

THE SOVIET UNION

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The Character of the Eastern Front

Germany's campaign against the USSR, which began on 22 June 1941, became the greatest land war in history. By the winter of 1942 its front line stretched more than 1,000 miles from the Arctic Ocean to the Caucasus. The opposing sides mobilised tens of millions of soldiers, and hundreds of thousands of aircraft, tanks and guns, during four years of bitter fighting.

During 1941, Germany military power reached its zenith. The *Wehrmacht* had occupied the territories of a dozen European countries; only Britain still resisted. Now Hitler sought to realise the long-standing Nazi ambition of expansion into the Baltic, the Ukraine and European Russia itself. By September, German forces had taken the Ukrainian capital of Kiev and stood before the gates of Leningrad and Moscow.

Soviet resistance, at first unexpectedly weak, now strengthened. For the time being the Germans advanced no further, although Leningrad was blockaded and Moscow was directly endangered. Soviet counter-offensives outside Leningrad and Moscow, stiffening through the winter, denied Germany the chance of a lightning victory. The Germans were caught off balance, unprepared for a protracted struggle.

Having temporarily lost the initiative, Hitler tried to win it back during 1942 with a new offensive to the south. His forces advanced to Stalingrad and the edge of the Caucasian oilfields. On the Soviet side there were fresh setbacks. Only at the end of 1942 was a real Soviet recovery marked with the encirclement and destruction of German forces at Stalingrad. This decisive stroke brought the war to its turning point. For Germany the long retreat now began. Hitler mounted only one more big offensive in the east, at Kursk in July 1943; this battle ended in another decisive

Soviet victory, which sealed the fate of German occupation in eastern Europe. The slow, costly but inexorable advance of Soviet forces continued against unremitting German resistance until the final battle of Berlin in 1945.

This huge war had several main features which determined its impact upon civilian life in the USSR.¹ Germany's war in the east was first of all a war for *Lebensraum* – living space for German colonial settlers. It was also a war to win guaranteed supplies of food and raw materials for German workers and German industries. These were to be won at the expense of the indigenous Slavic races who were destined by German plans, some for eastward deportation or starvation, the rest for menial labour as Germany's helots.² The peoples of the USSR therefore faced a bitter war for national survival.

Another feature of the war became the tremendous productive effort on each side. This was to a large extent a measure of the failure of the Blitzkrieg. German plans had intended a lightning war ending in a quick victory before the USSR could mobilise its larger economy, avoiding the necessity for significant German sacrifice. The Soviet denial of German victory turned the war into a protracted struggle. Eventual victory would now belong to the side that could wield the greatest volume of resources.

The two sides waged the struggle with unique intensity. On the eastern front as a whole there died three fifths of the war's total dead, which reached well over 50 millions.³ Soviet national losses are now officially estimated as 26-27 millions, or one in seven of the pre-war Soviet population. Of these, civilians probably made up the majority.⁴ Soviet civilians died in an extraordinary variety of ways. Some died under fire on the front line as it crossed their homes. Others died, whether blockaded in Leningrad, or at a distance from the front line, perhaps under bombardment by aircraft and distant shellfire, and also perhaps more commonly in the Soviet interior from overwork, hunger and disease. Still others died for the same reasons under enemy occupation; there, they were also killed as Jews, commissars, partisans and hostages, and additionally in Germany itself as slaves.

Civilian Life

For nearly all civilians, life in wartime was very hard. Just how hard depended on whether they spent the war in occupied territory or under Soviet control, and what was their employment and social status (e.g. peasant, industrial worker, government official). There was also tremendous movement between regions and economic and social positions – just in 1941-2 there were 25 million homeless refugees to be fed

and housed. On the whole I shall not write about the worst extremes – about life under German occupation, in Leningrad, or in labour camps or internal exile – which have been ably surveyed in authoritative works.⁵ Rather, I shall concentrate on more typical, everyday trends.

The Urban Economy

War production. Soviet rearmament had already pushed munitions output to a relatively high peacetime level before war broke out. In the late 1930s Soviet defence factories were producing a full range of modern weapons of a quality and quantity to compete with Germany, and their rate of output was rising rapidly. The war years saw further huge increases. By the wartime peak in 1944, weekly Soviet output would stand at 750 aircraft and 400 armoured fighting vehicles, 2,500 guns and mortars, 45,000 rifles, and 4,000,000 shells, mines and bombs.⁶

The wartime expansion of war production proceeded in two phases. In the first phase (from mid-1941 to the end of 1942) munitions output raced ahead in an uncontrolled way which, although essential to the country's immediate survival, carried huge costs and did considerable damage. The absence of controls meant that different lines of war production got out of balance with each other – thus the output of guns outpaced shell production, and a persistent shell famine ensued. The supply of aircraft and armour fell behind, partly because of the high proportion of factories being decommissioned and put on wheels for transfer from the battle zones to the interior regions. At the same time, the concentration on war production ignored trends elsewhere in the economy which pointed in the other direction. If defence output climbed, everything else was collapsing. Traditional priorities failed to protect the output of coal, steel, electric power and industrial machinery, which plummeted. German successes in capturing territory were only partly to blame. On the Soviet side the pursuit of war production at any price took further resources away from the civilian infrastructure and hastened its decline.

