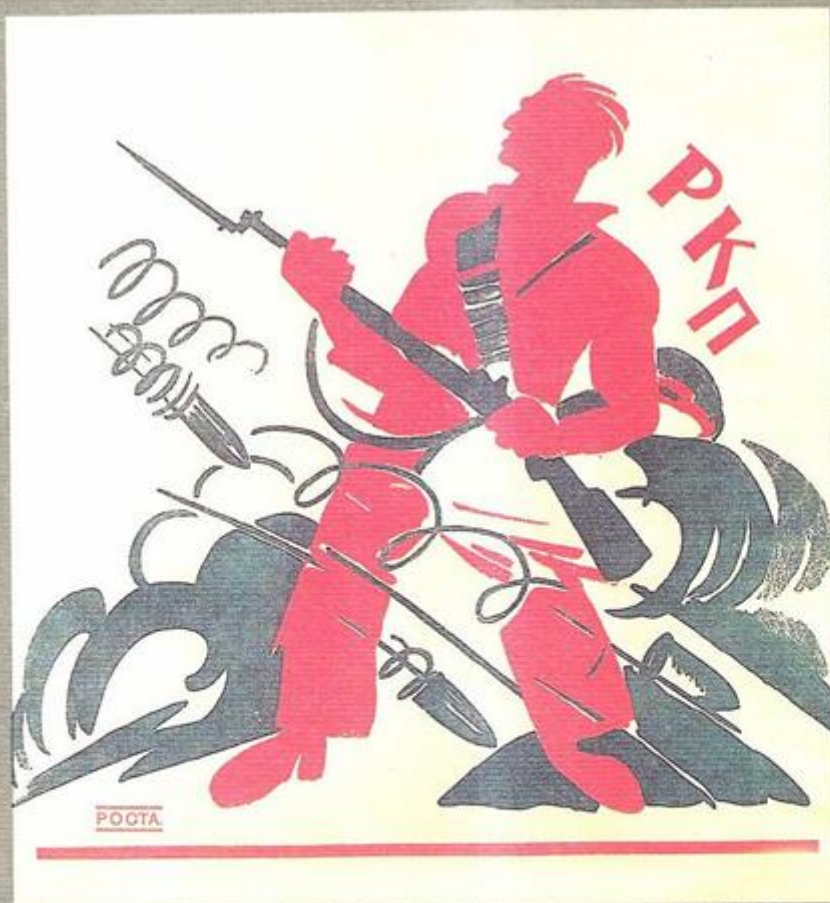


Fondazione
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RUSSIA IN THE AGE OF WARS 1914-1945

Edited by Silvio Pons and Andrea Romano



Introduction

Silvio Pons and Andrea Romano

Ten years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the opening of its archives, we may say that a new post-Cold-War historiography of twentieth-century Russia is emerging. However, contrary to expectations following the fall of the Communist regimes, the growth of this historiography has not been without its problems and difficulties. Given the partial, confused manner in which the archives have been opened, research has been faced with greater obstacles than had been hoped. An instrumentalised use of the archives and a tendency to seek confirmation for pre-established theses have also spread among specialists, and not only in historical writing for the general public. In virtually unchanged form, interpretative models dating back to the Cold War have stubbornly persisted. More generally, there appears to be clear difficulty in bringing the historiography of contemporary Russia to the same level of method and debate as exists in relation to other countries, despite the elimination of the previous barriers between Russian and Western historians. The permeation between Western historiography and the renaissance of historical studies in Russia has often worked one way, with Russian historians adopting interpretative references or models formulated outside their national context. The perhaps inevitably slow development and consolidation of a Russian historiography freed of the censorship and ideological conditioning of the past may be thought to be influencing the birth process of a new historiography. And yet the process is under way. Even in the current state of affairs, the archives are an important heritage that will surely and substantially enrich and modify the historical culture on contemporary Russia. Studies aimed at opening the way towards more in-depth knowledge and reformulating the historical question-marks have multiplied. This is what emerges above all from the work by historians belonging to generations less marked by the experience of the Cold War, which has already set off research in many different directions.

