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**VLADIMIR KOROLENKO'S PEACEKEEPING HUMANISM
(ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE BOOK
"ON WAR, THE FATHERLAND AND HUMANITY")**

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Abstract: Having shown his talent as a prose fiction writer, V. Korolenko then left a significant mark in history as a public figure in the Populist movement [Narodnichestvo], the First World War, and the Russian revolutions. In his book "War, the Fatherland and Humanity" (1917), he provides a panorama of wars in the world's historical process from the ancient past to the modern era. As an historian, sociologist, and philosopher in this book, V. Korolenko explores such categories as patriotism, internationalism, chauvinism, and nationalism. From a psychological and moral-ethical standpoint, he assesses governmental and social development in conditions of traumatizing mass conflict. His humanist approach permitted the writer-publicist to make such important, time-proven conclusions as "...war is getting more dreadful", gaining a universal scale, in so much as, in a society that excludes equality, there are groups that benefit from militarism. V. Korolenko's apocalyptic forecast is effaced by his confidence in the power of the "law of mutual sympathy and love" that opposes evil. The moral-philosophical and socio-historical views of the writer deserve close attention, wide popularization, and further study in the face of environmental and humanitarian catastrophes that threaten humanity. The article's authors have restored the history of the creation of "War, Fatherland and Humanity" and revealed the relevance of its humanistic meaning in society today; they have introduced archival materials from the Poltava Museum collections scholarly dissemination; and they have shared information about international cooperation in the field of Korolenko studies.

Keywords: Korolenko, humanism, international cooperation, Russia, Ukraine, The Poltava Literary and Memorial Museum of V. G. Korolenko.

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**МИРОТВОРЧЕСКИЙ ГУМАНИЗМ В. КОРОЛЕНКО
(К ЮБИЛЕЮ КНИГИ «О ВОЙНЕ, ОТЕЧЕСТВЕ И ЧЕЛОВЕЧЕСТВЕ»)**

Исследование выполнено при финансовой поддержке РФФИ
в рамках научного проекта № 17-14-18005-ОГН ОГН-Р_УРАЛ-А

Аннотация: Проявивший свой талант писателя-беллетриста В. Короленко оставил значительный след в истории как общественный деятель периода народнического движения, Первой мировой войны и русских революций. В книге «Война, отечество и человечество» (1917) автор дает панораму войн в мировом историческом процессе от древности до современной эпохи. Как историк, социолог и философ В. Короленко исследует такие категории, как патриотизм, интернационализм, шовинизм, национализм. С психологической и морально-этической позиций автор оценивает государственное и общественное развитие в условиях массовой вражды, травмирующей человека. Гуманистический подход позволил писателю-публицисту прийти к важным, проверенным временем выводам о том, что «война становится все страшнее», приобретая вселенские масштабы, поскольку в обществе, исключая равенство, есть слои, имеющие от милитаризма выгоды. Созданный писателем апокалиптический прогноз снимается его уверенностью в силе противостоящего злу «закона взаимного сочувствия и любви». Нравственно-философские и социально-исторические воззрения писателя достойны пристального внимания, широкой популяризации и дальнейшего изучения в условиях грозящей человечеству экологической и гуманитарной катастрофы. Авторами статьи восстановлена история создания книги «Война, отечество и человечество», вскрыт ее гуманистический смысл как актуальный для современности. Введены в научный оборот новые архивные материалы, даны сведения о международном сотрудничестве в области короленковедения.

Ключевые слова: В. Г. Короленко, гуманизм, международное сотрудничество, Россия, Украина, Америка, Полтавский Дом-музей В. Г. Короленко.

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The Russian writer Vladimir Galaktionovich Korolenko (1853–1821) lived a turbulent and interesting life. He proved himself as a talented prose writer, literary critic, editor of the boundary between the “golden” and “silver” ages in Russian literature, as a public figure in the populist movement, Russian revolutions, Civil War, and First World War. His book “War, the Homeland and Humanity” was published 100 years ago. Korolenko indicated its genre and focus on modernity in the subtitle “Letters on Questions of our Time,” but, despite his reference to “our time,” this journalistic work remains relevant and responds to questions that face us today. For example, in it Korolenko speaks out against incessant manifestations of “triumphant nationalism.”

