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War and Peace from the Military Point of View



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Leo Tolstoy had firsthand experience of war and the military. He served almost five years in the army (January 1852 to November 1856), and during the Crimean War he even considered a military career. He chose literature over the army after the success of his first Sevastopol sketch, but his interest in the military and war did not disappear. When *War and Peace* began to appear a decade later, he was especially eager to hear the responses of military readers. These readers had a special stake in the novel, of course. They reacted to it not only as experts but also as objects of Tolstoy's analysis who questioned whether the author had done them justice.

With one partial exception, the four reviews that I consider in this chapter appeared after the publication of volume 4 of the novel, which described the campaign of 1812 from its beginning to the Battle of Borodino. The authors knew there was more to come—as it turned out, two more volumes—but they could no longer contain their excitement and irritation. The most prestigious Russian military journal, *Military Review* (*Voennyi sbornik*), published three reviews of the novel in 1868 alone and justified this by the extraordinary interest the novel had provoked.¹ Authors rushed to be the first to get their opinions in print. Interest was so high that the first review, by Captain N. A. Lachinov in the military newspaper *Russian Veteran* (*Russkii invalid*), was republished in slightly expanded form in *Military Review*, and A. N. Vitmer's two-part review came out as a book in 1869.² The most exhaustive review, that by M. I. Dragomirov, was republished in part in his selected works in 1881 and then in full in 1895 as a pamphlet.³ This chapter, focusing primarily though not exclusively on Dragomirov,

explores the complex dynamics behind the reactions of military readers to *War and Peace*.

Just the Facts, Please

All the military reviewers criticized Tolstoy's performance as a historian. As professional historians, Lieutenant-General M. I. Bogdanovich (1805–82) and Colonel A. N. Vitmer (1839–1916) led the way here.⁴ Bogdanovich had won a Demidov Prize from the Imperial Academy of Sciences for the first volume of his three-volume *History of the 1812 War of the Fatherland*.⁵ Determined to rely only on what he regarded as scientifically certifiable sources, and in this sense a positivist, he had endured bitter criticism from veterans for ignoring their memoirs as unreliable.⁶ These attacks left him undaunted, however, and he produced many more volumes on the period, all in the same spirit. Bogdanovich brought this positivist spirit to his review. He compares *War and Peace* unfavorably to the novels of Walter Scott, which, while fictional, are always true to the time and place of their settings. Tolstoy, by contrast, distorts truth, not for any novelistic purpose, but “just from the desire to say something new that had previously evaded historians.”⁷ Although Bogdanovich agrees with Tolstoy that the official French and Russian historians of 1812, Adolphe Thiers (1797–1877) and Lieutenant-General A. I. Mikhailovskii-Danilevskii (1789–1848), were partisans of their respective sides, he prefers even them to Tolstoy, whose “artistic feeling” (*khudozhestvennoe chut'e*) is based on nothing objective at all, and who conjures up whatever facts are needed to support his opinions. If Tolstoy had studied official documents of the period, he would never have so denigrated the decisive importance of great men like Napoleon and Alexander I.⁸

Unbeknownst to Bogdanovich, Tolstoy had in fact consulted the former's *History of the 1812 War of the Fatherland*. His annotated copy remains in the Iasnaia Poliana Library. One of his marginalia, next to a letter from General Bagration to Alexander's close adviser A. Arakcheev, provides a tiny but specific example of how Tolstoy interacted with the historical texts he consulted.

