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Experiences of Soviet Women Combatants During World War II

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Abstract of Thesis

World War II was arguably the most heroic event in the history of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), so much that it was known as the "Great Patriotic War." Tens of millions of Russians were killed during the large scale conflict against their "fascist foes." Still, the large population of the USSR were moved to action primarily by mass propaganda distributed by the Communist Party leaders. Women played a large role during the war, not just in the factories on the home front or as partisans, but as combat nurses and snipers as well. Since the losses were heavy on the Soviet side, the Party urged women to take up arms and fight on the front lines. When the war ended in a Red Army victory, the Party did everything in its power to stifle the voices of the women who had served by fueling rumors that women veterans had joined the army merely to find husbands and by emphasizing the importance of domestic women and motherhood over any military achievements.

State University of New York
College at Buffalo
Department of History

Experiences of Soviet Women Combatants
During World War II

A Thesis in
History

By

Michelle L. De Jesus Reyes

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Arts
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Dedication

Special thanks to Dr. Norman, the most patient and helpful human being to guide me through one of the most complex moments in my life. Thanks to Dr. Lazich and the Buffalo State history department for being of significant help and steering me towards the finish line.

Much love to my parents, my younger brother, my aunt and cousins for incessantly pushing me to strive towards my goals. And for simultaneously urging me forward while also there to let me breathe when I needed a break.

Much love to Alex and Krysta for always being my inspiration.

I dedicate this thesis to the memory of my cousin, Jacqueline, who was taken from the world so soon, before she could reach her potential.

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Introduction

Soviet Women Mobilizing to the Frontline During World War II

Soviet women were not required to join the army during the Great Patriotic War. Rather, they volunteered, not by coercion, but through propaganda used to "appeal to their sense of patriotism."[1] Women combatants had a great role in the resistance of the fascist forces who invaded and mutilated their *Rodina*: their motherland. But because Soviet women memoirs did not fit into the narrative of the Soviet hero during the Great Patriotic War, their real, uncensored stories were suppressed even after the fall of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) in 1991. Women experienced battle and bloodshed on the frontlines and they also faced great resistance and pushback from their superiors and male counterparts due to their gender. Soviet women veteran memoirs are filled with brutal details as well as dimensions of human and social aspects, including the narrative of preserving their womanhood and femininity while entrenched in a deeply man's world. A flood of women veteran's memoirs flooded the archives after Khruschev's thaw during the Cold War. According to historian Roger Markwick:

> In the past decade or so, freed from the Soviet-era constraints of draconian censorship and the necessity to depict themselves and their war against fascism in nothing less than the most heroic terms, women Red Army veterans have begun to

[1] Euridice Charon Cardona and Roger D. Markwick, "'Our Brigade Will Not Be Sent to the Front': Soviet Women under Arms in the Great Fatherland War, 1941-45," *The Russian Review*, Vol. 68, No. 2 (Apr, 2009), 244.

write and speak more openly about their roles and experiences of the fighting on the Eastern Front."[2]

To this day, women veteran's voices are still whispers in the narrative of the Great Patriotic War. But their stories and experiences bring a new light to the structure and struggles faced by soldiers on all sides during the most brutal campaign during World War II.

This essay will focus on the Soviet women ground troops who fought on the frontlines for the Soviet Union during World War II and will occasionally focus on the women who worked in the defense sector on the home front. This includes snipers, riflewomen, machine gunners, guerilla partisans, officers, medical personnel, and other roles who fought directly at the front. This essay acknowledges the achievements and sacrifices of every veteran who gave their lives during the Great Patriotic War, including those of airwomen, field agents, the navy, other combat units, and those who worked diligently on the home front.

The main sources that empower the argument of this paper are Roger Markwick's article "'A Sacred Duty': Red Army Women Veterans Remembering the Great Fatherland War, 1941-1945," Euridice Charon and Markwick's article "Our Brigade Will Not Be Sent to the Front': Soviet Women under Arms in the Great Fatherland War, 1941-45," and Barbara Alpern Engel's Chapter in *Women and War in the Twentieth Century: Enlisted With or Without Consent* titled "The Womanly Face of War: Soviet Women Remember World War II." Each of these sources use diaries (or oral interviews in the case of Engel) from actual Soviet women veterans for their writings and use state papers and Communist Party decrees to bolster their arguments. The experiences of the women who were part of the Red Army of World War II should be treated as

[2] Roger D. Markwick, "'A Sacred Duty': Red Army Women Veterans Remembering the Great Fatherland War, 1941-1945." *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 54, no. 3 (2008), 404-5.

much valuable as the reports of any officer or Party leader. Any instances of contradictions are noted throughout the paper; human memory lapses over time, but written records provide strong clues to events that occurred, especially if there is evidence, even an oral interview, to sustain an argument. Arguments, such as what caused a Soviet civilian to take up arms and fight by the millions for their country, become important. What motivated a citizen to rally and fight a bloody battle for the Communist Party?

Chapter 1

The Need for Mobilization

> "Comrades, Red Army and Red Navy men, commanders and political instructors, men and women guerrillas! The whole world is looking to you as a force capable of destroying the brigand hordes of German invaders. The enslaved peoples of Europe under the yoke of the German invaders are looking to you as their liberators. A great mission of liberation has fallen to your lot."
> -Josef Stalin's speech in the Red Square, November 7, 1941

--*

Six months after the launch of Operation Barbarossa, the German Wehrmacht had occupied much of Ukraine and were quickly approaching the Russian borders. The quote at the beginning of this chapter is an excerpt from Josef Stalin's speech given in the Red Square in Moscow on a cold, November day. A month after the call to arms was issued, the Red Army retook Rostov and launched a counter-attack against the Wehrmacht in Moscow. The Soviet people rallied for their *Rodina* (Motherland) and engaged their opponent in a long, bitter, and bloody war. The Great Patriotic War for Russia had just begun. According to Susan Corbesero, who wrote "Femininity (Con)scripted: Female Images in Soviet Wartime Poster Propaganda," the response from the Soviet people was immense:

> Official pronouncements at the beginning of the war called men to the front and women to work for the home front, both in industry and on collective farms. Throughout the war the response from women was extraordinary. Initially, mass voluntary movements brought unemployed housewives into the labor force. As

enormous losses depleted manpower, women transferred to the heavy industry and construction sectors. By 1942, sixty percent of defense industry workers were women.[3]



Figure 1- "We will take your place."[4]

[3] Susan Corbesero, "Femininity (Con)scripted: Female Images in Soviet Wartime Poster Propaganda, 1941–1945." *Aspasia*, Vol. 4 (2010), 107.

[4] Russian World War II Propaganda Posters, Digital Image. Available from: All World Wars, http://www.allworldwars.com/Russian%20WWII%20Propaganda%20Posters.html (accessed April 11, 2017).

Just like during the Great War, women, unlike their male counterparts, were not officially conscripted into the army. However, many women willingly volunteered to join the army to stop the looming threat: the Nazis. Within eight months of the war between 1941-42, the Germans carried out the "most concentrated mass killing in human history" at the time when "the invading German armies killed an estimated 2.8 million Soviet prisoners-of-war through starvation, exposure, and summary execution."[5] The Nazi's goal of eliminating the Soviet way of life was clear: "they aimed to destroy the USSR, wipe out the communists, and turn the survivors into slaves."[6] But it was not just the prisoners of war who suffered; Slavic civilians suffered under the brutal force of the occupying Germans as well. Whether a person enlisted in the war to protect their families or for personal vengeance against the Nazis, "citizens rallied to the defense of their homeland, some because of their feelings about…the leadership of [Stalin], others despite their feelings."[7] According to Susan Corbesero, "the German invasion in June 1941 immediately reignited the importance and power of Soviet posters to rally the nation, uniting artists and the state in a common patriotic purpose."[8] Propaganda posters were a large morale booster to the troops at the start of the war and then throughout. A woman aircraft mechanic, Evgeniia Sapronova, said about the images "I, for one, was greatly affected by the posters now housed in museums."[9] The symbols of women and war on the propaganda posters unofficially became the memoirs of women's roles during the Great Patriotic war. Throughout the war, the image of Soviets fighting Nazis was always at the visual forefront of the Soviet people.

[5] "Case Study: Soviet Prisoners-of-War (POWs), 1941-42." Gendercide Watch. Accessed October 1, 2016. http://www.gendercide.org/case_soviet.html.
[6] Barbara Alpern Engel, "Chapter Seven: The Womanly Face of War: Soviet Women Remember World War II," in *Women and War in the Twentieth Century: Enlisted With or Without Consent*, ed. Nicole Ann Dombrowski, vol. 13, Women's History and Culture (New York, NY: Garland Publishing, 1999), 138.
[7] Ibid, 138.
[8] Corbesero, 105.
[9] Ibid, 105



Figure 2- "Fascism is the worst women's enemy. All on the fight with fascism!"[10]

[10] Russian World War II Propaganda Posters, Digital Image. Available from: All World Wars, http://www.allworldwars.com/Russian%20WWII%20Propaganda%20Posters.html (accessed April 11, 2017).

Obstacles in Mobilization

The Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union disrupted the lives of many young men and women, most of whom were still in school. The majority of the veteran memoirs were from women who attended school and universities. As such, "those women who volunteered, and those who later remembered in writing, tended to be among the more educated, and therefore advantaged and literate, Soviet women."[11] Among the memoirs are those of two Soviet nurses: Irina Bogacheva, a maths-physic student and Vera Malakhova, a medical student. Though soldiers were urgently needed, it was near impossible for women to mobilize to the frontlines. Irina Bogacheva recalls in her memoir:

Remember that peaceful pre-war year
When you were only seventeen,
Without a care in the world …
Not realizing we were a mere two steps from war …
I hurried to the recruitment office
There was already a line of girls
But the Senior Commissar sternly declared
"… Go home girls!"[12]

But the university-taught Bogacheva and other like-minded individuals believed they belonged on the frontline with the men. Bogacheva refers to the war as the "people's war," where both men and women fought in unison. Vera Malakhova joined at the onset of the war as a combat nurse after she graduated from medical school. When asked why she chose to serve, she said: "What was there to talk about? We had graduated, they had given us our diplomas.