Patriotism, devotion to the homeland, the value of people's heroic deed, when the best sons are ready to defend their homeland even at the cost of their own lives, the international idea and its relation to feelings of patriotism and chauvinism, its manifestation in various forms — these are Korolenko's research subjects, and thus we must understand Korolenko in this work as writer, sociologist, historian, and philosopher [13].

In fact, in analyzing wars from different times, he unfolds before the reader a panorama of the world's historical canvas from ancient times to his contemporary Russia and Europe, for the whole story, to borrow his words, is nothing but war and peace, but “peace <...> is a particular, so-called ‘armed peace’” [10, p. 15].

A person at war and in the rear, that person's psychology, morality, behavior — this also is a subject of Korolenko's research. He deduces general laws of the development of state and society in abnormal conditions of general enmity and mass killing of one's own kind. These laws, as it turned out for Korolenko, are universal for all states and for all epochs: “One state sees value in building a warship, and its neighbor sees value in building two. One power establishes an infantry regiment, and its neighbor establishes identical regiments. How much work, ingenuity, how much of each country's time and natural resources goes into making tools for death. The burden of taxes and poverty is growing, and people have to give up what is necessary and useful for life, in order to create what is harmful and necessary only for murder. And this rivalry grows uncontrollably, like a lump of snow that is rolling down a mountain” [10, p. 15].

Korolenko's humanitarian thought process and his drawing on a broad range of historical material brought him to an important philosophical deduction: "<...> the war is getting worse and worse. Under the [separate] cover of the homelands, science and industry developed, which, along with delivering tools that are useful for life, also brought terrible tools of destruction. The human being became more powerful than his primitive ancestor. He ascended into the air, he lowered himself to the bottom of the sea. He brought the possibility of war everywhere, and, besides, war is not local, but general <...> Involuntarily the best people get an idea: how to stop this horror, how to make wars impossible?" [10, p. 29].

Logically, he reached the following conclusion: "Of course, under the current system, which is based entirely on inequality, war brings more burdens to some and more benefits to others" [10, p. 29].

In the opinion of this great humanist, nevertheless, along with the eternal law of enmity, there is another law in all living things: the law of love. And here "the struggle of these two principles — of enmity and love — which people call evil and good, Belbog and Chernobog, Ormuzd and Ahriman, the spirit of light and the spirit of darkness constitutes the substance of all human history, all religions, and all human morality" [10, pp. 5–6].

The history of the brochure's composition is connected with concrete facts. The fundamental one is that Korolenko himself witnessed World War I; what is more, he happened to witness the beginning of it when he was in France. What brought him to such troubled times in Europe?

On January 27, 1914, together with his wife Evdokiia Semionovna and their older daughter Sofiia, Korolenko set off from Poltava on his and Evdokiia's wedding anniversary on a trip abroad, so that he might take bath treatments (he had weak lungs) and prepare for publication the first complete collection of his works. They planned also to stay with Korolenko and Evdokiia's younger daughter, Natalia, and her family, who had been living in the south of France — in Nice and Toulouse — since October 1912. Korolenko's letters make clear that at this time he wanted to travel abroad very much, unlike in 1893, when he traveled to the United States but did so with great doubt about the need for that trip. Although political life was tense in Europe, no one in the family believed in the possibility of a war. On January 29, 1914, the Korolenko family was already in Berlin, and on the 31st they reached Paris.

The family's private life in many ways continued as usual, but in July they faced serious unexpected events. In June and early July 1914, Korolenko, along with his son-in-law Konstantin Liakhovich, was in Nauheim (Germany), where he took bath therapy, and on July 3 he was forced to return to France, when he learned that the health of Natalia, who was pregnant, was deteriorating. However, Natalia recovered, and on July 5, to the family's great pleasure, she gave birth to Sonechka, Korolenko's only granddaughter, who would become the joy of the last years of her his life.