On April 7, from his halting place [*scratched out*, Smolensk] at Mikhailovka on the Smolensk road, Bagration wrote the following. [There follows the printed text of the letter, and then Tolstoy's commentary resumes.] He wrote Arakcheev, but he knew that his letter would be read by the Sovereign, and therefore as much as he was capable of it he thought through every single word.⁹

The second sentence from this marginal comment appears in the text of the novel exactly as Tolstoy wrote it here.¹⁰ In this note we observe Tolstoy using

his artistic feeling to fill unavoidable gaps in documentary materials to which Bogdanovich as a positivist historian had limited himself. Of course there is no way to verify that Bagraion acted from the motivation that Tolstoy ascribes to him, but in this case Tolstoy's artistic feeling served him well. The novelist appeals to the reader's sense of what he or she might have done in a similar situation, and we readily accept his psychological insight. In this way a particular incident of only antiquarian interest in the war is injected with a general (psychological and political) significance that preserves it for posterity.

If Bogdanovich's attitude toward Tolstoy's historical methodology was one of Olympian disdain, Vitmer objected to his theory of history and the errors of fact that supported it. He exposed sloppy dating in the novel and errors concerning the sizes of armies.¹¹ In one place, Vitmer shows how misdating distorts not only a sequencing of events but a proper understanding of their outcome. Had the dates been properly reported, the events would have demonstrated the historical importance of leaders, rather than, as Tolstoy would have it, their impotence.¹² The second installment of Vitmer's review detects one historical or tactical inaccuracy after another in Tolstoy's depiction of the Battle of Borodino.¹³

Sling enough mud and some of it should stick. However much a naive lover of literature may rely on novels to learn history, no one who has read the reviews of Bogdanovich and Vitmer, let alone modern histories of the period, can take *War and Peace* as unvarnished historical truth. Yet the accumulated power of so many errors detected did not even at the time (and does not now) destroy the power of the novel, not even for its military readers. Dragomirov explains why a soldier reader might well prefer the novel to history.

The difference between his [Tolstoy's] descriptions of battles and historical descriptions is the same as that between a landscape and a topographical map: the first provides less, provides it from one point of view, but provides it in a way that is more accessible to the eye and heart of a human being. The second provides every object in the location from a great number of sides, it provides the locality from a distance of tens of versts, but it provides these within an artificial scheme that in its appearance has nothing in common with the objects being described; and therefore in it everything is dead, lifeless, even for the trained eye.¹⁴

It could have been predicted that even its military readers would forgive the novel its historical inaccuracies. *War and Peace* gave them a satisfying account of their own individual experience of war that the tools of history (maps, official documents, and chronologies) did not capture.

Fatalism in History

Tolstoy's contemporary military reviewers objected to the theory of history laid out in essay form in the opening chapters of the newly published two

parts of the novel. These chapters bluntly assert that history is determined by “Providence,” and that political and historical leaders are “history’s slaves.” This shocking declaration, if it did not spoil *War and Peace* for military readers, needed to be neutralized in some way or read out of the novel altogether. All of them performed this last, extreme operation by dividing the book into art and thought and claiming to accept the former and reject the latter.

It was not that the typical military reader thought of himself as an Alexander or a Napoleon. The readers were well positioned to appreciate Tolstoy’s attacks on vainglory, and they did. Dragomirov calls braggadocio “the exploitation of war.” He notes how at Bagration’s command post after the Battle of Schöngraben, the adjutant Zherkov “has not yet fully managed to pull on his—before and after—battle mask.” Although Zherkov already lies “boldly and gaily” about his supposed presence at an attack, he still looks around nervously to see if anyone might know he was not actually there; within a short while, he will gain confidence and will dine out on his lie ever after.¹⁵ For Dragomirov, however, Tolstoy’s text is a chiaroscuro in which hypocrisy is the tribute that vice pays to virtue. The darkness of a Zherkov or a selfish glory seeker like Dolokhov makes the too often unsung heroism of such frontline officers as Timokhin and Tushin shine all the more brightly.¹⁶

The problem for Tolstoy’s military readers was the status accorded even genuine heroism within the context of his thought. If history was determined, this would affect frontline officers and soldiers as well as generals and staff officers at headquarters. Tushin and Timokhin, too, would be nothing but unwitting tools of history, and their behavior would be counted no more meaningful than that of Zherkov. According to Tolstoy’s narrator, people as historical actors belong to “the unconscious, swarm-like life of mankind,” which is not free (III, 1, i, 605). All “men of action,” from the highest to the lowest, are “involuntary instruments of history” (III, 2, i, 682). Lachinov expresses the problem this raises for military readers very well. From the perspective of historical fatalism, public service is emptied of all meaning, and participants in an event are nothing but “labels” (*iarlyki*) dangling from it, but without any influence on it.¹⁷ No soldier with any sense of self-worth could operate under such a supposition.