[11] Roger D. Markwick, ""A Sacred Duty": Red Army Women Veterans Remembering the Great Fatherland War, 1941-1945." *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 54, no. 3 (2008), 407.
[12] Ibid, 407.

Naturally, it was our duty to go to the front."[13] Bogacheva, however, was more conflicted about her decision. She felt strongly that her university-taught education would have been more beneficial on the home front and she received letters of criticism from her classmates, though some were envious of her. Despite her calling, Bogacheva was the breadwinner in her home and her mother was opposed to her daughter marching off to war:

> "s a university graduate, it was suggested, she would be more use on the home front, an issue she wrestled with even after she got to the front-line, while her mother, dependent on Bogacheva as a breadwinner, echoing popular prejudice among many women, cruelly suggested she had enlisted only to find a husband.[14]

She wrote a letter home in 1942, stating that though she might have acted out of impulse, her cause was a just and noble one. According to Mahdi D. Nazemroaya:

> The mobilization of Soviet women against the invading German Wehrmacht can be explained as a synergy of identity, metaphysical concepts of womanhood based on both a mix of tradition and the revolutionary ideology of the state, and finally survival. The scholar Hodgson (1998) believes that it was the traditional view of women and femininity as "moral beings" and the Soviet mobilization of women as "civic beings" that prompted Soviet females to join their male counter-parts in the Soviet military and impelled many of the same Soviet women to demand combat roles.[15]

When women who volunteered to go to the front were asked about their intentions, they replied that "their decision to go to war as a spontaneous reaction to the news about the invasion. The recurrent Russian word that they used to distinguish their war intentions apart from home front and military support activities was *voevat*– 'to take part in armed fighting.'"[16]

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[13] Engel, "Chapter Seven: The Womanly Face of War," 141.
[14] Markwick, 407.
[15] Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya, "The Historic Role That Soviet Women Played in Defeating the Nazis in World War II." Global Research, March 8, 2014. http://www.globalresearch.ca/how-the-west-ignores-women-as-actors-in-otherized-societies-a-sociological-unraveling-of-the-logos-of-the-soviet-amazons/5372529.
[16] Anna Krylova, "Stalinist Identity from the Viewpoint of Gender: Rearing a Generation of Professionally Violent Women Fighters in 1930s Stalinist Russia." *Gender and History*, Vol. 16, 3 (November 2004), 647.

After the end of the First World War, Russian women were expected to return to their gendered domestic role. But shifts in the paradigm of tradition allowed women to pursue combat roles. Despite resistance from commissars to conscript women, "in a desperate fight for survival, even Stalin was willing to modify traditional patriarchal attitudes about the role of women"[17] and allow them to fight. After all, the Soviet Union itself had been founded on revolutionary ideals. "The militant aspects of socialist/communist ideologies tied to revolution equally applied to the militarization of men and women as revolutionaries ready to fight capitalism, counterrevolution" and, especially in this particular instance, "fascism."[18] As the bloody Eastern Theater marched on, Soviet women could pursue other roles besides nursing, cooking, factory, and home front roles. In designated shooting clubs and training camps, women learned how to handle rifles, anti-aircraft turrets, machine guns, and other combat equipment. By the end of the war, women in the Red Army had comprised of roughly 800,00 combatants. Memoirs by the women combatants were sustained by real experiences and emotions on the battlefield; the memoirs were not, as Roger Markwick wrote, "just relics of so-called 'totalitarian' indoctrination" of the Patriotic War.[19] Before they could be deployed, the women were interviewed by the Komsomol organizations and medical committees:

> The majority of those selected were sent to military pilot, infantry and tank schools where they were trained. Among the 800,000 women sent to the front were thousands of commanders of rifle, machine-gun and mortar subdivisions. In 1943 alone, 1,388 women infantry commanders graduated from the Riazan infantry school. Women also fought in armored and artillery units as tank commanders, tank snipers and operators of field guns.[20]

[17] Mike Markowitz, "Women With Guns: The Red Army Female Snipers of World War II." Accessed November 19, 2013.
http://www.defensemedianetwork.com/stories/women-with-guns-the-red-army-female-snipers-of-world-war-ii/.
[18] Nazemroaya, "The Historical Role," http://www.globalresearch.ca/how-the-west-ignores-women-as-actors-in-otherized-societies-a-sociological-unraveling-of-the-logos-of-the-soviet-amazons/5372529.
[19] Markwick, 407.
[20] Krylova, 649.

Though the battlefield experiences by the Soviet women combatants were as real as their male counterparts', the women still faced discrimination from their enemies as well as their own comrades and officers. The invading German army wrote about "ferocious riflewomen" [*Flintenweiber*] as "Bolshevik beasts" and "amazons devoid of femininity."[21] Officers sexually harassed their women soldiers and offered rations and power for sexual favors. Along with the discrimination faced by human men, women had to survive on the gruesome battlefield. Irina Bogacheva wrote:

> Overcoming fear of appalling wounds and death, amidst snow, blood, filth and lice (a common companion in war) was fundamental to military medicine: tending the wounded on straw mattresses because there were not enough beds, severely burnt tank crews, cleaning grossly infected wounds, removing shrapnel, or the death of a revered commander from stomach wounds, provoking an oath of "merciless revenge" on the "black souls" of the "fascist bandits."[22]

Such a sight was common for medical officers on the frontlines. They faced just as much danger as the infantry fighting on the frontline. Even though Soviet women were officially allowed to participate in roles on the frontline, they were still trying to womanize in a man's world.

[21] Markwick, 407.
[22] Ibid, 409.

Chapter 2

Womanizing in a Man's World

"Warfare is…the one human activity from which women, with the most insignificant exceptions, have always and everywhere stood apart…"
-John Keegan, *A History of Warfare* (1993)

--*

At the start of the Second World War, "nursing was a socially acceptable role for women in the Red [Army]" as killing was only committed in defense of their patients.[23] Not only did Soviet women combatants have to prove their loyalty, but they also had to prove they were as competent as their male counterparts. Iuliia Zhakova, a veteran of the Red Army and author of her memoir titled *Girl with a Sniper's Rifle*, wrote about her experience, both on and off the battlefield, with honesty. Much like Bogacheva, Zhukova was initially turned away by her commissar when she wanted to join the army. She was "a Soviet loyalist, initially denied the right to join the military because of her age in 1941 and because of her sex, she remained determined to go to the front, despite the obstacles."[24] Initially, women fulfilled traditional domestic roles, such as washing the bloodstained uniforms of soldiers, preparing and serving meals, telegraph operators, nurses and physicians, and noncombatants roles like factory work and farming. By 1943, "800,000 women volunteers served…constituting about eight percent of

[23] Roger D. Markwick, "'A Sacred Duty': Red Army Women Veterans Remembering the Great Fatherland War, 1941-1945." *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 54, no. 3 (2008), 409.
[24] Ibid, 410.

military personnel."[25] Soviet women flew in the air force, and infantry ground forces, and a few rose to officer status and even led men into battle. Women earned medals and distinguished honors (though majority received these posthumously) and women physicians had the highest rate of casualties, surpassed only by the troops themselves.

In October of 1942, Stalin's decree declared the formation of women's brigades "to satisfy women's desires to take up arms to defend their socialist motherhood."[26] Although recruitment of women into the Red Army was officially voluntary, there is evidence to suggest that the mass wave of recruits in 1942 and 1943 was organized by the Komsomol (the Communist Party's youth division). These recruitments were limited after the Komsomol Central Committee resolution of February 3, 1943, which "specifically prohibited the recruitment of women who were the primary care-givers for their families."[27] Women who were pregnant, had young children, or were taking care of elderly relatives were prohibited from serving. Also, women who were from certain regions, like Belarus, Western Ukraine or any enemy nation, were forbidden from joining the Red Army. "Women who were previously from German occupied territories were also excluded."[28] The recruits that were enlisted from the Komsomol consisted of a combination of raw recruits, drafted from "the civilian population through regional, factory, and collective farm" committees and from the pool of women who had already served or were serving on the frontline. The latter experienced soldiers were trained to become officers and leaders of the former.[29]

[25] Barbara Alpern Engel, "Chapter Seven: The Womanly Face of War: Soviet Women Remember World War II," in *Women and War in the Twentieth Century: Enlisted With or Without Consent*, ed. Nicole Ann Dombrowski, vol. 13, Women's History and Culture (New York, NY: Garland Publishing, 1999), 139.
[26] Euridice Charon Cardona and Roger D. Markwick, "'Our Brigade Will Not Be Sent to the Front': Soviet Women under Arms in the Great Fatherland War, 1941-45," *The Russian Review*, Vol. 68, No. 2 (Apr, 2009), 243.
[27] Ibid, 244-245.
[28] Ibid, 245.
[29] Ibid, 245.



Figure 3- "Red Cross nurses, don't leave on the battlefield no wounded, nor his weapon."[30]

[30] Russian World War II Propaganda Posters, Digital Image. Available from: All World Wars, http://www.allworldwars.com/Russian%20WWII%20Propaganda%20Posters.html (accessed April 11, 2017).