As long as the civilian economy pointed downward, the Soviet capacity to maintain supply of the war effort remained in doubt. There was a constant danger that munitions factories might be forced to halt production because of shortages of steel and power, or rations for munitions workers. In the winter of 1941/42 war production faltered. The chasm between the huge and multiplying needs of the Army, and the restricted supplies of war goods available, now reached its widest.

In 1942, war production would accelerate again, but its basis in the civilian economy would remain unstable through the following winter. With 1943 nearly everything began to turn up. Imbalances between different lines of war supply were

put right, and the civilian economy began to recover, strengthening the basis for war production as a whole. Defence output rose towards its peak in 1944. Some lines of output were even cut back – for example, the Army now had as many guns and mortars as it needed.

Civilian production. Maintenance of some residual level of civilian economic activity was essential for the war economy. War production was not, and could not be, self-sufficient. Defence factories could not operate without metals, fuels, machinery and electric power. Nor could they operate without a workforce, and their workers likewise could not live without food, clothing and shelter. The Army itself could not operate without inputs supplied directly from the civilian economy. In addition to munitions, it needed the means of military construction and operations in huge quantity – food rations, petrol and aircraft fuel, transport services, and building materials.

In fact, the civilian economy suffered a catastrophic reverse. With 1942 the output of civilian industry fell to less than half the pre-war benchmark – and went on falling, because for most of 1942 things were still getting worse, not better. There was a downward spiral. To the south, territory was still being lost; most of the key factories evacuated from the south and west were still out of commission; there were persistent problems with the coordination of different branches of the economy, the matching of factory outputs with inputs, the reconciliation of military and civilian freight requirements, the specialisation of regional economies.

During 1942 the pattern of priorities changed. It was no longer enough to pursue war production at any price. The stabilisation of civilian industry and transport became just as vital to the war effort as making aircraft, guns, tanks and bullets. Stabilising the civilian economy required new resources. And for the time being there were practically none to be found, because existing resources were already dangerously overstretched, because territory was still being lost, and because Allied aid had not reached a significant scale. This made the task more or less impossible, and in economic terms 1942 would be remembered as a year of desperation and panic measures.

Soviet economic leaders were already used to operating under conditions of shortage, and of the unreliability of central supply. In peacetime, factory managers had already learnt the virtues of self-reliance, turning to local resources for survival. Better for the factory to have its own toolroom, machine shop or foundry than have to rely on other factories and regions for components or materials that might never arrive. The supply of imported goods was typically least reliable. As wartime shortages took these circumstances to new extremes, self-reliance became a domi-

nant characteristic of economic life. As central supplies ran out, every factory and locality was forced into still greater self-sufficiency. Cut off from foreign trade, the economy as a whole became a self-sufficient enclave. For some branches, however, self-reliance was meaningless. The consumer industries could not avert a collapse of output by turning to 'local resources'. There were no local resources left over for making cotton frocks or cups and saucers when everything had already been preempted by the needs of war production and heavy industry.⁷

With 1943 the condition of the civilian economy began to improve (this was true of all its branches except food products). The basis of the Soviet war effort had been stabilised. The situation was less threatening, but not yet free of danger. The situation in agriculture and food processing remained dreadful right through 1944, and hunger continued to undermine the efforts of the workforce.

Employment. The productive effort which supplied the Soviet front depended on the number of workers available after meeting the needs of the army, and their hours and intensity of work. When war broke out, the balance between demand for workers and their supply was completely upset. On the supply side the number of potential soldiers and workers was slashed by many millions because of the millions of soldiers and the tens of millions of civilians killed or abandoned in early battles. At the same time, on the demand side several millions of additional soldiers and war workers were required almost overnight.⁸

The Soviet economy had entered the war with its industrial workforce already fully employed. There was extensive regimentation backed up by the emergency labour laws of 1938 and 1940; these had already increased normal hours of work and reduced freedom of movement from one job to another. With the war came more controls; normal leisure time and holidays were cut immediately, while hours of work in industry rose from an average of 41 hours before June 1940, and 48 hours thereafter to 54-55 hours in 1942.⁹ Existing harsh penalties for minor lateness and absence from work were applied widely, and new penalties were added when defence industry were placed under military discipline in December 1941.¹⁰ In the winter and spring, other measures provided for the fullest mobilisation of the working population through universal liability to perform either military or civilian service.