Ironically, all of Tolstoy’s military reviewers were themselves historical determinists, for either religious or philosophical reasons, but they implicitly distinguished determinism of this sort from his “completely pure historical fatalism.”¹⁸ None of the military readers denied the existence of some grand design in life, which as soldiers they were defending. As a Hegelian, Vitmer jumps through hoops in his review to prove that while progress is preordained, in specific circumstances on the battlefield individuals determine how and when it will occur.¹⁹ In his discussion of the second epilogue, Dragomirov criticizes Tolstoy’s historical determinism as irrelevant in assessing the actions

of practical men while not rejecting its validity outright. Modern historians, unlike the ancients, understand that ultimate truths are inaccessible to the human mind and therefore that they should “not waste time on cogitations about what they can never comprehend.”²⁰

Readers today may not like Tolstoy’s historical determinism, partly for the same reasons as the military men, but as impartial judges they cannot wish away the conflict that he raises between the necessity of freedom in human psychology and of determinism in history. In the second epilogue he explains that if historical actors were free agents, then “the whole of history would be a series of incoherent accidents” (Epilogue 2, viii, 1200). Therefore, as Jeff Love puts it, “freedom challenges system, in this case a system of laws, and, ultimately, unity as well.”²¹ As Love goes on to show, in the second epilogue Tolstoy also argues for the existence of individual freedom.²² Elsewhere in the novel, however, he reserves this for “personal life, which is the more free the more abstract its interests” (III, 1, i, 605).

Perhaps in response to the complaints of his military readers about his “historical fatalism,” Tolstoy developed his argument about freedom and its limits further in the fictional narrative in what was volume 5 in the first edition of the novel (III, 1, and IV, 1–2), which came out in February 1869.²³ Platon Karataev, the freest man on the battlefield, was conjured into existence only then.²⁴ The fictional narrative demonstrates that freedom exists only *outside history*, in personal choices that individuals make whether on the battlefield or elsewhere. Once made, these decisions become part of the larger tapestry of history over which no individual has control. Napoleon, for instance, is enslaved to history because of his lust for power. A simple soldier participates in the swarm life of history when he kills an enemy soldier to save his own life. These acts are “free” of outside interference in that they come from internal impulses, while their consequences enter into what Tolstoy regarded as a “system” (to use Jeff Love’s word) regulated by the laws of history. Of course, impulses and passions, though they may be internal, are not free. There are degrees of freedom within the individual, who is freer the more he acts independently of passions and according to the voice of moral reason. Platon Karataev chooses to stay outside history and free to the extent possible, and this is the lesson that he teaches Pierre Bezukhov. Even Platon’s presence on the battlefield is his own choice, because he volunteered to be conscripted in place of a brother with children.

The idea of a separation between personal freedom and determined history that is preserved most robustly in folk wisdom as expressed by Platon Karataev may reflect the influence of the German thinker W. H. Riehl or the Slavophile K. S. Aksakov.²⁵ This protopopulism would not have mollified Tolstoy’s military readers because it restricts freedom to private life, thereby

denying that wars and those who plan them are anything more than tools of history.

