World War II has never ended for the citizens of the former Soviet Union. Nearly 27 million Soviet citizens died in the course of what Joseph Stalin declared to be the Great Patriotic War, half of the total 55 million victims of the world war. The enduring personal trauma and grief that engulfed those who survived, despite the Red Army’s victory over fascism, was not matched by Stalin’s state of mind, which preferred to forget the war. Not until the ousting of Nikita S. Khrushchev in October 1964 by Leonid Brezhnev was official memory of the war really resurrected. This article elaborates a thesis about the place of World War II in Soviet and post-Soviet collective memory by illuminating the sources of the myth of the Great Patriotic War and the mechanisms by which it has been sustained and even amplified. It discusses perestroika, patriotism without communism, the fate of the wartime Young Communist heroine Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya, the battle for Victory Day, the return of ‘trophy’ art, the Hill of Prostrations, and Sovietism without socialism.
The Great Patriotic War. The collapse of Hitler's Germany is approaching. “On June 22, 1941, German fascist hordes treacherously attacked our country by order of Hitler's oberbandite, using the temporary superiority of forces, Hitler dreamed of capturing the entire Soviet Union in two months and turning our great freedom-loving people into slaves of German barons and landowners ...” Ratification of the Treaty between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United Kingdom in Britain on the alliance in the war against Hitlerite Germany and its accomplices in Europe and on cooperation and mutual assistance after the war. [Moscow]: OGIZ. State Publishing House of Political Literature, 1942. Great Patriotic War. On June 22, 1941, German troops invaded the Soviet Union's territory. German planes dropped bombs on Kiev (now the capital of Ukraine), Minsk (now the capital of Belarus), Riga (now the capital of Latvia), Sevastopol (Crimea) and other cities and towns. The war lasted 1,418 days. A total of 27 million Soviet people were killed, including 18 million civilians and 8.7 million servicemen. On June 21, a memorial candle is lit at Moscow's Yelokhovo Cathedral and is taken to the Hall of Memory and Grief of the Great Patriotic War museum on the Bow Hill. This candle is used to light many others, which are brought to WWII burial sites and monuments all over the country. In 2015, other former Soviet States, including Kazakhstan, Armenia and Belarus joined the campaign. The Soviet troops held out against the enormous German army, decimating and wearing it out, until a relieving force encircled the city compelling the invaders to surrender. The crushing defeat at Stalingrad was unmatched in scale, spurring the Soviet drive towards victory... In May 1945 Berlin finally fell. The famous photo of two Soviet soldiers unfurling a red flag over the Reichstag became an iconic image of World War II. The memory of the war, referred to as the Great Patriotic War, is particularly venerated in Russia. In the USSR the end of the war was considered to be May 9, 1945, when the German surrender took effect. The date has become a national holiday – Victory Day – and is commemorated in a grand military parade on Red Square. The Great Patriotic War is a term used in Russia and some other former republics of the Soviet Union) to describe the conflict fought during the period from 22 June 1941 to 9 May 1945 along the many fronts of the Eastern Front of World War II, primarily between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. For some legal purposes, this period may be extended to 11 May 1945 to include the end of the Prague Offensive. The end of the Great Patriotic War is commemorated on the 9th of May. During the Soviet Union's Great Patriotic War, from 1941 to 1945, as many as 24 million of its citizens died. 14 million were children ages fourteen or younger. And for those who survived, the suffering was far from over. collective memory of unity and sacrifice. For all the war's significance in Soviet history and for all its influence on Stalinist and post-Stalinist state and society, however, it seems somehow disconnected from the history of children and childhood in the Cite this Item. 1 The Children’s War.