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The Theme of the Issue:

MAN OF WAR ON THE WAY TO PEACE:
COMBATANTS IN THE HISTORY OF RUSSIA OF THE 20TH CENTURY

FROM THE EDITORS

A man of war on the way to peace...”. For many people these days, the ancient dichotomy of war and peace has suddenly acquired obvious relevance. The realization that we live in a “time of war” prompts historians to pose new questions to the seemingly unchanging material of the past. The 20th century went down in the history of Russia as the century of two world wars, revolutions, and armed conflicts, in which millions of people took part. Winners and losers, active creators and passive victims of events, combatants, prisoners of war, civilians, the wounded and disabled, children and orphans, and a lot of other categories and groups generated by wartime: how did they overcome the shifting and sometimes blurry line between war and peace? What difficulties did they face and what decisions guided them? How did the state participate in the transition process? How did this transit affect the country and society? What lessons can we learn from the past to highlight the situations of today and the likely future?

We, the editors of this issue of the “Historical Courier”, have managed to gather a team of qualified authors, who are ready to cover different aspects of this controversial field, shrouded in powder smoke, from their original research positions.

The first and the most obvious research focus in the articles introduced to the public is the issue of adaptation of combatants to civilian life. The opening article by D.O. Nikulin analyzes the return of war veterans to the homefront in 1915–1918. The next three publications address the problems of adaptation of former combatants in the 1920–1930s.

The social support of war invalids during the New Economic Policy period is the subject of research carried out by N.S. Sklyarenko. N.N. Ablazhey and A.S. Zhanbosinova analyze the naturalization of former prisoners of war (citizens of the Central Powers) in Soviet Russia. D.I. Petin focuses on the place of former white officers in post-revolutionary society, using the example of the Siberian province.

Three other articles are devoted to the period of the Great Patriotic War. M.A. Semenov’s study analyzes the comprehensive Soviet practice of medical rehabilitation and social adaptation of wounded servicemen. N.M. Markdorf writes about medical aid to “children of war” and about the staffing support of children’s social, educational, and medical institutions in Kuzbass in the war and first post-war years. A.D. Derendyaeva focuses on the postwar adaptation of the Kazakh SSR population.

Another area of research on the problems of post-war transition is represented by a group of studies focused on biographical and prosopographical issues. A.V. Dmitriev’s article is a chronologically unique study of deviant behavior of the Russian army soldiers of the 18th century after surviving the war. M.N. Suprun presents the experience of German captivity of World War I in the memoirs by historian M.I. Romanov.

A.E. Goncharov reconstructs the life histories of D.F. Kotelnikov, K.K. Neupokoev, and other polar explorers—former officers who took part in the establishment of navigation on the Kara Sea in the 1920s. D.A. Astafiev describes the biography of P.I. Astafiev, a typical participant of the events of the World War I and the Civil War. K.V. Sak and N.Y. Pivovarov introduce a bright and interesting source—the record of interrogation of Prince N.M. Gagarin, an emigrant, a Wehrmacht soldier, and an agent of the Soviet secret services.

The next block of publications addresses the issues of “veteran phenomenon” in the Russian history. The article by A.V. Yurov is devoted to the destinies of heroines



of the Civil War, members of the “Community of Women—Participants of the Civil War”, created in 1929. A.G. Teplyakov analyzes the practices of imposture in the 1920–1930s among the participants of the Revolution and the Civil War in Siberia and the Far East. A.D. Popov examines a specific case: the celebration in 1955 of the half-century anniversary of the mutiny on the battleship Potemkin and the commemorative activity associated with this date.

The experience of participation of combatants in public politics is analyzed in the studies by K.V. Zakharova on the political activities of military servants of rear garrisons in Siberia during the February Revolution, and by M.A. Kokorev on the social movement of the Afghan War participants during the period of “Perestroika” and the post-Soviet period.

The issue is completed by two articles reconstructing the specifics of the world spaces balancing on the brink of war. T.Y. Tolstikov’s article is devoted to the imagology of Leningrad in the publications of foreign correspondents at the end of the war. A.A. Khoroshev analyzes the process of repatriation of Soviet citizens from Finland to the USSR from 1944 to 1953.

Many of the large-scale issues presented in this issue of the journal “Historical Courier” by specific studies, which are localized in terms of territory and chronology, are worthy of study at a broader, including monographic, level. We hope that the publication of this issue will be a significant step towards the creation of a more detailed and multicolored picture of the *new history of combatants*.

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