Reasoning in War

Tolstoy emphasizes the emotional side of war, and this appealed to military readers like Lachinov and Dragomirov. Dragomirov agreed with Tolstoy that will is more important in battle than thought. “War and war alone summons that terrible and combined effort of all the spiritual sides of a man, in particular *will*, that reveals the full measure of his power and that is summoned up by no other kind of activity.”²⁶ According to Dragomirov in an article published in 1861, there are dueling and equally natural psychological principles at play on the battlefield: a natural instinct for self-preservation and, on the other hand, a sense of duty based on honor as well as an “inexplicable, but totally human” and voluntary impulse to confront danger head-on and defeat it. This last impulse, felt by “very elite” (*izbranneishie*) soldiers only, “illuminates like blinding lightning mysteries of the human soul accessible to analysis and study in no other arena than the battlefield.”²⁷ In an 1873 summary of these same principles, Dragomirov says that the mind serves “self-preservation” while the “self-sacrifice” that produces great deeds on the battlefield is the province of will only, which he defines as “moral energy.”²⁸ Both principles are necessary in warfare: the first produces caution and the second, daring. Although it is necessary to protect the soldier and his comrades to the extent possible, thought, when it trumps will, can be the enemy of fortitude on the battlefield; therefore, will and daring must predominate in the successful army. Dragomirov may have learned these lessons in part from Tolstoy. As a cadet at the Nikolaevskii Military Academy he followed the Crimean War closely,²⁹ and he most certainly would have read Tolstoy’s Sevastopol sketches. At the very least we can say that Dragomirov drew conclusions from the war similar to Tolstoy’s as expressed in the sketches and then in *War and Peace*. In the first sketch, “Sevastopol in December (1855),” which so impressed the new tsar Alexander II that he had it translated into French and published in Brussels even before it came out in Russian, a soldier in the hospital after his lower leg has been amputated explains how to endure in war: “The most important thing, your honor, is *not to think a lot*: if you don’t think, you’re okay.” The third sketch (“Sevastopol in August”) uses the metaphor of fire to represent the soldier’s will to fight, and this is then developed extensively in *War and Peace*. Dragomirov advocated tirelessly over his whole career for the importance of what Russians call the “moral” side of war and what Tolstoy in both the Sevastopol sketches and *War and Peace*

depicted as the “spirit” (*dukh*) of the army. According to both Tolstoy and Dragomirov, this spirit determines the outcome of battles.

Despite his agreement with Tolstoy about the importance of will in war, Dragomirov believed that Tolstoy slighted the role of reason there. He did not agree that the decision to go to war was always and only illogical.³⁰ Nor did he agree with Tolstoy that war was opposed to human nature.³¹ In other words, unlike Tolstoy in *War and Peace*, he did not reserve the ultimate reasons for war for God or Providence alone. This acceptance of war as a normal and even reasonable part of human life meant that Dragomirov, unlike Tolstoy, did not have to present warriors in combat as governed by feeling alone. Precisely because of the dominance of feeling on the battlefield, Dragomirov stressed the need for leadership in combat and for intensive training so as to minimize a soldier’s sense of panic and helplessness there. Habits inculcated through training were needed to counter chaos inside and outside the soldier, and at the same time all soldiers needed to be prepared to respond to the unexpected. They must *understand* their role and be prepared to take the initiative where necessary. This required the kind of tactical thinking that Dragomirov defended in Nikolai Rostov.

Discussing Rostov’s successful attack on French dragoons (III, 1, xv), Dragomirov argues that Rostov could not have been acting spontaneously, without thought or planning.