These measures, undertaken from above, were met with a ready enough response from below. There was an immediate flow of volunteers for war work, including many hundreds of thousands of housewives, college and school students, and pensioners. The response from below extended to massive participation in organised programmes such as the emergency tasks of industrial evacuation and

conversion, and the industrial movements of 'socialist emulation' – individuals and groups pledged to double and triple fulfilment of work norms, overcoming the multiple obstacles to high productivity entrenched in the pre-war industrial system.¹¹ Lower level responses were also represented in recruitment into war work from the village, Russia's traditional labour reserve.

Such measures were at least relatively obvious and straightforward. Far more difficult was the maintenance of numerical coordination between the three main subgroups of the working population: the soldiers, the war workers who supplied them with munitions, fuel and other goods, and the civilian workers who kept everyone alive with food and other basic necessities. At first there was chaos in the labour market, with different rival military and civilian agencies competing to recruit workers for different purposes. New, more centralised institutional controls were required to overcome this; they were worked out in the course of war mobilisation, and it took nearly 18 months to get them right.¹²

Productivity. The only positive trend was in output per worker in the munitions industries, which increased sharply and continued to improve throughout the war.¹³ The main factors accounting for this were a switch from small batch production to flow production, and the mobilisation of reserve capacities; the latter included reserve capacities deliberately created as a matter of pre-war defence policy, 'concealed' reserves of idle time resulting from the operation of the industrial planning system, and the unused leisure hours of the workforce. This productivity gain certainly eased difficulties in 1942-3 by cutting the direct employment requirements of war production; its importance was magnified by the disastrous record of other economic sectors, where productivity sagged.

Low output per worker in agriculture, and the setback to productivity in every branch except specialised munitions work, inevitably limited the Soviet mobilisation of resources. If productivity losses had been avoided, or if the productivity gap between industry and agriculture had been limited to western European or north American proportions, millions of workers would have been freed for war work in industry or frontline duty.

During 1942 it became more and more difficult to get the right proportions between numbers employed in combat, war work and the civilian economy. The problem was that, of those not taken by the army, too many had become munitions workers, leaving too few to carry on with producing food, steel, fuel and power. The reserves of labour in inessential employment had run out; remaining kinds of civilian employment in construction, transport, agriculture and government service were all essential to the war effort, and all carried highest priority. The relative

priorities of war work became more and more finely graded and, at times, even outranked the priority of military needs.

Stricter controls on the mobilisation process, and the stabilisation of the civilian economy, came more or less together at the end of 1942. Economic management became more centralised, and the anarchistic rivalry between different wartime claims on resources was brought under control. At the same time other conditions also lightened the situation in the domestic economy, especially the victory at Stalingrad which eased the military pressure and put to an end the erosion of Soviet territory, and the swelling volume of Lend-lease shipments of weapons, industrial goods and foodstuffs.

The Urban Community

Food. In wartime most civilian households and consumers were never far from the knife edge which separated sufficiency from starvation.¹⁴

By November, 1941, food rationing was general for almost half the country's population. The rationed foods were bread, cereals, meat, fish, fats and sugar; the only staple foodstuff not to be rationed was potatoes. Most important was bread, which supplied 80-90 per cent of rationed calories and proteins. Bread was issued daily, other foods three times a month. Bread was the only foodstuff for which the rationing authorities did not permit substitutes to be issued – as, for example, powdered eggs could be substituted for meat (however, there was frequent resort to inferior ingredients in baking). Any failure of the bread supply was treated as a police matter.

Not everyone got the same, and there was considerable differentiation by age and working status (in ascending order – adult dependents, children, office workers, industrial workers, war workers, coal face workers). However, none of these except war workers in the most dangerous occupations got enough to live on from rations alone.

There was not enough to go round. Most people went hungry, and suffered the physiological consequences – loss of weight and wasting of body tissues, accompanied by a compensating reduction of metabolic pace. Deaths from starvation included not only a million Leningraders but a wider circle of unnumbered victims in the interior of the country. However, with preservation of basic sanitary and medical services, there was no great excess mortality from disease.

Rations alone were not sufficient to sustain life, and most had to look to unofficial sources as well (except for Leningraders, who lacked any surrounding farmlands). These now made the difference between life and death. Thus, workers and house-

holders too had to practice self-reliance, in the shape of sideline farms and allotments. Another important unofficial source was peasant food surpluses sold in the unregulated urban food markets.