Suspension of Femininity

The recruits were sent to specialized training camps throughout the Soviet Union to fulfill a variety of roles, from bombing pilots high in the sky to snipers lying in wait, and everything in between. But the camp culture proved to be brutal on femininity. As Roger Markwick wrote:

> With military life, [the girls] entered into another world. At Podolsk they were quarantined for health checks in spartan accommodation, from whence they were marched off to the baths. At the bathhouse a "surprise" awaited them: "an entire brigade of haircutters". For girls, shearing their locks so that they "all looked identical, like boys" came as a shock. Some girls resisted or cried, in vain. The culture shock of severe, masculine, military haircuts was compounded by the donning of unflattering, ill-fitting, men's uniforms.[31]

After receiving short haircuts and men's uniforms, the women were sent to live in barracks filled with shoddy cots, inadequate food, and only able to bathe every week or so. Such conditions allowed diseases to spread and morale to decrease. The barracks housing women soldiers of the Women's Volunteer Rifle Brigade was renovated from old brick factories. In a report addressed to the Komsomol, the officer of the brigade "complained that the rooms were dirty and dark, lavatories did not function, and there were no buckets, brooms, or hand basins, forcing the women to wash themselves with snow. There was not even access to clean, potable water."[32] When the women combatants of the Rifle Brigade went to town for baths, the trains they were riding in did not even halt. The women had to jump on and off of the cars. It was unsurprising that several women were injured or even killed "under the wheels of trains during trips to the bath and all kinds of work in Moscow." The senior officers were blamed for the deaths, with several Komsomol reports stating that "they failed to explain and implement the

[31] Markwick, 411.
[32] Cardona and Markwick, 248.

rules for using rail transport or to ensure that senior officers organized, accompanied, and oversaw the bathing trips."[33] Red Army recruits and factory workers lived in tents or overcrowded barracks that lacked kitchens, working plumbing, and any personal privacy.

Overturning Gender Roles

Despite the "brutal suspension of femininity," in general, girls had the opportunity to remain girls during the course of the war, despite the difficulties.[34] Physician Vera Malakhova wrote about how she and the other medics improvised undergarments. They also had a solution for the combat boots, which were too large for their feet:

> I remember how they gave us those ribbons -remember, I told you how they used to drag away the wounded- they gave us blue and red ribbons. And from those ribbons -they were made of jersey- we sewed ourselves stockings. They never gave us stockings! ... The male doctors scolded us, but what could we do?[35]

Lidiya Lityvak, a well-known ace pilot, earned a reputation for being an incredible flier and making a powerful impression to everyone who met her, despite her small stature. She was a well-known lover of nature and "decorated the inside of her cockpit with wildflowers" she found near the airfields and allegedly "painted a while lily" on the fuselage of her plane. She wielded "color scarves out of parachutes and was a deadly adversary in the skies."[36] Military hospitals became "centers of culture" where Soviet women were drawn back to domestic culture by putting on concerts, reading from books and women's personal notebooks, a pre-war tradition.[37]

[33] Ibid, 248-9.
[34] Ibid, 411.
[35] V. I Malakhova, "Four Years as a Frontline Physician" in *Revolution of their Own*, edited by Barbara Alpern Engle and A. Posadskaya-Vanderbeck. Westview Press, 1997, 196-97.
[36] Amy Goodpaster Strebe *Flying For Her Country: The American and Soviet Women Military Pilots of World War II*. Washington, D.C: Potomac Books, Inc., 2009: 26-27.
[37] Markwick, 416.

According to Mahdi Nazemroaya, during warfare, gender stereotypes can be turned on their heads. Many men have proven to become "sensitive, averse to violence, brutality, and killing," meanwhile more women are provided the chance "to prove themselves as fighters. Paradoxically, while men felt an unaccustomed lack of power and freedom of movement," women veterans of World War I have stated that the war was a "liberating experience for women, which replaced feelings of powerless in the world."[38] Soviet women were given their chance to become competent warriors, mostly through sniper training programs. Rifle training camps graduated about 2,000 (of whom 500 survived the war) Soviet women snipers, who were deployed to the front. According to Iuliia Zhukova (who had eight confirmed kills), being a sniper was regarded as "one of the most difficult and dangerous military professions." According to the *Soviet Sniper's Personal Handbook*:

> A sniper has to be able to […] hit the target precisely and with the first shot in all situations […] A sniper has to know how to observe painstakingly, for protracted periods, on the field of battle, persistently stalking the target; has to know how to work at night, in poor weather, in lacerated terrain, strewn with obstacles and mines […].[39]

Prior to the war, many young men and women in the Soviet Union participated in rifle clubs or paramilitary sporting groups that taught the young how to use weapons. Among these youth was Lyudmila Pavlichenko, a young student pursuing a Master's degree at Kiev University. She was a self-described tomboy and declared that she would not "allow herself to be outdone by boys in anything." During her tour in Washington D.C, she told the crowd: "When a neighbor's boy boasted of his exploits at a shooting range, I set out to show that a girl could do as well. So I practiced a lot." Pavlichenko earned the title of deadliest female sniper in

[38] Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya, "The Historic Role That Soviet Women Played in Defeating the Nazis in World War II." *Global Research*, March 8, 2014. http://www.globalresearch.ca/how-the-west-ignores-women-as-actors-in-otherized-societies-a-sociological-unraveling-of-the-logos-of-the-soviet-amazons/5372529.
[39] Markwick, 412.

history with 309 confirmed kills by the age of 25.[40] In the skies, Soviet women pilots and bombers struck their enemies just as accurately and mercilessly as their male comrades. During the Battle of Stalingrad, German tanks met heavy resistance from anti-aircraft batteries "operated by young woman volunteers, barely out of high school." The inexperienced young women, most of whom had never fired a gun before, were low on ammunition and switched targets to the advancing panzers. The German crews made note of the girls' "Sunday promenade" clothes and fired on the batteries. Captain Sarkisyan, the commander of the mortar batteries, wrote: "Every time the anti-aircraft gun fells silent, I'd exclaim 'oh! They're [the girls] finished now! They've been wiped out!' But each time, after a pause, the guns started to fire again."[41] General Friedrich Paulus of the German army was ambushed by "a bandit battalion of women soldiers, commanded by a redhead" when the Wehrmacht entered the city. The general describes the women soldiers as "female beasts" who fought "in treacherous and dangerous ways. They [lay] concealed in heaps of straw and [shot them] in the back" as the German army passed.[42] The Germans were mercilessly cruel to the Soviet women soldiers they captured. Zhukova notes that the Wehrmacht "did not spare sniper-girls" when Zhukova found the "monstrously tortured" corpse of fellow sniper Dusia Filipova, who had been caught in a house in the surrounded city of Landsberg.[43] The German sources from World War II called Soviet women soldiers "beasts" and "amazons" and "ferocious warrior women" or focused on their clothing and fashion. Their gendered language proves the bias most of the Western world had towards female combatants, even in the twentieth century. But Soviet women combatants faced three main issues with their

[40] Gilbert King, "Eleanor Roosevelt and the Soviet Sniper," *Smithsonian.com*, February 21, 2013. http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/eleanor-roosevelt-and-the-soviet-sniper-23585278/?no-ist.
[41] Antony Beevor, *Stalingrad: The Fateful Siege- 1942-1943*. Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd, 1998, 106-7.
[42] Ibid, 66.
[43] Markwick, 414.

male counterparts in the Red Army: the adverse resistance of male officers to respect women's leadership, sexual harassment, and the conditions that came with forced cohabitation with male officers.

Resistance to Women: Battalion Leaders and Abuse

The Germans were not the only obstacle that Soviet women soldiers faced on the battlefield. Women faced all sorts of discrimination and violence among their own comrades as well. In the all-women battle brigades, experienced women combatants were brought in and trained to become officers to eventually take over the battalions. In the case of the Women's Volunteer Rifle Brigade, 913 male officers temporarily held commanding positions, ideally until the women officers brought in were sufficiently trained enough. For four months, male officers had control of the 6,240 female soldiers within the Brigade. The shift from male officers to all-female officers did not occur until May 13, 1943.[44] According to reports by the male battalion officers:

> [The male officers] complained that the women commanders were too young and lacked experience working in military divisions and exercising command… The new female commanders were finding it difficult to establish themselves as commanders and educators because of their weak bodies, weak will, and youth; some of them took the path of familiarity, thereby undermining their authority with their subordinates.[45]

Male officers and subordinates resented the authority of women commanders and responded with insubordination and even sexual assault. By the summer of 1943, most all-Women Brigades managed to convert all leadership to female officers, removing the substituted all-male junior commanders. According to an official report, "discipline and order in the garrisons improved." While the problems that occurred with cohabitation and subordination diminished, accusations

[44] Cardona and Markwick, 243.
[45] Ibid, 258.

against male officers abusing their women subordinates rose.[46] Through memoirs and reports, it has become apparent that Soviet women soldiers faced not only a "lethally misogynistic enemy," but sexual assault in a predatory environment among their own male superior officers and comrades.[47] According to historians Roger Markwick and Euridice Charona:

> Sexual relations, particularly harassment or abuse of women by male comrades and officers, did not sit comfortably with the heroic narrative of the war. Sexual relations were unquestionably forbidden between male and female soldiers. Only in the last decade or so has this forbidden question surfaced.[48]

Markwick goes on to state that the "commitment to fight fascism, at the risk of life and limb, was a 'sacred duty' and to discuss or recall the underside of this commitment is to betray it."[49] Vera Malakhova, Iuliia Zhukova, Irina Bogacheva, and other women veterans have all reported sexual harassment within their own memoirs. The latter wrote about her surprise and dismay when a group of young officers ordered her to attend an evening with a group of generals. She was sentenced to the guard house for three days after refusing the order by telling them, "I won't carry out this order. You will have to shoot me!"[50] Physician Vera Malakhova writes about the time a "disgusting commissar" attempted to take advantage of her:

> Once [the commissar] summoned me at night. So. "Sit down," he said. … I don't sit down. He spreads his overcoat. It was cold. "Sit on my overcoat." "I'll stand," I say. "No, no, no, you sit down." Well I had no right to disobey; I was still a junior officer, while he was a major. I sat down on the corner. He began to move towards me. He moved and moved and all of a sudden…his hand was up my skirt. I jumped up and said, "Ah, so that's why you summoned me." You know, I was really upset…If things had been different, I'd have simply slapped him in the face. But here I couldn't, he was my superior. … "I wanted to test you," he said. I said, "You know what, you can test your wife. But you have no reason to test me."[51]

[46] Ibid, 258.
[47] Ibid, 243.
[48] Ibid, 260.
[49] Markwick, 418.
[50] Ibid, 418.
[51] Engel, 144.