On July 18 Germany declared war on Russia, and on July 21 on France. Thus, the travelers found themselves in historical rock and a hard place. In his letters the newly-fledged grandfather shared with friends that his granddaughter had saved him from German captivity. Almost certainly, if he had stayed in Germany, he might have found himself in captivity. Still, in France it also was not possible to avoid troubles. On July 24 Korolenko and his wife were detained on the street in Toulouse and taken to the mayor's office as foreigners. (Sofiia would explain that this was done in connection with the moods of the first days of the war). The mayor, after learning about the Korolenko family's circumstances, granted them an official permit for residence in France.

Korolenko and Evdokiia lived in France until May 19, 1915, after which — and with some great difficulties — they were able to return to Poltava (Sofia had returned earlier). At home, a period of military devastation, defeat at the fronts, and the dissolution of the State Duma awaited them. In February 1917, Korolenko wrote a literary sketch, “The Captives” [*Plennye*], which appeared in March in the journal *Russkie zapiski* (*Notes on Russian Issues*, books 2 and 3). On March 9, he received a request from the Provisional Committee of the State Duma to speak out by telegraph on the latest news of the day and, in particular, about the war, and on March 14, what he wrote in response to that request was published as a public letter under the titles “The Homeland in Danger” [*Otechestvo v opasnosti*] in the newspaper *Rech* (*Speech*, no 62) and “The Homeland is in Danger” [*Otechestvo v opasnosti*] in the newspaper *Russkie vedomosti* (*Russian Gazette*, no 58). Through June, July, and August 1917, he worked on the “letters” that make up “On War, the Homeland, and Humanity.” On August 15, the five letter appeared in *Russkie vedomosti* (no 186–196). In the second half of September, Korolenko prepared a separate edition of “War, the Homeland and Humanity”, and during the author's lifetime, the book was published in eight separate editions.

For Korolenko, literary activity was always closely united with what he was doing in society. Most famously, his work during the famine of 1891–1892, which consisted of raising donations and using the donations to open free dining halls for peasants, is reflected in his 1892 collection of essays “In the Year of Famine” [*V golodnyi god*]; his efforts to absolve Udmurt peasants who had been wrongly accused of ritual murder led to the series of articles that make up *The Multan Sacrifice* [*Multanskoe zhertvoprinoshenie*, 1895–1896]; and his defense in the press of the Russian Jew Mendel Beilis against charges of committing a ritual murder resulted in a series of publications on the Beilis case (1911–1913). The period under investigation was no different. This was a time when Korolenko also was active in society, acting on residents’ behalf and working to bring Russian society into larger conversation about the war and that society.

Recently, a remarkable document was added to the collection of the Korolenko literary and memorial museum in Poltava. It is a poster appeal “To Poltava citizens” that was produced in the Poltava province printing house and signed by Korolenko. The appeal does not have a full date, but it can be determined from the text of the document. With details (date, day of the week, month) at hand, it is not difficult to establish the year: 1916. The appeal states that the group of people who organized monthly contributions from provincial zemstvo workers to help prisoners of war, have initiated a convening of the constituent assembly in order to create a society to help captured compatriots. The date and place of the assembly are indicated: Tuesday, April 4, in the dining room of the Provincial Administration. However, only twelve people responded to this appeal. Perhaps people were tired, maybe they had lost faith in their own initiatives. Regardless, Korolenko tried to support the noble cause and informed the population of Poltava that a new meeting was planned for Friday, April 14, in the same place, explaining the importance of the event thus: “Only in this way can we begin to collect regularly and finally realize this necessary task, this sacred duty of the Russian society towards its captive countrymen.

In this situation, to the aid of the experience of a public figure comes his writer's talent, the ability to vividly and convincingly convey all the circumstances of the case. Underscoring the importance of the event, Korolenko brings emotion to the clearly imagine the situation of our prisoners in some hostile country, which itself is suffering from deprivation. In Germany and Austria, in Bulgaria and Turkey they languish in the most terrible conditions. The prisoners of other nationalities have at least some consolation — that they and their sufferings

are remembered in their homeland. The British, the French, the Italians receive constant and abundant help from their homeland. It's only too ours who are captive, as it is to orphans, that this help hardly comes. It's as if they really do not have a homeland, that they have no compatriots. At times their terrible situation is made easier by those very captives of other nationalities. Think about it, citizens, because that means that we force our fellow countrymen in a foreign country to support their existence with alms from almost fifteen other countries' people who take upon themselves our duty, our sacred obligation"¹.