Morale. National feeling, long recognised as a decisive factor in modern warfare, was also of great importance to the Soviet war effort. At the same time, patriotic considerations did not automatically point everyone in the same direction. We know, after all, that in the communities which fell under enemy occupation a significant number identified with the invader and became collaborators. Among them were some evidently driven by a mistaken patriotism, who believed that the nation would fare better under German than Soviet rule.¹⁶ Their motives for doing so were doubtless complicated, and the dividing line between self-interest and sincere national feeling is not easily drawn. The basis for sincere belief was soon undermined by experience of German occupation policies of plunder and enslavement, but Vlasov's Russian Liberation Movement could still meet with some popular support in the occupied USSR in 1943.¹⁷

When we look at those who remained loyal to the Soviet state and committed themselves to its preservation, whether in the interior or behind enemy lines, we do not really know with any precision what provided the effective motivation for them to do so. Why did Slavic and non-Slavic communities from the Ukraine to the Far East join in resistance to Hitler's war? To what extent were they driven to do so by political authority, and would they have chosen the same freely? What cause were they defending – that of their leader Stalin, the Soviet state, the nation or ethnic group? To what extent was their participation in Soviet wartime institutions differentiated by ethnic affiliation?

In answer to these questions historians still have little to offer but intelligent speculation. This is partly a problem of sources, for the whole subject of patriotism and collaboration has remained a large 'blank space' in Soviet historiography. But there is also the historical fact that Hitler's stance towards the eastern territories was so unappealing as to provide only a very weak test of the Soviet population's true loyalties and national feeling.

Whatever its determinants and character, Soviet national feeling was probably a big factor in the civilian war effort.¹⁸ If for no other reason, this was simply because compulsion could not do everything, and the scope for substituting monetary incentives was also very limited. Wartime experience in construction would show that military style organisation without attention to worker morale would not give good results. Issuing orders in agriculture and mining, too, had little effectiveness when other conditions for success were absent, and what was done was often done

in spite of the coercive instincts of authority. Likewise, wage premiums and cash bonuses probably had much reduced effect on worker behaviour in wartime. This is because, in official shops, there was little or nothing to buy above the ration until 1944; as for the free market, goods were available sometimes at hugely inflated prices (which must have motivated some to work harder for cash, while deterring others from seeking to buy), or were available at other times only for barter.¹⁹ However, the authorities found that giving out extra rations to war workers was a powerful incentive to participate and perform reliably.

One result of the food shortage (and this was found everywhere in World War II, not just in the USSR) was 'food crimes'. These covered all sorts of misdemeanours and felonies from petty theft to largescale corruption. Government food stocks sometimes found their way to the black market. Ration coupons were forged, stolen (from the authorities and from individuals), bought and sold.²⁰ Associated with food crimes were both social and private costs. Social costs were shared out in the shape of reduced ration entitlements. Sometimes, however, the full burden fell upon the individual, especially in the case of private theft. In Leningrad the authorities refused to replace stolen ration cards before the end of each month, in order to discourage falsely reported losses. In the winter of 1941/42, to have a ration card stolen in the first weeks of the month meant death, unless the victim received support of family or friends. All food crimes were punished severely, often by shooting.²¹

Food supplies were among the determinants of morale, but there were many intervening factors, and the relationship was always complex. Certainly loss of civic morale did not follow inevitably from food shortage and hunger.

For example, in the territories of eastern Poland and the Baltic region absorbed in 1939-40, many welcomed the German occupation without having suffered any great shortage of food or other goods. On the other hand the Leningrad population suffered quite extraordinary hardship, with hunger-related deaths numbered in tens of thousands per month at the worst times; individuals suffered every variety of physical and moral atrophy. Yet there was no breach of collective morale – no panic, no looting, as would be experienced in Moscow itself, and no surrender. The Moscow events of October 1941, themselves provide an instructive example. Consumer shortages did not prompt the looting and other breaches of public order in the city. The 'panic' was sparked off by the evacuation of central government offices, which stimulated the people's fear that their leaders had deserted them.

The Village

The collective farm. Under the pressures of war the collective farm (*kolkhoz*) system was in some respects intensified. There was more compulsory labour, and pressure on farms in the interior to extend sowings. Historians have argued over the success of these measures, sometimes seeing them as counterproductive.²²

In some ways, however, the agrarian regime was relaxed. When the pressure for results was greatest, for example during the harvest, there was often greater readiness to reward the farmworkers first and take the state's share afterwards. There was also a tendency for a kind of privatisation to encroach on the collective farm itself; more decisions were taken on a family basis, families took over responsibility for *kolkhoz* livestock and equipment, and family allotments extended their margins onto *kolkhoz* land. These trends would have to be stamped out at some cost after the war.

Production. In agriculture 1941 was already terrible, and in 1942 things got far, far worse. In that year total agricultural output fell to two fifths of the pre-war level. In the meantime, the population under Soviet control had only fallen by one third.

In wartime, farm labour was exceptionally difficult. The main causes were the loss of the best agricultural land in the southern regions, the loss of horses and tractors, and the disappearance of young men from the agricultural workforce.