Malakhova states that the hubris felt by the Communist Party officers made them believe they could use their position of power for "intimacy." Another commander in her medical battalion tossed a grenade into a trench where women were bathing, just to watch them run away naked. Male officers conducted themselves like a "boys club," where they would assert their authority by "hiding behind their military experience, their rank, or influential friends when female [officers] confronted them with breaches of discipline, such as theft of socialist property, cohabitation, or mistreatment of women subordinates."[52] In one such case, Cardona and Markwick write of Lieutenant Prokofieva, who confronted Lieutenant Temniakov about his lewd behavior towards his female subordinates. Temniakov went to his superior, Major Sergeev, who told Prokofieva to mind her own business. Prokofieva went up the chain of command. However, she was subjected to abuse by Sergeev and his friends where they threatened to "wipe her off the face of the earth."[53] According to another report from July 1943:

> Lt. Morosov asked several [female] sergeants to live with him and when they refused he demoted them or made their life a living hell. Morosov called…Sergeant Nikolskaia, a 'swine and unhinged,' threatened her with a revolver, and sent her out to dig trenches.[54]

Morosov was eventually accused of being rude to his superiors but initially denied everything, despite the facts against him. Eventually, he was "demoted and expelled from the Communist Party for abusive language and cohabitation with subordinates."[55] Women rarely took the abuses passively. They would warn other Soviet women combatants of "disgusting" commissars and even encourage each other's defiance.

[52] Cardona and Markwick, 258.
[53] Ibid, 258.
[54] Ibid, 260.
[55] Ibid, 260.

According to Markwick, the Soviet women combatants "fought first and foremost as patriots, and sometimes as communists, for their *rodina*," but they did not fight for women's equality "although they demanded the right to fight alongside men."[56] In the minds of the women soldiers, they were patriots first.

[56] Markwick, 416.

Chapter 3

Pushing to the Front

"'What am I to do with you, my darlings?' -that was how [the colonel] treated us - whereas we [women] already saw ourselves as real warriors."

-Lance Corporal Maria lvanovna Morozova, sniper

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Despite the unified cohesiveness of men and women combatants prevalent in academia, Soviet masculinity during the war was threatened by women combatants entering the army. Women soldiers destroyed "the clear-cut vision of a woman in need of a male…protector." A young Soviet woman was" able to defend not just herself, but others, including the men who were supposed to, at least according to gender norms, protect her. "Long-held male prerogatives to heroic death and military violence were thus themselves violated by armed women."[57] Different models of Soviet femininity suddenly created a binary political model that was later portrayed in the government's narrative of the war: those who acted on their maternal instinct and duties and those that abandoned it in defense of their country.

[57] Anna Krylova, "Stalinist Identity from the Viewpoint of Gender: Rearing a Generation of Professionally Violent Women Fighters in 1930s Stalinist Russia." *Gender and History*, Vol. 16, 3 (November 2004), 647.



Figure 4- "Red Army soldier, save us!"[58]

[58] Russian World War II Propaganda Posters, Digital Image. Available from: All World Wars, http://www.allworldwars.com/Russian%20WWII%20Propaganda%20Posters.html (accessed April 11, 2017).

On the battlefield, intimate and sexual relationships between men and women soldiers were forbidden. Nurse Irina Bogacheva admits that intimate relationships did occur among the soldiers. She viewed this as a "natural, human phenomenon; true no less, perhaps more so, in wartime than in peacetime, when all faced death and feared dying without having loved."[59] Even so, the majority of Soviet women's memoirs (including Bogacheva and Vera Malakhova) state that the relationships between male and female soldiers was more familial, paternal even, than sexual. Male soldiers would fondly call women soldiers sister (*sestry*) or daughter (*dochery*). The men often helped women soldiers, like in instances when, as Vera Malakhova described it, the female "anatomy proved a disadvantage:"

> You march at night, you couldn't during the day, because then the infantry and other forces were on the move and they'd bomb you. So you'd only move at night. You'd march along…and all of a sudden you'd need to…but how? To move off was dangerous because the land was sometimes mined. So three of the older men would turn their backs in a circle and open wide their greatcoats and say: "Little daughter, come here, don't be ashamed. We see that you can't walk away." And we'd squat and pee.[60]

Malakhova discusses the "rank-and-file" ordinary male soldiers as chivalrous and states that she did not feel in danger of sexual assault by her comrades, even when they were huddled together at night for warmth. To quote one veteran male soldier:

[59] Roger D. Markwick, "'A Sacred Duty': Red Army Women Veterans Remembering the Great Fatherland War, 1941-1945." *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 54, no. 3 (2008), 417.
[60] Barbara Alpern Engel. "Chapter Seven: The Womanly Face of War: Soviet Women Remember World War II." In *Women and War in the Twentieth Century: Enlisted With or Without Consent,* edited by Nicole Ann Dombrowski, 138-60. Vol. 13. Women's History and Culture. New York, NY: Garland Publishing, 1999, 143.

> We did not look upon them as women soldiers. We looked upon them as friends. They were our friends who carried us from the battlefield. You don't marry your own sister, do you? They were our sisters.[61]

Malakhova berates the Komsomol and Communist Party commissars for using their power to sexually assault women. She describes them as "cowards" and "dishonorable."

[61] Nina Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia*. New York: Basic Books, 1994, 183-4.



Figure 5- "Young men and women, defend freedom, Motherland and honor, gained by your fathers."[62]

[62] Russian World War II Propaganda Posters, Digital Image. Available from: All World Wars, http://www.allworldwars.com/Russian%20WWII%20Propaganda%20Posters.html (accessed April 11, 2017).

Martyrs and Deserters

Still, the young soldiers of the Red Army were committed to their *Rodina* with "unyielding determination to commit to the interests of state, nation and society at whatever cost to individual fate, including life itself; indeed, martyrdom was idealized."[63] During the course of the war, *Pravda*, the Communist newspaper, hailed the Soviet women aviators as national heroes of the war. Therefore, the airwomen became the face of the war. The first female recipients of the title "Hero of the Soviet Union" were Colonel Valentina Grizodubova, Major Polina Osipenko and Major Marina Raskova, the latter two of who were killed in plane crashes in 1939 and 1943 respectively.[64] However, military training of infantry forces was less than glamorous. The new recruits were not taken seriously by their male superior officers, even after they passed their initial checks upon recruitment. As told by Lance Corporal Maria lvanovna Morozova:

> We eventually came to the front ... to join the Sixty- Second Rifle Division . . . outside Orsha I remember it as if it were yesterday - grew angry upon seeing us: "They have thrust some girls upon me." But then he invited us to have lunch with him. We heard him ask one of his aides, "Do we have anything for the dessert?" We felt offended - what was he taking us for? We'd come to fight . . . and he was receiving us not as soldiers but as girls. We could have been his daughters, as far as age was concerned. "What am I to do with you, my darlings?" -that was how he treated us - whereas we already saw ourselves as real warriors.[65]

Infantry recruits were forced to perform "battleground preparation" tasks including digging out trenches, preparing and firing from defensive positions, exhausting physical labor, and consuming bland meals of gruel and dried bread, all while constantly hearing the mantra of "your

[63] Markwick, 410.
[64] Ibid, 410.
[65] Svetlana Alexievich & Keith Hammond & Ludmila Lezhneva, "'I Am Loath to Recall': Russian Women Soldiers in World War II." *Women's Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 3/4, Rethinking Women's Peace Studies (Fall - Winter, 1995), 80.

security, your lives."[66] Stories of brave Soviet women circled around the Soviet Union. Among them was the tragic tale of Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya, a young partisan who was captured by Germans after she burned down a barn housing officers of the Wehrmacht army. According to German sergeant Karl Bauerlein, she remained silent during her torture as the Germans attempted, unsuccessfully, to extract information from her. As she stood at her execution, a noose around her neck, she told the crowd: "Why do you look downcast? Be brave comrades. Fight, smash, hound the enemy!" A soldier tried to silence her, but her last words were: "I am not afraid of dying. It is great to die for one's Motherland."[67] Stories of her bravely spread throughout the USSR and she was dubbed by global newspapers as the "Soviet Joan of Arc."[68] Soviet soldiers, especially women, revered in the story of "our Zoya." Hundreds of thousands of Soviet women combatants were killed in action; more died than survived. More often than not, many of the women's lives ended like those of Privates Mariya S. Polivanova and Natalya V. Kovshova, "a spotter and sniper team killed in action together near Novgorod on August 14, 1943. Wounded and out of ammunition, they waited until German troops approached their trench, then detonated their grenades."[69]

But by February 1943, many women combatants were exasperated at their situations. The Communist Party passed a contradictory decree stating that women's role in the war would be limited to "guarding garrisons, major military installations, railway junctions, and warehouses and also traffic control."[70] Unofficially, this meant that Soviet women were to take over security

[66] Markwick, 419.
[67] Albert Axell. *Russia's Heroes: 1941-45*. London: Constable, 2001, 85-6.
[68] Rosalinde Sartorti, "On the Making of Heroes, Heroines and Saints" in Richard Stites, ed., *Culture and Entertainment in Wartime Russia.* Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1995, 182.
[69] Mike Markowitz, "Women With Guns: The Red Army Female Snipers of World War II." http://www.defensemedianetwork.com/stories/women-with-guns-the-red-army-female-snipers-of-world-war-ii/.
[70] Euridice Charon Cardona and Roger D. Markwick, "'Our Brigade Will Not Be Sent to the Front': Soviet Women under Arms in the Great Fatherland War, 1941-45." *The Russian Review*, Vol. 68, No. 2 (Apr, 2009), 243.

details in newly liberated territories, thus freeing up men for the frontline. This led to the rise of a strange phenomenon: women deserting, not back home, but to the frontline. In the Women's Volunteer Rifle Brigade, the chief of the political department reported about 131 women deserting with over 200 more writing letters to Stalin, begging to mobilize to the front.[71] However, Stalin's Order No. 277, commonly known as the "Not one step back" rule, forbade any form of desertion. All violators were subjected to the tribunal for military discipline where execution was the common outcome. 62,000 soldiers (it is unknown how many were women) were arrested for desertion by the NKVD. Women who left their stations to help on the front were sent to the same tribunal as the male soldiers who had deserted the frontlines to go home.[72] For women, desertion was seen as the "symptomatic of failings of discipline and character and of a dearth of political education among the rank-and-file women, not failings of military policy."[73] However, bad relations between (mostly male) officers and the lower-rank women, lack of confidence in the military, and influential letters from women on the front who retold their heroic deeds were the main causes of desertion. Agrafena Isupova deserted to the front but was caught five days later. At her tribunal, she said:

> I always was the first at work. I volunteered for the company. I didn't care, because I wanted to go straight to the front. I left here because I felt ashamed to be sitting in the hospital like a "noble woman," when all I wanted was to shed my blood for the motherland. I believed that I would die as a hero.[74]

However, excuses of heroism and patriotism did not sway the tribunal, who likened her desertion with those who fled home:

> There are deserters who ran to the front. And others are running away from it. We despise deserters. Those like Iusupova...did not go in the spirit of the Komsomol.