Let’s take, for instance, the attack by Rostov. It begins, “Rostov, with his keen hunter’s eye, was one of the first to catch sight of the blue French dragoons chasing our uhlans.” Then they come closer and closer; Rostov “felt by instinct that if the hussars were to strike the dragoons now, they would not be able to resist; but if they were going to strike, it had to be right away, that minute, otherwise it would be too late.” The same Rostov very concisely explains his thought to his comrade and right afterwards they throw themselves into the attack. It all seems completely clear that Rostov’s decision to attack comes not out of the blue, though quickly: the process of physical and mental work necessary for every attack is completely clear here. All the moments of this work—to see, to reckon, to decide, to carry through—are in plain view. But the author needs to revert to his beloved theme that everything happens by itself—and the next thing you know he transitions from the thoughts he has just uttered to “Rostov himself didn’t know how and why he had done this. He had done all this the way he did things on the hunt, without thinking, without weighing pros and cons!” [. . .] At the beginning of the second part of volume four, the author goes even further: he reveals that Rostov had galloped into attack just because, allegedly, he couldn’t resist the desire to gallop across an open field!³²

The episode discussed here is an example in the novel where, according to Dragomirov, the fictional narration contradicts the narrator’s commentary on it. The fact that Rostov responds quickly and draws on skills and experience

gained in hunting as well as war does not mean that he hasn't thought before he acts.

Dragomirov then refutes the narrator's contention that Kutuzov, listening skeptically "from the point of view of his age and experience" to Denisov's proposals for partisan warfare, would have "despised" his "intelligence" and "knowledge" (III, 2, xv, 742). What Tolstoy calls Kutuzov's experience is in reality nothing but conclusions that the mind draws from facts that, without the action of the mind, mean nothing in themselves; in other words, so-called experience is the very same combination of intelligence and knowledge that Kutuzov supposedly scorned in Denisov.³³ Quoting extensively from Prince Andrei's assessment of Kutuzov in the same episode (III, 2, xvi, 745), Dragomirov ridicules Andrei's impression of the commander in chief as a passive receptacle of mystical wisdom. Kutuzov embraces what is useful in the information that he receives and rejects what he considers harmful; this, Dragomirov says, is exactly the conduct recommended by Napoleon for a general in the midst of battle.³⁴

Dragomirov also faults Tolstoy for either ignoring or misrepresenting the aspects of war that most require thought by commanders. He agrees with Tolstoy that a general's role in combat is limited to directing forces mostly beyond his control (as Kutuzov tries to do at Borodino) and to keeping up morale (Bagration at Schöngraben and Kutuzov at Borodino). But there are two phases in battle: "[I]n the first, the troops are fully under the influence of the senior commanders; in the second they themselves do their job to the extent that they are capable of it."³⁵ The battle plan that a general issues *before* combat can be decisive for success or failure. In mocking Napoleon's orders before Borodino because none are actually implemented, Tolstoy shows that he does not understand their function. They serve not as a rigid blueprint for action but as goals that the competent general knows cannot be fully realized unless the battle is over quickly, before it has time to develop beyond its first stage.³⁶ Once combat begins, the general must show the kind of flexibility that Tolstoy praises in Kutuzov and, for that matter, in Nikolai Rostov. At the same time, however, the orders of the general both before and during a battle provide guidelines to officers about how to proceed on their own.³⁷ Even during combat a general can often act to affect morale on the field. Dragomirov drives this last point home with an extended illustration from *War and Peace* itself, when Kutuzov in the Battle of Borodino aggressively rejects the pessimistic assessment of General Barclay de Tolly reported by Barclay's adjutant, Colonel Wolzogen, and even orders an attack for the next day (III, 2, xxxv, 806–8). Having quoted this passage, Dragomirov remarks scathingly that "the author himself is often his own best critic: as soon as he starts to depict events, he gives the lie to his own theoretical cogitations."³⁸

Tolstoy and his spokesman, Andrei, also fail to appreciate the importance of logistics both before the battle and during it. Listening to the debates at the council of Drissa before the battle of Borodino, Andrei sneers to himself at those who define a military “genius” as the person who “manages to order a timely delivery of biscuits and tells this one to go right and that one to go left” (III, 1, xi, 644). To this Dragomirov retorts that logistics are vital: a commander must *foresee* where to send rations and troops.³⁹ And while, as we have seen, Dragomirov agrees with Tolstoy about the importance of morale in war, he makes the point that high morale depends on many factors, most definitely including the leader’s ability to motivate troops,⁴⁰ but also on everything from weaponry, battle position, troop strength, “and even such factors as excessive cold or heat.”⁴¹ In other words, logistics affects morale.