Those who remained carried on a bitter struggle. Men and women both worked harder than in peacetime, with more time worked on the collective, and with fewer breaches of discipline. But harder work failed to sustain output per worker. Output per worker in agriculture in 1942 was well down on the prewar level, which was already miserably low.

Food. The extent of wartime consumer sacrifice on the part of collective farmers is another 'blank space' in Soviet historiography, with little hard research to fill the gaps in our knowledge. Certainly, food output per farmworker had fallen, while the share of total grain and meat output taken by government had risen.²³ The farm population was left with a reduced share in a smaller total than before the war.

Collective farmers did not have the privilege of a guaranteed ration which was nominally available to urban dwellers. They relied for the most part on the one significant unrationed foodstuff. Potatoes played the same role in the village diet as bread in the towns. Potatoes were supplemented by milk for proteins, fats and vitamins and, in the final resort, by grass.²⁴

The wartime treatment of collective farmers was very harsh. Even before the war, the attitudes of authority to the consumer needs of the village had operated according to harsh and arbitrary norms. Compulsory state purchases of food 'surpluses' were based on official assessments of potential farm capacity, not real farm output. Farm payments of grain to state-owned machine tractor stations in return for machinery services were based on percentages of the crop before harvesting, not after it had been gathered and stored in barns. In wartime the arbitrary confiscation of food from farm stocks was intensified, and procurement was carried on in the style of a military campaign against the peasants right through 1944.

Not all sacrifices were imposed on peasantry from above. Collective farmers accepted wartime privations, in part, in order to help feed husbands and children who had gone to work in munitions factories and to fight in uniform. There was some inequality in the burden, however. Food produce was fantastically scarce but those who had any to spare could take it to the markets where urban dwellers went to find their own means of survival. There the seller could get up to 12 or 13 times the prewar return on food produce.²⁵ On this basis, a few became significantly wealthy in cash terms. But they did not become materially better off, since there was nothing to be bought in the village for cash.

State and Society

Civil and Military Leadership

Soviet wartime government remained in civilian hands. There was only Marshal Voroshilov to represent the military in Stalin's war cabinet, and his personal influence generally declined. The army as an institution was too busy fighting the Germans to take on any new roles in the making of Soviet domestic or foreign policy.

However, the character of civilian control over the military did change. In the pre-war years Stalin had established absolute personal authority over the armed forces, and decided or supervised everything from grand strategy to details of military appointments and munitions policy. The removal of professional autonomy from military leaders and institutions had been greatly facilitated by the armed forces purge of 1937-8, which was accompanied and followed by huge numerical expansion of Red Army personnel. The purge had eliminated a substantial fraction of the experienced officer corps, and terrorised their survivors and replacements.

Replacing the purge victims, and at the same time recruiting to meet the needs of the huge expansion of 1938-40, resulted in a dramatic lowering of army officers' professional standards and experience.

These things had a powerfully negative influence on wartime military performance. Not least was the lack of restraint on Stalin's propensity to make mistakes in 1941-2. Having wrongly anticipated German moves, he failed to make appropriate dispositions of his forces; even when German intentions had become obvious, he still showed incapacity to organise defence in depth. As time went by, professional soldiers began to win back a louder voice in operational matters. Stalin was required to dictate less and listen more (but still arbitrate, if necessary, between conflicting professional assessments). All the same, he retained absolute control over grand strategy and diplomacy. And even in operational matters the ideology of Stalinism still left characteristic traces right through to the last moment of the war, for example in the failure to anticipate casualties while planning operations, and in the setting of arbitrary objectives regardless of the huge cost in lives and technical means which would be paid to attain them.²⁶

Uncontrolled Economic Mobilisation

Civilian authority was changed by the war in more ways than one. Governmental morale was badly damaged by the outbreak of war, since the general view was that enough had been done in diplomacy, rearmament and deployment of armed forces on the Soviet-German border to deter German aggression for the time being. For a few days Stalin went through the motions, apparently believing that the scope of the conflict could still be limited. But it was Molotov, not Stalin, who had to break the news of the attack to the Soviet population on the radio. After a week Stalin retreated in depression to his country residence near Moscow. Senior Politburo members visited him to propose that he should form and head a war cabinet. Evidently he thought they had come to arrest him. Mikoian recalled afterwards: 'He looked at us beseechingly and asked "Why have you come?" One felt that he was alarmed, but was trying to keep calm.' Molotov put the proposal. 'Stalin looked at him with some surprise, but after a pause said "Good."²⁷ After that he was back in the saddle, but things turned from bad to worse and his determination was not yet restored. In October, 1941, facing the possibility that Moscow would be taken, Stalin tried to surrender to Hitler, offering the Baltic, Belorussia, Moldavia and part of the Ukraine in return for peace.²⁸ Hitler, scenting victory, refused.