[71] Ibid, 250.
[72] Ibid, 250.
[73] Ibid, 256.
[74] Ibid, 252.

> ...We did not lose anything; we got rid of the fainthearted. ...So we will deal with these people. She will be sent before a court, a particularly harsh court. And how many other incidents do we have? [Girl] soldiers continuously swear and disobey orders. Where is our backbone?[75]

Iusupova was sentenced to ten years in the gulag. In January 1944, the Komsomol blamed the lack of education and discipline among the middle-rank officers for the desertions, stating that "only rank-and-file deserters were punished and that no commander had been cautioned. As a result, the report stated that hence forth inquiries into desertion will determine the level of guilt of the commanders and the guards."[76] However, the blame for desertion always fell to the individual rather than the conditions within each brigade. As such, women soldiers continued to be viewed as second-rate and cast down upon by their male superiors, even after the war shifted in the Soviet's favor.

[75] Ibid, 252.
[76] Ibid, 254.

Chapter 4

The Effects of War

There is only one religion — FRIENDSHIP
There is only one temple — the FRONT.
-Red Army mantra

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Historian Euridice Cardona argues that the leadership among the women's brigades sought "to transform the new recruits into military personnel aimed not only to erase their civilian habits but also to eliminate the femininity with which such habits were associated."[77] Many male officers blamed women leadership for the desertions to the front, claiming that the deserters who fled to all male divisions believed they would be treated better. As the defensive phase of the Great Patriotic War ended and the Red Army moved to the offensive against Germany, so too did the tone shift in the memoirs. Stories of young women eager to sacrifice themselves for their *Rodina* were replaced with battlefield gothic. Battlefield gothic, as described by former Marine Samuel Hynes, is "the gore, horror and stench of maiming, killing and dying" on the battlefield.[78] Many Soviet women veterans recounted the tales of their first kills. Some snipers, like Iuliia Zhukova, relished in their first kill:

> It was already three o'clock in the afternoon when my observer shouted "*Fritzy*!" It was already getting dark. I peered through the sights; two Fritz [slang for

[77] Euridice Charon Cardona and Roger D. Markwick, "'Our Brigade Will Not Be Sent to the Front': Soviet Women under Arms in the Great Fatherland War, 1941-45." *The Russian Review*, Vol. 68, No. 2 (Apr, 2009), 259.
[78] Samuel Hynes, *The Soldier's Tale*. Penguin Books, 1998, 26.

> Germans], completely upright, were emerging from the forest. I could see them clearly, right in front of my eyes. I held my breath. I fired, but too hastily and missed. I quickly reloaded and fired again. This time the bullet struck home. One Fritz went down, the other crawled off into the forest. Although I saw it with my own eyes, as did others, I could not believe that I had killed a Fritz with my own hands. What a mood I was in when I returned! The girls came up to congratulate me. The company commander sent his thanks. In my sniper's notebook appeared the first mark. Thus I opened my fighting account.[79]

And others, like Lance Corporal Maria Morozova, were repulsed:

> While [my spotter and I] were arguing, the German officer indeed gave orders to his soldiers. A cart appeared, and the soldiers passed some load down the line. The officer stood there for a while then said something and disappeared. Meanwhile, we went on arguing. I noticed that he had already appeared twice, only for an instant that he appeared and disappeared - I decided to shoot. I was full of resolve, and then it occurred to me that he was after all a human being. Even though he was an enemy, he still was a human being. My hands began to tremble, and a chill ran down my spine. I was seized with inexplicable fear. ... I could not bring myself to take a shot at a human after using plywood targets. Nevertheless, I braced myself and pulled the trigger. He swung his arms and fell. I don't know whether I killed him, but after that I began to shiver even worse from the thought that I had killed a human being.[80]

The difference in mindset derives from the realization of killing another human being. As Morozova stated, humans are not equal to plywood targets. Despite these few moments of vulnerability, there are no remorse written in the pages of women veterans. Rather, details of German brutality were used as sources of reprisal among many of the memoirs. In the bloody battle of Landsberg, Prussia, of which only a dozen of four hundred Red Army soldiers survived a German encirclement, Zhukova writes of the horrors she witnessed: her friend, a Red Army

[79] Roger D. Markwick, "'A Sacred Duty': Red Army Women Veterans Remembering the Great Fatherland War, 1941-1945." *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 54, no. 3 (2008), 415.
[80] Svetlana Alexievich, Keith Hammond & Ludmila Lezhneva, "'I Am Loath to Recall': Russian Women Soldiers in World War II." *Women's Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 3/4, Rethinking Women's Peace Studies (Fall - Winter, 1995), 81.

agent, his corpse battered and broken in the snow, the mutilations and tortures of women soldiers at the mercy of the Germans, the destruction and annihilation of an entire medical regiment, and so forth. Despite the desperate situation, Zhukova maintains that although her unit were "mere girls, by age and life experience," unfazed by the harsh treatment by the Germans, the women "maintained their dignity; nobody faltered, nobody retreated, nobody sought to hide behind others or save their lives at others' expense."[81] In a settlement in Eastern Prussia, Sergeant Kladvia Krokhina, a sniper, witnessed a house on fire:

> Everything had already burned down; only cinders remained. Human bones and charred little red stars could be seen among them. Wounded or captured Soviet soldiers had been burned up. . .. After that I never felt pity whenever I killed. Once I had seen those burned bones I seemed to be unable to come to my senses. All I felt was fury and a desire to avenge.[82]

In most instances, Red Army soldiers feared capture more than death. They had been witnesses to the Germans' brutal campaign to annihilate the Soviet existence since the beginning of the war. For most, the Great Patriotic War was one of great survival against their German fascist foe. Others, like sniper and Hero of the Soviet Union Natasha Kovshova, had a personal motive. Before her death in 1942, she wrote a letter home stating: "My hatred for the cursed fascist beast grows stronger every day, with every battle […] I will shoot the vermin point blank, I will pump bullet after bullet into their foul skulls."[83]

[81] Markwick, 414.
[82] Alexievich, Hammond & Lezhneva, 81.
[83] Natasha Kovshova, Unpublished letters, 30 July 1942.

The stress and fear of the war caused many women to cease menstruating. Pregnant women had to "continue to serve until [their] seventh month,"[84] that included lifting heavy objects and dragging wounded soldiers off of the battlefield. On the homefront, women accounted for almost all of the labor force in the defense sector:

> As early as 1941, the women of Leningrad made up ninety percent of the work-force in machine shops. They entered and learned a range of skilled trades in engineering, transportation and power generations, labor sectors to which they had previously been denied access. Increased rations associated with high-skill positions surely played a part in such astonishing growth; the war-time labor regime was grueling, however, and included 66-hour working weeks and draconian laws against infractions. Additionally, employed and unemployed women were dragged to build barricades and dig anti-tank trenches to repel invaders.[85]

Even on the homefront, every Soviet citizen had to be present and accounted for by constantly working to protect and bolster the *Rodina*. As the war progressed on, images, mainly posters, of the war reflected women waiting at home and working in the factories. Propaganda contributed to the rapidly declining popularity of women on the frontlines in public eyes and gave rise to rumors, including the phenomenon that became known as the mobile field wives.

[84] Barbara Alpern Engel, "Chapter Seven: The Womanly Face of War: Soviet Women Remember World War II." In *Women and War in the Twentieth Century: Enlisted With or Without Consent*, edited by Nicole Ann Dombrowski, 138-60. Vol. 13. Women's History and Culture. New York, NY: Garland Publishing, 1999, 143.
[85] Susan Corbesero. "Femininity (Con)scripted: Female Images in Soviet Wartime Poster Propaganda, 1941–1945." *Aspasia*, Vol. 4 (2010), 107.