In the first two installments of his essay, Dragomirov applauds Tolstoy’s art for its accuracy and moral usefulness, while complaining that his mistaken philosophy and psychology lead him to distort a reality that he often portrays accurately in his narrative.⁴² He even argues that Tolstoy’s very strengths as a poet account for his mistakes as a theorist. The poet almost always speaks from a single, highly focused, and concentrated point of view, while the theorist must take all points of view into account.⁴³ Tolstoy, however, tends to generalize from a single perspective that, while valid in itself, does not capture the whole. In the third installment of his essay, where he discusses the final volumes of the novel, Dragomirov turns more critical simply because in these volumes Tolstoy’s narrator insists in long digressions on those very generalizations to which Dragomirov and his fellow military readers so objected in volume 4. Sounding now like the sour Colonel Vitmer, Dragomirov presents Tolstoy’s authorial commentator as a combination of ignorance and hubris. To explain war, this commentator relies upon a highly abstract and old-fashioned mathematical model much more systematizing than the modern military theory developed by Dragomirov and his comrades at the Nikolaevskii Military Academy.⁴⁴ The commentator proposes a straw-man version of contemporary theory, tears it to shreds, and then recommends the flexibility already built into that theory.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, the stupider Napoleon seems, the smarter the authorial commentator looks at his expense.⁴⁶

These various thrusts by Dragomirov hit home. Tolstoy presents war as a kind of irrational, spontaneous human activity (though with a metaphysical dimension and rationale inaccessible to humankind). In keeping with this narrow definition of war, he systematically underestimates the role of mind in it, and in his review Dragomirov calls him to account for this. In his narrative commentary, Tolstoy represents officers like Nikolai Rostov as less rational in their actions than is plausible. As Dragomirov points out, the fictional narrative contradicts the narrator in this respect. The fact that Rostov does not stop

and think before he acts does not mean that he does not act rationally; on the contrary, as Dragomirov tries to argue, Rostov employs the tools of practical reason as he calculates his advantage and rushes to seize it. Tolstoy's narrator denies even such figures as Kutuzov and Bagration the power of thought when, as Dragomirov interprets their actions, they draw on a lifetime's reflection on experience as they direct men in battle. Tolstoy does not say one word about the importance of training for officers and men. He depicts them before and after battle, foraging and sitting around campfires but never learning their craft. They just show up on the battlefield and perform.⁴⁷ He does caricature contemporary military theory, and he does denigrate Napoleon as a man, a thinker, and a soldier while adopting many of his thoughts about war.⁴⁸

Because Tolstoy denies the rationality of behavior in war so completely, the narrator is the only source of reason left standing. His soldiers are said to act from pure impulse, whatever that might mean, and the narrator does the thinking for them. This is one explanation for the structure of the part of the novel on Borodino (III, 2), which begins and ends with lengthy digressions by the narrator. The digressions stand outside life, especially public life that includes war and politics, and give it a rational structure that it otherwise lacks. The author commentator provides the reasons behind a vision of life that is all flow, no self-determination. For the same reason, the novel ends with a long digression.

To Dragomirov and the other military reviewers of *War and Peace*, this explanation of their world was unacceptable. All of them were writers or scholars, and all were involved in military education. Dragomirov was a scholar soldier devoted to issues of training and tactics who aspired to be a fighting soldier and subsequently became a hero of the Russo-Turkish War (1877–78). If officers did not think or rationally maneuver on the battlefield, if wars made no rational sense from the human perspective—if they just happened by themselves and armies coalesced, fought, and died without any guidance from leaders—then Dragomirov and the others were simply wasting their time. Dragomirov counters Tolstoy's pernicious pronouncements about the uselessness of strategy and tactics by using Tolstoy's own fictional narrative to illustrate their existence and importance.