Government did not disintegrate, but its administrative effectiveness was seriously weakened. Formal mechanisms for resource allocation became irrelevant.

While the *Wehrmacht* ate up Soviet territory, including the country's most important military-industrial centres, economic planners went on writing factory plans and coordinating supplies. But the factories and supplies only existed on paper. Meanwhile, Army requirements for new supplies of munitions and soldiers, just to replace early losses, hugely exceeded plans. The gap between needs and resources could not be papered over by any plan, and grew dangerously.

What really carried out the essential tasks of war mobilisation and managed the war economy through the first period of the war was a system of informal leadership. The key roles fell to individual leaders – Stalin's deputies, members of the Politburo and war cabinet. Kaganovich, Kosygin, Shvernik and others headed a crash programme to evacuate war industries from the war zones to the interior, which was carried out without any planning beforehand, as an inspired piece of improvisation. Other powerful individuals – Beria, Malenkov, Malyshev, Mikoian, Molotov, Voznesenskii – armed with unlimited personal responsibility, took on key tasks of industrial mobilisation and conversion. All this was carried on regardless of economic plans and attempts at high-level coordination, which anyway bore no relation to the needs of the situation.

These powerful individual leaders did not do everything themselves. Their activities would have been quite ineffective if they had not been met by a response from below. Initiative from below was represented both in the evacuation of assets, especially farm stocks, and in the conversion of factories to war production. Initiative from below did not mean that there was no organisation or forethought; the conversion of civilian capacities to wartime needs did not come out of the blue, and was supported by pre-war planning carried out in factories, municipalities and industrial branch administrations. The point was that people did not adopt an attitude of 'wait and see', but went straight over to wartime tasks without needing instructions from the Kremlin.

However essential under the circumstances, uncontrolled mobilisation on this pattern was extremely costly. In 1941, the defence industries were saved, and the supply of munitions expanded rapidly, but everything else was left to look after itself and lapsed into a state of chaos. This was no basis for a sustained war effort. As for 1942, the intolerable strains in the civilian economy were not just the product of successful German offensives, but were actually made worse by the forced, unbalanced character of mobilisation in the previous year. The relocation of the western and southern factories for making guns, tanks, shells and aircraft in the Urals and western Siberia had shifted the centre of gravity of war production hundreds of miles to the east. This effort alone had cost huge resources of civilian transport and construction. But now additional costs presented themselves. These

remote regions were utterly unready for such accelerated development. They lacked most things necessary for recommissioning the evacuated war factories – additional workers, housing and food supplies, transport links, electric power, sources of metal products and components, and any kind of commercial and financial infrastructure. To make good these shortages cost the economy dearly.

Much of the cost was met straight away, by huge Soviet civilian sacrifice, in terms of immediate creation of a supportive infrastructure. Some costs were met by the United States through Lend-lease shipments, which acquired a massive scale in 1943-4. Other costs – for example, long-term ecological damage to the Urals and western Siberia, arising from the region's crash industrialisation – were hidden for many years.

The informal, uncoordinated system of emergency leadership by individual members of the war cabinet and Politburo, which had managed the transition to a war economy at the highest level, lasted until the end of 1942. In November, workforce controls were centralised in a single government agency (the Committee for Registration and Allocation of the Workforce); soon after, personal war production responsibilities of individual war cabinet and Politburo members were devolved upon a new, powerful cabinet subcommittee, the GKO (war cabinet) Operations Bureau. After this, the formal procedures for compiling and implementing economic plans were gradually brought back to normal operation, diminishing the scope for powerful individuals to run the economy by decree. Wartime plans began to incorporate objectives of reconstruction and rehabilitation, which sometimes also included consideration of post-war requirements.²⁹ Overriding panic measures and crash programmes became less frequent, although they did not disappear, especially in food and agriculture policy where the situation remained critical right through 1944.

Measures to Strengthen Civilian Morale

A critical wartime task was that of unifying Soviet society around the patriotic cause. In order to achieve this, the Stalinist regime moved away from pre-war emphasis on internal struggle against the enemy within and the need to purge hostile elements. The campaigns against the pre-war oppositions of Left and Right were wound down. A few military and economic leaders imprisoned as a result of the pre-war purges were rehabilitated and taken back into official posts.

Stalin himself, in speeches and decrees, offered major concessions to Russian national feelings. In the autumn of 1941 he began a deliberate rehabilitation of the image of the Army in Russian history before the Soviet era, altering its role from

one of imperialist oppression to one of national liberation. In the summer of 1942 the renewed status of the Army officer corps was further confirmed by abolition of the commissars responsible for political supervision of professional officers, and by restoration of many pre-revolutionary privileges of rank. In 1943 the Russian Orthodox church was another beneficiary of renewed national traditions, when a new concordat was promulgated between the Soviet state and the Russian Orthodox church. The agreement provided for restoration of the holy synod, and greater freedom of religious expression. Meanwhile, as Russian national sentiment strengthened, anti-German feeling was also strongly promoted. All these trends were objectively reinforced by the fact that, with occupation of the western republics and the Ukraine, Russia was now more than ever the dominant partner in the Soviet family of nations.