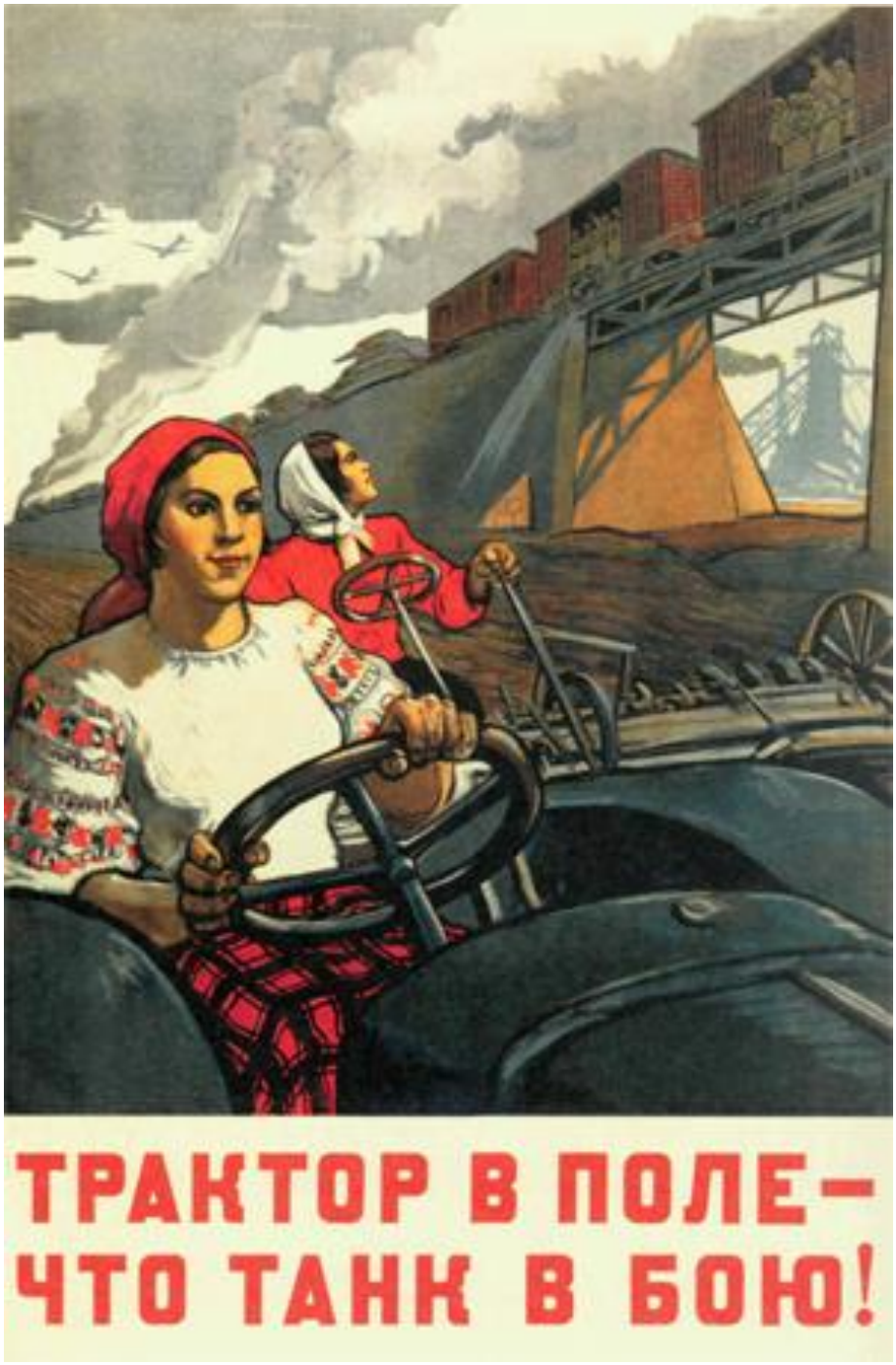


Figure 6- "Tractor in the field is the same as a tank in battle."[86]

[86] Russian World War II Propaganda Posters, Digital Image. Available from: All World Wars, http://www.allworldwars.com/Russian%20WWII%20Propaganda%20Posters.html (accessed April 11, 2017).

The Mobile Field Wives

Though love and intimate relationships were forbidden on the battlefield, romance did blossom. Malakhova tells of her lover, a physician like her, who helped her escape from a German encirclement:

> Later, as [Malakhova] lay in the hospital recovering from shellshock…, he risked his life to swim across the Volga with a birthday present for her, a package of raisins, a scare item that he had saved. Not long after, he was mortally wounded and died in her arms, uttering as his last words, "how will you live without me?" Almost fifty years have passed, …it is to this lost love of her youth that her memories often turn.[87]

Love and the desire for physical intimacy is inevitable during war, especially with the constant looming threat of death surrounding the soldiers. But among the innocent love between soldiers emerged the "sensationalist fashion" of a phenomenon known as the "mobile field wives" [*Polevaia pokhodnaia zhena*], "a vulgar term that first appeared after the war, based on rumors" that Soviet women combatants on the frontline were "no more than officers' mistresses."[88] Soviet women combatants who received special status for having high-ranking officers as lovers were looked down upon by men and women combatants alike. Malakhova describes a fellow nurse who was "excellent!" but looked down on her after the fellow nurse threw everything aside just to tend to her officer lover's washing or other domestic duties. Malakhova states that the officer was forgiven by the unit since he was "such a good commander," but the nurse was not.[89] The consensus of most Red Army veterans, men and women, about the mobile field wives was that they were "women who failed to resist or acquiesced to sex with a powerful male because of

[87] Engel, 145.
[88] Markwick, 417.
[89] Engel, 146.

a desire to obtain the privileges that such an association might bring."[90] Because of this attitude, majority of Soviet women combatants, especially ground troops, were viewed as "camp followers" or mobile field wives after the war ended. This belief became so widespread throughout the Soviet Union that women veterans were too fearful to wear their uniforms or display their medals and distinctions in public. Often times, when they *did* put on their uniforms, they were catcalled or called "whores!" by people on the street. According to Engle:

> Even as women's heroic actions, their suffering and self-sacrifice at the front were downplayed or effaced by government silence in the postwar period, postwar popular discourse transformed their feats into sexual transgression, enabling the "mobile field wife" to crowd out the woman warrior.[91]

But why was the government silent about the women's achievements? Why was the government, who had allowed women to join as snipers and pilots and soldiers to defend their *Rodina* against the common enemy of the Soviet people, not support their women in uniform? Because the Communist Party needed to gain control of the narrative in order to control and replenish the population that had perished during the war.

[90] Ibid, 146-47.
[91] Ibid, 150-51.

Chapter 5

Propaganda and War Crimes

"Ultimately, the question of whether the Germans were victims or not can only be addressed by highlighting how 'some Germans were victims, some Germans were perpetrators, and some Germans were both.'"

- Robert G. Moeller[92]

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In response to the German invasion of the USSR, the Soviet government created the *Chrezvychainaia gosudarstvennaia komissiia* (known as the ChGK), known in full in English as the "Extraordinary State Commission for the Establishment and Investigation of the Crimes of the Fascist German Invaders and Their Accomplices, and of the Damage They Caused to Citizens, Collective Farms, Public Organizations, State Enterprises, and Institutions of the USSR."[93] Judging by the various reports that the ChGK created from its conception in the early 1940s to the Nürnberg Trials, the ChGK had successfully managed to "blame Hitler for a portion of the Soviet authorities' own crimes."[94] It was not until 1994 that historian P.N. Knyshevskii suspected foul play with Soviet propaganda, at least in terms of the Soviet authorities passing the blame of their war crimes onto the German army. In 1998, Lev Bezymenskii updated Knyshevskii's findings and "confirmed that some of the information published by the ChGK was

[92] Robert G. Moeller, "Germans As Victims? Thoughts on a Post Cold War History of World War II's Legacies." *History & Memory*, 17, nos. 1 and 2, (Spring, Summer 2005), 150.
[93] Marina Sorokina, "People and Procedures Toward a History of the Investigation of Nazi Crimes in the USSR." *Kritika*, Vol 6 No 4 (Fall 2005), 797.
[94] Ibid, 804.

the result of conscious and purposeful falsification on the part of Stalinist propagandists."[95] The first concrete instance of transferred blame came in 1943 regarding the Katyn Massacre, where over 22,000 people were executed by NKVD officials in Katyn, Poland. Until 1990 where documents pointed to a Soviet cover-up, it was believed that the German Army had carried out the action:

> [The ChGK]'s role became all the more crucial in 1943, when the "Katyn commission" uncovered a whole series of reports by the German high command about the discovery on the occupied Soviet territories of sites of mass NKVD executions of Soviet citizens. It goes without saying what serious consequences the "political ricochet" of such revelations could have had for the Stalinist leadership, both at home and abroad. Fearing such consequences, Stalin and his circle did all they could to silence and distort Nuremberg Trial evidence dangerous to them.[96]

The role of propaganda and counterpropaganda became increasingly important for the Soviet authorities leading up to and during the Great Patriotic War. There were no clear defined "friends" or "foes" in the 1930s for the Soviets until the German military was at their doorstep. The propaganda posters distributed in the major Soviet cities, like Moscow and Leningrad, "constituted a powerful and large-scale weapon in the Soviet arsenal to mobilize the population, to bolster morale and to convey official wartime goals."[97] Millions of pamphlets were allocated to the many forces on the frontlines, factory workers and farmers, and in the cities. "The state publishing house in Moscow alone churned out 34 million copies of 800 posters;" over 100,000 posters were printed within the first two months alone.[98] Laborers in factories worked under

[95] Ibid, 804.
[96] Ibid, 804-5.
[97] Susan Corbesero, "Femininity (Con)scripted: Female Images in Soviet Wartime Poster Propaganda, 1941–1945." *Aspasia*, Vol. 4 (2010), 104.
[98] Ibid, 105.

prodigious patriotic propaganda posters that urgently called for "increased production or patriotic appeals to help defeat Hitler's inhuman and savage army."[99]



Figure 7-"Berlin is our common target!"[100]

[99] Ibib, 105.
[100] Russian World War II Propaganda Posters, Digital Image. Available from: All World Wars, http://www.allworldwars.com/Russian%20WWII%20Propaganda%20Posters.html (accessed April 11, 2017).



Figure 8- "Glory to our fighting women!"[101]

[101] Russian World War II Propaganda Posters, Digital Image. Available from: All World Wars, http://www.allworldwars.com/Russian%20WWII%20Propaganda%20Posters.html (accessed April 11, 2017).