Reasoning about War

When it came to thinking about the psychology of war, Tolstoy was willing to analyze more deeply than were his military readers. Although Dragomirov himself studied and wrote about the psychology of war, he had the practical man's hostility to psychological analysis when it undermined his mission.

This helps explain his hearty dislike of Prince Andrei, to whom he devotes many pages of his review.⁴⁹

Prince Andrei epitomizes the desire for glory of a young warrior, and Dragomirov should respect him for that reason. Dragomirov certainly admires Nikolai Rostov and, as we have seen, even defends Rostov from what he regards as Tolstoy's insufficient appreciation of this character. Yet Andrei in Dragomirov's reading is a vain young man who despises society but has no qualms about pulling strings to land himself a prestigious position on Kutuzov's staff in 1805. He has had no actual combat experience (and, like all of Tolstoy's soldiers, no evidence of field training). If he were serious about soldiering, he would have submitted himself to "the hard, laborious time as an apprentice that alone produces a master," but instead he expects his superiors to take him seriously as a tactician.⁵⁰ (This would have especially annoyed Dragomirov, who was already a specialist in tactics and eventually published the standard tactical manual for the imperial army.) Surveying the field from Tushin's battery before the Battle of Schöngraben, Andrei sketches a plan for the disposition of troops (I, 2, xvi, 177). He has been educated in the Prussian style of war in favor at the time, and so he is surprised at the actual course of the battle and the performance of officers like Bagration and Tushin. In interesting speculations about Andrei's education, Dragomirov brands him as a Russian Pfühl, "Pfühl as a dilettante."⁵¹

When Andrei's initial theories and plans are contradicted by facts on the ground, he does not adjust them, preferring to conclude that all detailed war plans are nonsense. Having attended the war council at Drissa, Andrei decides—and Dragomirov concurs—that the generals all bring different suggestions to the meeting, and so no conclusion about how to proceed could have been derived from it. But, Dragomirov explains, such councils are not intended to produce a plan and are used by a commander in chief to test and fine-tune a previously determined strategy. He says that Andrei ought not to be shocked by the practical reality that there can be many ways to achieve the same aim.⁵² Andrei eventually decides that only the commander of a fighting unit can have any influence over a battle, and he requests to be made such a commander. In Dragomirov's interpretation, Andrei acts solely from vanity. Rather than admit his errors and learn from others, he prefers to throw in the towel altogether. "He nurses his boo-boo [*On lechit svoe bobo*]."⁵³

Dragomirov's Andrei is "a little great man, capable of everything, but unfit for anything." He is too doctrinaire and stubborn to succeed as a military commander. Dragomirov recognizes Andrei's personal nobility, but asserts that he lacks the charisma, flexibility, and organizational skills of a true leader. Tolstoy seems to concede this last fact, Dragomirov snidely proposes, by never depicting Andrei as he directs reforms at Bogucharovo or as an active staff officer under Kutuzov at Bucharest. This happens only off stage.⁵⁴