But the break with peacetime was far from complete. A characteristic element of continuity lay in Moscow's persistent distrust of civilian morale and civilian values. The wartime behaviour and decisions of Soviet leaders suggest that they were continually prey to fears about the imminent breakdown of public order; whether or not the fears were exaggerated, the consequences were often cruel. Thus, in the face of enemy advances Stalin delayed the evacuation of noncombatants first from Leningrad, then from Stalingrad. He preferred to incur additional civilian casualties, rather than give a signal of retreat. Another, more infamous example was the punitive treatment of minor nationalities (for example, the Volga Germans, and Crimean Tatars); where a minority sided with the German invaders, the whole ethnic community was punished by deportation under atrocious conditions.

In general, the peacetime apparatus of repression was kept active and in good working order. Numbers held in forced labour camps and colonies shrank, mainly because of shockingly high wartime mortality, but the proportion of 'counter-revolutionaries' (i.e. those held under Article 58 of the RSFSR criminal code) rose slightly.³⁰

Stalinism and the Price of Victory

Once Stalin was seen everywhere as the great Soviet war leader, the Generalissimus who symbolised the military destruction of Nazi expansionism and the confirmation of the USSR's post-war great power status. More than anything, the Soviet victory in 1945 was seen as validating Stalin's rule. As a modernising statesman who changed both his own country and the world, Stalin invited comparison with Bismarck, Napoleon or Peter the Great.

Over the years, a variety of revelations and reinterpretations has eroded this image. Now Stalin's contribution to history appears more sordid, even criminal. Modern historical writing tends to emphasise the price which the USSR paid for Stalin and Stalinism in World War II as well as before and after.

Reformist Soviet historians of the war period have condemned Stalin on a variety of counts, which could be summed up as follows.³¹ His pre-war policies of industrialisation and collectivisation were too wasteful of human life and labour, and needlessly overstrained the economy. The ceaseless purging of the 1930s left Soviet society demoralised and divided against itself. Stalin's foreign policies were too opportunistic; first he underrated the Nazi threat, then failed to win potential allies to a policy of collective security against Germany; his turn to appeasement of Hitler in 1939 was ultimately counterproductive. The concentration of diplomacy and military policy in Stalin's hands undermined Soviet security; his mistakes opened the way for the *Wehrmacht* to the gates of Moscow and Leningrad in 1941, and to Stalingrad in 1942. The Stalinist belief that the human individual was no more than a passive cog (*vintik*, literally 'screw') in the machine of state also had practical consequences: a cheapening of human life, indifference to casualties in planning and executing military operations, and post-war concealment of the huge cost of victory in Soviet fatalities, both military and civilian. Irresolute in defeat, Stalin proved vindictive in victory; after the war he condemned the few returning Soviet prisoners of war, declared 'traitors to the motherland' because they had allowed themselves to fall alive into German hands, to years of further suffering in internal exile and labour camps; he renewed his authority by imposing fresh sacrifices on society and launching new purges.

Such a comprehensive verdict is part scholarly evaluation of the Soviet past, part political statement about the Soviet future. In reality, it may not be easy to disentangle the historical role of Stalin and Stalinism from what might have transpired without them. The indictment is not so much a finished judgement as a set of working hypotheses which we must continue to research and refine, and be ready to modify or reject. In fact, the historiography of the USSR in World War II will continue to evolve, and what is written above is best seen as a report of work in progress.

NOTES

1. Some of the ideas and evaluations contained in this paper are developed at greater length by John Barber and Mark Harrison, *The Soviet Home Front, 1941-1945: a Social and Economic History of the USSR in World War II* (London, 1991).

