovaia voina v prostranstve kul'turnoi pamiati sovremennoi Rossii. Nezabytaia "zabytaia" voina](#), in: [Gefter, 2 October 2017 \(Gefter\) \(Article\)](#)

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