"They raped every German girl from eight to eighty"

The Katyn Massacre was not the only violent crime inflicted by the westbound Soviet Army. When the Red Army advanced into Prussia and Germany, many of the Soviet women veterans wrote about the cleanliness and pristine conditions of the houses. Iuliia Zhukova wrote of one such house in eastern Germany:

> [E]verything in the home sparkled with unusual cleanliness. Linen, neatly arranged in the cupboards, was not only dyed blue, but intricately darned. There, in Prussia, for the first time I realized what was meant by German pedantry and accuracy, of which I had heard so much before the war. It was not just the order and cleanliness within the homes. […] However, none of this touched us; on the contrary, it had the opposite effect, because we saw the effects of these habits of cleanliness and precision on our land, how mercilessly they smashed and destroyed everything on our territory, as we had just witnessed in western Russia and Belarus.[102]

Though most Soviet women veterans claimed that Red Army soldiers did not steal, burn down German houses, or rape civilian women, reports from the *RGASPI-M* (official reports from Communist military leaders) stated otherwise.[103] Historian Markwick believes that this inconsistency could be due to self-censorship or selective memory. He states that these memories and reports were "long concealed in Soviet archives, have only recently come to light in Western historiography."[104] The first German-possessed lands to suffer under the advancing Soviet Army were East Prussia, Danzig, Silesia, and Pomerania. According to the words of American General Frank A. Keating, "the Soviet's actions [were as] bad as the hordes of Genghis Khan."[105] German civilians were victims of the Soviet army's 'bloody outrage.'

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[102] Roger D. Markwick, "'A Sacred Duty': Red Army Women Veterans Remembering the Great Fatherland War, 1941-1945." *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 54, no. 3 (2008), 409.
[103] Markwick, 413. (According to Markwick, the RGASPI report is filled with pillage, robbery, and rape committed by Red Army soldiers).
[104] Ibid, 413.
[105] "Soviet War Crimes 1944-1945." Latvian History, May 9, 2011. https://latvianhistory.com/2011/05/09/soviet-war-crimes-1944-1945/.

Women and girls of all ages were brutally raped and murdered. Houses were looted and burned. Soviet tanks ran down fleeing German refugees. Any Germans who survived were deported or executed. "Famous American diplomat George F, Kennan remembers that 'the local population was razed to the ground with means that had no analogy with times of Asian hordes.'"[106] According to the German Federal Archive, over 120,000 German civilians (men, women, children, and elderly) were killed outright by the Soviets. 100,000-200,000 more were killed in labor camps or prison, 250,000 died during deportations and a large number of civilians committed suicide, the highest number being women rape victims in Berlin during Soviet occupation.[107] Stalin and the commanders of the Soviet army were well aware of the atrocities being committed by their troops against the German civilians; they even encouraged and took part in the crimes themselves:

> General Zhukov was known for collecting large amounts of looted German goods and brought them to [the] Soviet Union using seven cargo trains. Zhukov was responsible for issuing orders of deportations and repressions in German east. As for discipline of Soviet soldiers; it was in disarray since 1944. Rapes, murder, looting began already in Ukraine, Belarus and Baltic states. Soviet army was divided [into] three vanguards- the front men took part [in] battles and suffered heavy losses. They were [too] busy with fighting than raping and looting. After them came the NKVD forces that cleared the captured lands. [Lastly] were soldiers in [the back] lines that saw no serious combat, but took the actions of looting, killing and raping.[108]

The motive for the reasoning behind the crimes falls back to Soviet propaganda and the "take no prisoners; kill them all" command issued by the Soviet military leadership. Reports of the widespread atrocities reached Moscow in droves. According to Antony Beevor, the army was

[106] Ibid, 1.
[107] Ibid, 1.
[108] Ibid, 2.

split between “freebooters who drank and raped quite shamelessly, and...idealistic, austere communists and members of the intelligentsia appalled by such behavior.”[109] In an attempt to keeping the feelings of hatred contained to the battlefield and not on civilians, Marshal Rokossovky issued order No 006. However, it had very little effect. Military leadership exerted authority to no avail:

> The commander of one rifle division is said to have "personally shot a lieutenant who was lining up a group of his men before a German woman spreadeagled on the ground". But either officers were involved themselves, or the lack of discipline made it too dangerous to restore order over drunken soldiers armed with submachine guns.[110]

According to Antony Beevor, “calls to avenge the Motherland, violated by the Wehrmacht's invasion, had given the idea that almost any cruelty would be allowed.”[111] Soviet soldiers aimed to humiliate and dominate Prussian women. The women of those eastern Germanic lands bore the brunt of the Soviet army’s revenge for Wehrmacht’s crimes as well as becoming targets of war themselves:

> Rape is the act of a conqueror, the feminist historian Susan Brownmiller observed, aimed at the "bodies of the defeated enemy's women" to emphasize his victory. Yet after the initial fury of January 1945 dissipated, the sadism became less marked. By the time the Red Army reached Berlin three months later, its soldiers tended to regard German women more as a casual right of conquest. The sense of domination certainly continued, but this was perhaps partly an indirect product of the humiliations which they themselves had suffered at the hands of their commanders and the Soviet authorities as a whole.[112]

[109] Antony Beevor, "'They raped every German female from eight to 80.'" *The Guardian*, May 1, 2002, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2002/may/01/news.features11
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Ibid.

Despite the reasons or motivations behind the Soviet war crimes, the rapes and killings of hundreds of thousands of German civilian men, women, elderly, and children is explicitly absent from the memoir of the women veteran Soviet combatants. It is most likely possible that they suffered from "selective amnesia" to protect their comrades or, perhaps, their own sanity.



Figure 9- "Kill the fascist monster!"[113]

[113] Russian World War II Propaganda Posters, Digital Image. Available from: All World Wars, http://www.allworldwars.com/Russian%20WWII%20Propaganda%20Posters.html (accessed April 11, 2017).



Figure 10- "Partisans, revenge without mercy!"[114]

[114] Russian World War II Propaganda Posters, Digital Image. Available from: All World Wars, http://www.allworldwars.com/Russian%20WWII%20Propaganda%20Posters.html (accessed April 11, 2017).

Chapter 6

Soviet Women Veterans' Legacy

"Now they spit on us, on all the veterans. And all the same I fought…, it's unfair."
-Irina Malakhova[115]

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According to historian Marina Sorokina, a "national amnesia" (known in Russian as *obshchenatsional´noe zabvenie*) separated myth from concrete events in the lives of real Soviet people. The "myth of the war" was the most resilient of Stalin's political myths to last in Russian public awareness and academic historiography. "By [the myth]'s simple and bewitching logic, everything 'ours' consisted of heroes and victims, and everything 'alien' was associated with enemies and criminals."[116] After the war, women in combat roles were written out of Soviet history, save for the aviators and the few top women snipers, who became the exception rather than the rule. The national amnesia brought an element of political stability and control for Stalin's regime within the Soviet Union.[117] As victory for the allies drew near in Europe, "the chaos and upheavals of the early wartime period gave way to order and renewed control; gender distinctions became exaggerated in ways they had not been earlier."[118] The Communist

[115] Barbara Alpern Engel, "Chapter Seven: The Womanly Face of War: Soviet Women Remember World War II." In *Women and War in the Twentieth Century: Enlisted With or Without Consent*, edited by Nicole Ann Dombrowski, 138-60. Vol. 13. Women's History and Culture. New York, NY: Garland Publishing, 1999, 154.
[116] Marina Sorokina, "People and Procedures Toward a History of the Investigation of Nazi Crimes in the USSR." *Kritika*, Vol 6 No 4 (Fall 2005), 800-01.
[117] Ibid, 801.
[118] Engel, 149.

Party's goal was to emphasize the motherly and sisterly roles of field medics or the women who worked on the home front. That, however, was not the original goal of the Communist Party.

At the birth of the Soviet Union, the Bolsheviks despised the idea of femininity and the domestic sphere:

> Yet while Soviet culture gave prominence to the female worker and political activists, it also projected another image of women as unenlightened [under feminine gender scripts], caught up in private and domestic matters, and therefore unable to play a full role in society. Private life, and, by implication, traditional female concerns, were dismissed as being of little relevance unless they could be integrated into the new [socialist/communist] social structure, and even then women's social responsibilities [as citizens of the state] were expected to take precedence over her family.[119]

But after the war, the female population in the Soviet Union outnumbered males by almost 26 million.[120] This imbalance initially helped women during the war economically as the demand for labor allowed them to enter the factories in droves. But after the Great Patriot War, the government needed to repopulate the Soviet Union, and in order to do that they had to emphasize the role of mother and family. As Nazemroaya writes: "When peace came, the population decline actually constrained the role of women to mothers and wives who were pushed to have children to repopulate the USSR."[121] This view of Soviet women remained the rule well into the Cold War, where women were urged by the government and society to remain home or, if they *really* wanted to leave their private sphere, only pursue pink collar jobs. The ideology and

[119] Katherine Hodgson, "Under an Unwomanly Star: War in the Writing of Ol'ga Berggol'ts." In Women and Russian Culture: Projections and Self-Perceptions by Rosalind Marsh, 134-147. Oxford, UK: Berghahn Books, 1998, 136.
[120] Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya, "The Historic Role That Soviet Women Played in Defeating the Nazis in World War II." Global Research, March 8, 2014, http://www.globalresearch.ca/how-the-west-ignores-women-as-actors-in-otherized-societies-a-sociological-unraveling-of-the-logos-of-the-soviet-amazons/5372529
[121] Ibid.

commitment of the Communist Party gave way to pragmatism: "the Kremlin's pragmatism ended up hurting Soviet women, the original Soviet vision, and factory democratization." Nazemroaya goes on to say that the policies dictating women in Stalinist Russia were not influenced by Marxism. Rather, "Marxism did not appear to be more than a mere justification for Soviet policies and not their source."[122] The imagery of protecting the personification of the *Rodina* (literally meaning "*Mother*land") was the ruling narrative of the Great Patriotic War. Everyone, men and women, enlisted to protect their precious way of life from the German fascist invaders. Konstantin Simonov, a famous wartime poet, wrote a famous poem about protecting the *Rodina*:

If you do not want to have
The girl you courted
But never dared kiss
Because your love was pure-
If you don't want fascists to bruise and beat
And stretch her naked on the floor
In hatred, tears, and blood
And see three human dogs despoil
All that you hold dear
In the manliness of your love…
Then kill a German, kill him soon
And every time you see one- kill him.[123]

Historian Roger Markwick believes that there is a "good reason" for Soviet women veterans being written out of the heroic war narrative: "conscripted men overwhelmingly bore the brunt of the bloodletting and the killing."[124] While the tens of millions lives lost from male combatants overshadow the hundreds of thousands of lives lost by women combatants, to place a

[122] Ibid.
[123] Quoted by Barbara Alpen Engle.
[124] Roger D. Markwick, "'A Sacred Duty': Red Army Women Veterans Remembering the Great Fatherland War, 1941-1945." *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 54, no. 3 (2008), 405.

greater value on male soldiers' lives undermines everything these women fought for. In countless reports and memoirs, time and time again, Soviets and Germans alike have written about the women combatants fighting just as valiantly as their male counterparts. As another historian Euridice Cardona wrote, "this was not just lip service; Soviet women did indeed participate in this titanic conflict to a degree unparalleled by other combatant nations in World War II, notably by serving in the military."[125] Later in "Our Sacred Duty," Markwick writes:

> It is not just the passage of time at work here; it is a Soviet genre of memoir in which personal pain and experience, although certainly not absent from the narrative, is subordinated to depicting the overriding historical drama of the "war against fascism" and to the virtue of reaffirming the rectitude of that struggle. Unlike, for example, memoirs of the Great War and of Vietnam, often expressing disillusion with the cause for which they fought, in these women's memoirs of the Great Fatherland War there are no regrets about young lives, limbs or minds wasted in vain. Nor are there regrets about killing.[126]

But all in all, "the promise, energy, and patriotic commitment of the 1930s generation of young women…had been squandered and stymied by the Stalinist state, the real priority of which, once victory was insight, was forced-march reconstruction and repopulation rather than women's emancipation."[127] Obstacles emerged with divorces as they became more expensive and harder to acquire. Single men and women were taxed much more harshly than those whom were married:

> The chaos of the early war years had threatened to break down traditional gender roles. With increasing political controls and victory closer at hand, the Soviet state moved to enact a series of policies that imposed gender distinctions aimed to reshape (and re-people) a post-war Soviet society. In 1943, the state introduced a

[125] Euridice Charon Cardona and Roger D. Markwick, "'Our Brigade Will Not Be Sent to the Front': Soviet Women under Arms in the Great Fatherland War, 1941-45." *The Russian Review*, Vol. 68, No. 2 (Apr, 2009), 261.
[126] Markwick, 415.
[127] Cardona, 262.

> policy of gender segregation in primary and secondary schools in which young girls learned domestic skills and men attended military classes. A year later, the Supreme Soviet issued a stringent new family code and a series of pro-natalist measures were introduced. The state also established medals for prolific mothers, such as the *mat'-geroinia* (mother-heroine) medal for rearing ten children and measures further restricting divorce. …As war ended, women would find fewer opportunities for advancement in the work-place than their male counterparts, even in the industries in which they were dominant.[128]

Everything women gained during the Great Patriotic War was pushed aside in favor of the pragmatism of the state: population and control over women's rights.

"I'm Still the Same:" Women after the War

Stories of women as "gentle and domestic" on the frontlines spread throughout the Soviet Union. Zoya was immortalized in artistic mediums that "stressed her suffering and sacrifice over her heroic action."[129] No posters or movies portrayed Soviet women veterans as champions alongside the heroism of their male counterparts. Despite the few shining examples, such as the Night Witches or top-scoring female snipers, women combatants on the frontlines hardly received recognition from the Soviet government. Because of the terror and purges of the 1930s, the Soviet Union had become a "society where remembering was dangerous."[130] Soviet women soldiers embraced society's definition of femininity during the war and still afterwards. On the train ride back to Russia from Germany following the conclusion of the war, Sergeant Krokhina said of her unit:

> It turned out that war had changed precious little in us. When we were already returning home from Germany a mouse scurried out of somebody's rucksack in

[128] Corbesero, 110.
[129] Ibid, 148.
[130] Andrei Ivankiev, Daria Khubova & Tonia Sharova, "After Glasnost: Oral History in the Soviet Union." In *Memory and Totalitarianism* ed. by Luisa Passerini. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992, 89.

> the train, making all the women spring to their feet, and those in the upper bunks roll head over heels with shrieks. The captain, who was our traveling companion, was amazed: "How is it that you all have decorations for bravery but are afraid of mice?"[131]

Trading trousers for dresses was "beginning anew" for most women veterans and Sgt. Krokhina says that even in civilian clothes she "instinctively want[ed] to salute a passing officer."[132] Returning to 'normal' civilian life has always added problems to soldiers assimilating back into their society. But Soviet women veterans had to remain women, even during the war:

> Most of the women…uncritically embraced their culture's definition of femininity: they wept when the military barber cut off their braids…they darkened their brows, kept mirrors handy at the front, and in general, tried as best they could to remain women. Although they passed through the terrors of war, they were nevertheless able to give birth to beautiful children, and that's the main thing.[133]

When they enlisted, Soviet women combatants never expected they would lose their spots in Soviet history. As Anna Krylova wrote:

> Women with weapons in their hands, who excelled at dying and killing, provoked an unexpected popular and an intense, disorganized hostility to the female sacrifice. This reaction surfaced in front and home front folk stories and rumors, invaded Soviet literature and survived in memoirs of women fighters.[134]

[131] Svetlana Alexievich, Keith Hammond & Ludmila Lezhneva, "'I Am Loath to Recall': Russian Women Soldiers in World War II." *Women's Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 3/4, Rethinking Women's Peace Studies (Fall - Winter, 1995), 83-84.
[132] Ibid, 84.
[133] Engel, 153. References from Svetana Alexievich's book, *The Womanly Face of War*.
[134] Krylova, 649-50.

Backlash reinterpreted women's roles drastically to nothing but husband-hunters and prostitutes. Already in 1943, propaganda images shifted from women combatants fighting for their country to wives and young girls eagerly waiting for the men to return home from war.[135] Women physically rallied to defend the Soviet cause against the invading fascist forces without hesitation. Though they were fighting and struggling in a heavily-masculine field, many managed to keep their femininity. But little did they know that by "remaining women," they were still playing by the rules of the heavily patriarchal society that had let them down.

[135] Ibid, 650.



Figure 11- "You brought us our life back!"[136]

[136] Russian World War II Propaganda Posters, Digital Image. Available from: All World Wars, http://www.allworldwars.com/Russian%20WWII%20Propaganda%20Posters.html (accessed April 11, 2017).

Conclusion

"There is no life that does not contribute to history."
-Dorothy West (1907-1998)

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The memory of the Great Patriotic War to the Soviet people has always been about liberation; even Stalin says in his November 7, 1941 speech that the Soviet people must break their *Rodina* free from "the yoke of the German invaders." Men and women both rallied to the front lines and home front throughout the course of the war. Though women made up a smaller portion of the Soviet army (100,000 compared to 35 million men), their sacrifices and work were not diminished. Women met resistance because of their gender, proved several times that they were just as capable as men, whether in leadership roles or in firing a gun or digging trenches. Though the heroic narratives of veteran soldiers of World War II were celebrated by the Party and the people, the voices of women veterans were lost to time, silenced by a government they had all fought so hard to serve and protect.

Propaganda was very instrumental to the war, both in rallying soldiers to the cause and for keeping the status quo after women were no longer needed in combatant roles. Fear of opposing the Party allowed the mobile field wife rumor to, unfortunately, dominate the prevailing historical narrative of women Soviet combatants. Women veterans were terrified to wear their medals and uniforms in public after the war for the shame it caused. They were forced to assimilate back into their old traditional society and trade their trousers for dresses, the

opposite of what many did when the war started out. Though many slid back easily into their old lives, it is unsure the rate of how many others suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder of any degree. Some women chose to write their flashbacks out in memoirs and diaries. During *glasnost*, many more women chose to tell their story. And even more stories became public after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. As Markwick states:

> It is not just the passage of time at work here; it is a Soviet genre of memoir in which personal pain and experience, although certainly not absent from the narrative, is subordinated to depicting the overriding historical drama of the "war against fascism" and to the virtue of reaffirming the rectitude of that struggle. Unlike, for example, memoirs of the Great War and of Vietnam, often expressing disillusion with the cause for which they fought, in these women's memoirs of the Great Fatherland War there are no regrets about young lives, limbs or minds wasted in vain. Nor are there regrets about killing.[137]

Despite the many reasons for choosing to serve, every Soviet soldier's goal was liberation and self-preservation from a foreign invader who had occupyed their home. Throughout the history of the Soviet Union, the women veteran Soviet combatants' voices have become whispers in the halls of memory, even now almost twenty-six years after Soviet records have become public. If one is willing to sit and listen, if one is willing to patiently concentrate and learn, they will be rewarded by a different narrative; one that is just as loud and just as strong but has fallen through the cracks of history. And as long as these long-forgotten Soviet women veterans continue to speak, whether in whispers or shouts, I am always willing to listen.

[137] Roger D. Markwick, ""A Sacred Duty": Red Army Women Veterans Remembering the Great Fatherland War, 1941-1945." Australian Journal of Politics and History 54, no. 3 (2008), 415.



Figure 12- "We defended Leningrad, now let's rebuild it!"[138]

[138] Russian World War II Propaganda Posters, Digital Image. Available from: All World Wars, http://www.allworldwars.com/Russian%20WWII%20Propaganda%20Posters.html (accessed April 11, 2017).

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