2. Alexander Dallin, *German Rule in Russia, 1941-1945* (London, 1957), pp. 310-13.
3. The leading Soviet demographer B. Uralis, in his *Wars and Population* (Moscow, 1971), p. 294, gave a detailed analysis of worldwide premature deaths totalling 50 millions, on the basis of a Soviet figure of 20 millions.
4. A total of 26.6 million excess deaths is the result of an official demographic revaluation by E. Andreev, L. Darskii and T. Khar'kova, 'Otsenka liudskikh poter' v period Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny', *Vestnick statistiki*, 10 (1990), pp. 25-7. Soviet wartime military fatalities have now been reported officially by the Chief of the Soviet General Staff, M.A. Moiseev, 'Tsena pobedy', *Voennostoricheskii zhurnal*, 3 (1990), pp. 14-16, as 8,668,400 (a figure which may well, however, prove to be an underestimate). If these two figures are reliable, then a residual figure in the region of 18 million civilian deaths is left by subtraction.
5. Dallin (above, note 2); T.J. Schulte, *The German Army and Nazi Policies in Occupied Russia* (Oxford, 1989); Harrison E. Salisbury, *The 900 Days: The Siege of Leningrad* (London, 1971); Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago, 1918-1956*, 3 vols (London, 1974-8).
6. On wartime production see Mark Harrison, *Soviet Planning in Peace and War, 1938-1945* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 109-64; also id, 'The Volume of Soviet Munitions Output, 1937-1945: A Re-evaluation', *Journal of Economic History*, 50 (1990), pp. 569-89.
7. Harrison, *Soviet Planning* (above, note 6), pp. 204-9.
8. On wartime labour a standard work is A.V. Mitrofanova, *Rabochii klass SSSR v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny* (Moscow, 1971).
9. According to N.A. Voznesensky, *War Economy of the USSR in the Period of the Patriotic War* (Moscow, 1948), p. 91, in 1942 the industrial worker's hours exceeded those worked in 1940 by 22 per cent.
10. Viktor Zemskov, 'Na rabote. Sorokovye, "trudovye"', *Soiuz* (18 May 1990), p. 9.
11. L.S. Rogachevskaiia, *Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v SSSR. Istoricheskie ocherki. 1917-1970 gg.* (Moscow, 1977), pp. 175-212.
12. Harrison, *Soviet Planning* (above, note 6), pp. 185-91.
13. For Soviet and comparative evidence see Harrison, 'Soviet Munitions Output' (above, note 6), p. 576.
14. U.G. Cherniavskii, *Voina i prodovol'stvie. Snabzhenie gorodskogo naseleniia v Velikuiu Otechestvennuiu voinu* (1941-1945 gg.) (Moscow, 1964); A.V. Liubimov, *Torgovlia i snabzhenie v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny*

- (Moscow, 1968); William Moskoff, *The Bread of Affliction: The Food Supply in the USSR during World War II* (Cambridge, 1990).
15. Moskoff (above, note 14), pp. 226-9
16. John Barber, 'The Role of Patriotism in the Great Patriotic War', paper to Moscow conference on 'Russia and the USSR in the XX Century' (April 1990).
17. Catherine Andreyev, *Vlasov and the Russian Liberation Movement: Soviet Reality and Émigré Theories* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 47-50.
18. For more discussion see Harrison and Barber (above, note 1), chapter 9.
19. See also Moskoff (above, note 14), chapter 8.
20. K.S. Karol, *Solik: Life in the Soviet Union, 1939-1946* (London, 1986), pp. 94-5; Moskoff (above, note 14), chapter 9.
21. Salisbury (above, note 5), p. 533; Moskoff (above, note 14), p. 176.
22. Iu.V. Arutiunian, *Sovetskoe krest'ianstvo v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny* (Moscow, 1970), pp. 18-20, 86-96.
23. Mark Harrison, 'Stalinist Industrialisation and the Test of War', *History Workshop Journal*, 29 (March 1990), p. 84.
24. Arutiunian (above, note 22), p. 361.
25. Voznesensky (above, note 9), p. 102.
26. *Istoriki sporiat. Trinadtsat' besed* (Moscow, 1988), p. 314; V.I. Kozlov, 'O liudskikh poteriakh Sovetskogo Soiuzu v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny 1941-1945 godov', *Istoriia SSSR*, 2 (1989), p. 132.
27. A.I. Mikoian, 'V pervye mesiatsy Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny', *Novaia i noveishaia istoriia*, 6 (1985), p. 98. Mikoian's story is repeated, in slightly different terms, in Dmitrii Volkogonov, *Triumf i tragediia. Politicheskii portret I.V. Stalina*, vol. II, part 1 (Moscow, 1989), p. 169.
28. Nikolai Pavlenko, 'Tragediia i triumf Krasnoi Armii', *Moskovskie novosti*, 19 (7 May, 1989), pp. 8-9. Pavlenko cited Marshal Zhukov as firsthand witness to this attempt, initiated by Stalin on 7 October, 1941. Volkogonov (above, note 27) vol. II, part 1, pp. 172-3, places the episode as early as July 1941, but in this he is apparently mistaken.
29. Harrison, *Soviet Planning* (above, note 6), pp. 175-85.
30. Aleksandr Dugin, 'GULAG glazami istorika', *Soiuz* (9 February 1990), p. 16.
31. On recent views of Stalin in wartime, see R.W. Davies, *Soviet History in the Gorbachev Revolution* (Basingstoke and London, 1989), pp. 100-14.

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