And, Korolenko explains, his compatriots act this way not because "we forgot about them [fellow countrymen in captivity] and did not sympathize with their grave suffering," but because "the old system weaned us from taking initiative, we do not easily organize and therefore miss so much time in this matter. Let us be grateful to the originators of a good deed. Let us remember that someday those who will suffer the terrible conditions of captivity will return to us. It is necessary that we, whom the war has touched with a lesser burden, who did not see the battlefield or the torture of captivity, had the right to look them in their eyes without shame, and only with pure joy for their return"².

The meeting took place, and at it Korolenko was unanimously elected Honorary Chairman of the Poltava Society for the Assistance to Prisoners of War. In the summer of 1917 he wrote the Society's charter and many more such appeals. The aid that came in was significant both from society and personally from Korolenko. Fedor Kornienko, a native of the Poltava region, who lived not far from Korolenko's dacha in Khatki, recalled, "I was in captivity in Germany. I send a letter, but I don't receive a penny from home. I wrote to Korolenko and he sent three packages" [11].

One form of philanthropy consisted of Korolenko's donating his own books. On March 29, 1916 the writer asked the editorial board of *Russkoe bogatstvo* (*Russian Wealth*) to donate some of his books for the charity lottery. The books had to serve as an Easter gift to the soldiers. Vladimir Galaktionovich gave his works also to replenish libraries at the front: "I am not designating how many: 5, 10, 15 — it depends on need"³.

In his letters Korolenko raised stirring questions about the inspiring power of patriotic enthusiasm when "the people are able to work miracles", about the imperishability of universal human values, about the need always to be ready to defend the Motherland, about the inadmissibility of the army's collapse and the infection of its bacillus of "democracy of discord," and about the danger of anarchy, which looms over the world and still looms today as did the wandering specter of revolution over Russia in 1917.

Unquestionably, Korolenko's works have enduring value — the fictional ones, of course, but the journalistic ones, too. Sofia Vladimirovna, who would become the first director of the Korolenko literary and memorial museum, recalled in the museum's first guidebook (1955) that on his fiftieth birthday, in 1903, her father claimed that, "my fame will not last long, because I responded to present day events, and when people have moved on from inquiries into our time, they will forget me". And then Sofia refutes her father's words: "In this sincere conviction my father turned out to be wrong" [15].

Korolenko concludes "War, the Homeland and Humanity" with words of hope: "If they [these letters] direct some minds to a consciousness of the homeland's importance, awaken in some hearts the old, sacred, rightful sense of reciprocal love for one's homeland, I will assume that I did not think in vain about these agonizing questions of our terrible time" [10, p. 47]. No

¹ Poltavskii literaturno-memorial'nyi muzei V. G. Korolenko (PLMMK), l. 1709. (In Russian)

² Poltavskii literaturno-memorial'nyi muzei V. G. Korolenko (PLMMK), l. 1709. (In Russian)

³ Poltavskii literaturno-memorial'nyi muzei V. G. Korolenko (PLMMK), № 2156 (889). (In Russian)

matter how demanding and terrible this trial — war — always is, we must state: in any times, in any countries war created particular experiences. At one extreme are tragedies, losses, hunger, captivity, and at the other are mutual aid, support, sincere desire to share what you have because sharing can save peoples' lives and protect them from death. Still, there also is the awareness that comes from participating directly in the fate of their country, which includes the wave of patriotism and the verification of the stability of moral values. Korolenko's moral and socio-historical views deserve close attention, wide popularization and further study in the face of environmental and humanitarian catastrophes that threaten humanity. Today his spiritual heritage not accidentally unites the culture and science of different countries. Not confrontation, but the constructive dialogue of scholars and students helps to examine and expand the horizons of research about the writer and his work [1–9; 13–16].

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