Dragomirov's criticisms of Andrei are all justified, and yet they leave out what should be most attractive to him in this character. He says nothing about Andrei's heroism at Austerlitz or, for that matter, his heroism at Borodino, when he is fatally wounded while modeling spirit and courage to his men. We know that as a character Andrei started out exactly as Dragomirov presents him: as a callow glory seeker who would get his comeuppance and die at Austerlitz. Tolstoy then realized that he was giving this character and his defining passion short shrift.⁵⁵ Tolstoy does not reject the desire for glory itself as low or inauthentic; it is the natural expression of the love of honor that distinguishes the true aristocrat and officer. In its purest incarnation in Prince Andrei, it is one stage in the quest of the mortal and imperfect self for validation beyond natural but ever-subjective animal self-love. The night before the Battle of Austerlitz, in one of the most beautiful passages in the novel, Andrei defines his own love of glory as the need to rule others through their unconditional love of him; this love will be won through great deeds like those performed by his hero Napoleon (I, 3, xii, 264–65). After his near death at Austerlitz, he seems to set aside his Napoleonic ambitions, and yet his love for glory, while at times silent, does not disappear from his soul. At Borodino he does not fall to the ground with his troops when he sees the spinning explosive shell because he “remembered that he was being looked at” (III, 2, xxxvi, 811). It is no accident that his appearance in the final lines of the fictional narrative is warlike and glorious in the imagination of his adolescent son Nikolenka. As his father before Austerlitz had imagined “mysterious power and glory hovering over me here in this mist,” Nikolenka dreams of glory leading him and his Uncle Pierre at the head of a vast army. It is clear from the scene at Bald Hills preceding this last one that Nikolenka and Pierre will be involved in the Decembrist movement in some way and that his Uncle Nikolai Rostov will oppose them. Love of glory will play an important role in this historical drama even if only by seducing men into public life. Whether or not men control history and its wars, there would be no war without the desire for glory. There is irony but no sarcasm in this tender closing portrait of Nikolenka Bolkonsky. Himself a product of the Russian military aristocracy, the creator of *War and Peace* understood and sympathized with the need of such aristocratic natures to prove themselves worthy members of their clans and station on the battlefield. The near certainty of wounds or death was a small price to pay for glory, and indeed Iurii Lotman has maintained that gentry members of the generation of 1812 both courted death and often were ashamed to have survived the war.⁵⁶

In *War and Peace* Tolstoy creates a gallery of characters who collectively represent the military type with its virtues, vices, and contradictions. Through Prince Andrei he explores glory and its origins in the human psyche. It is striking that although Dragomirov praises Tolstoy for creating

so many types, he fails to sufficiently distinguish Andrei from the usual run of glory seekers in the novel. As we have seen above, he criticizes the vain-glory of a Zherkov, yet nowhere in his review does he analyze the dynamics of true love of glory as manifested in its purest form in Andrei. Surely this is the passion that motivates supreme acts of courage on the battlefield that Dragomirov himself praises so highly and tries to encourage through training. Perhaps he prefers to think of such acts as more selfless than they appear from the point of view of psychological analysis. Perhaps he does not want to hear that lovers of glory care so much what others think of them. That psychological explanation would seem to undercut the magnificence of glorious deeds by making heroes less godlike and more human in their neediness.

Tolstoy may not have agreed with the attacks on him by his military readers, but he took them seriously and even tried to anticipate them. In an article, "A Few Words Apropos of the Book *War and Peace*," that came out at the same time as the original volume 4, he defends his depiction of historical figures and events as all true to historical sources that he claims to be able to produce on demand. At the end of the article, he also summarizes his philosophy of history and war as laid out in the opening chapters of the two parts of volume 4.⁵⁷

Emphasizing chaos in war and the moral will of human beings to counter that chaos to the extent possible, Tolstoy goes too far in *War and Peace* when he claims that this is all war is for the human beings who wage it. His military readers rightly call him to account for his neglect of the importance of tactics, strategy, and training in warfare, and Dragomirov rightly points out contradictions between the implications of the fictional narrative and the pronouncements of the narrator in this regard. Yet Tolstoy's military readers have their blind spots too. Their own love of glory and sense of honor are emotional pillars on which their soldierly resolve and even patriotism rest, and they are averse to probing these too deeply. Like the humble soldier amputee in the hospital in "Sevastopol in December," they can't afford to think too much. So Tolstoy, who so admired Russian soldiers and was one himself, parts company with them in this respect. As a novelist, he is free to perform the abstract work of philosophizing about the psychological bases of soldiering in a way that his military readers do not. He does this partly through the digressions of his didactic narrator but also, and more effectively, through character development. His military readers, however rational their analysis in other respects, do not do justice to his greatness here.