“The War Works Hard”
Dunya Mikhail

How magnificent the war is!
How eager
and efficient!
Early in the morning
it wakes up the sirens
and dispatches ambulances
to various places
swings corpses through the air
rolls stretchers to the wounded
summons rain
from the eyes of mothers
digs into the earth
dislodging many things
from under the ruins...
Some are lifeless and glistening
others are pale and still throbbing...
It produces the most questions
in the minds of children
entertains the gods
by shooting fireworks and missiles
into the sky
sows mines in the fields
and reaps punctures and blisters
urges families to emigrate
stands beside the clergymen
as they curse the devil
(poor devil, he remains
with one hand in the searing fire)...
The war continues working, day and night.
It inspires tyrants
to deliver long speeches
awards medals to generals
and themes to poets
it contributes to the industry
of artificial limbs
provides food for flies
adds pages to the history books
achieves equality
between killer and killed
teaches lovers to write letters
accustoms young women to waiting
fills the newspapers
with articles and pictures
builds new houses
for the orphans
invigorates the coffin makers
gives grave diggers
a pat on the back
and paints a smile on the leader’s face.
It works with unparalleled diligence!
Yet no one gives it
a word of praise.