This collection of essays aims above all at helping to document this work, choosing a historical outlook having a lowest common denominator: how the experience of war pertains to understanding the history of contemporary Russia. This point needs some qualification. Our aim is not to propose a new category of interpretation, but merely to sustain a direction of

study that is becoming increasingly substantial. The war experience formula must therefore be understood in a broad sense, which in the current state of the historiography cannot aspire to constituting an organic, consistent trend of study. This acception mainly concerns the significance that the experience of the Civil and World Wars had for developing the political reality in Soviet Russia. The outlook adopted here aims, therefore, at capitalising on the results of those research works for which the war experience presents a link addressing the relationships between the formation of the political culture and the visions of the outside world, and the ramifications this had for the development of the regime's foundations and components, as well as for State policies¹. Our work may be summarised as an attempt to help towards understanding how Soviet Russia conceived and placed itself in world politics between the First and Second World Wars, and opening a way towards studying the interaction between international policy and the internal context.

In this era, perhaps more than any other country, Russia had the tragic fate of being the stage for application of "total war", as a characteristic feature of modern war already discernible in World War I and then distinctive of World War II². At the same time, it had to grapple with an unprecedented intertwining of war between states and civil wars; the war between revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries of 1918-21, which uninterruptedly prolonged the effects of the Great War, was followed less than ten years thereafter by the unique war unleashed by the new power against the peasants, setting in turn the stage for the bloody purges that befell institutions and society up until the eve of World War II. Russia was thus a central location, and not a periphery, of the "second Thirty Years' War" or "European civil war" – aside from the highly differing interpretations that this notion may involve³. But this reference to European history relates not only to the question of periodisation. It calls to mind a more far-reaching issue: the war experience and its consequences for identities, mentalities and political psychologies, as a crucial moment of intertwining between national histories and international history, between internal and external contexts, be-

tween state structures and systemic orderings, whose intensity has been recognised as a salient feature of the past century⁴. The approaches taken by the essays in this volume are not homogeneous in method, but they all hold serious implications for grasping the interaction between internal and international history better than has been done to date, avoiding the dichotomy between the "primacy of internal policy" and the imperatives of foreign policy, whether these are connected with the imperial dimension or with revolutionary ideology⁵. In this sense, the war experience may be a paradigm for the history of Soviet Russia, provided that it is seen neither univocally, nor as a mere product of the conceptions and practices of the elites in power, nor as an objective context for justifying to any degree these elites' orientations and behaviour. The observations that follow are aimed at supplying certain elements of comfort for this hypothesis, even if they do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the individual authors, but only those of the editors.

The impact of the external environment and its interaction with the internal context was shaped in Russia by the cycle of wars from 1914 to 1921. Beginning as a traditional war between the Great Powers, the First World War gave rise to a series of revolutions, civil conflicts, and national wars that were not only to bring about the destruction of the old regime and the birth of a new state, but also redrew the essential features of Russia's relationship with the world. The perception of Russian events outside Russia was dominated by the revolutionary nature of the new power, which gave the country an international profile of far greater scope than the pre-Revolutionary Empire could have had, and at the same time determined its isolation. However, the revolutionary ideology forged by Lenin during the years of the World War was not the only determining factor in the new power's policy and practice, nor was it a factor unchangeable over time⁶. This observation is not to diminish the autonomous importance of ideological factors, nor do we underestimate the influence that the vision and plan of civil war as a necessary revolutionary passage had upon Bolshevism. The point is that the Bolsheviks were actors in historical processes only partially created by them, despite their expectations. These processes fed, conditioned or modified their archetypes. Bolshevik ideology presided over diverse and changing concrete choices. Thus, the original ideological motives increasingly became part of a broader political culture, shaped by the experience of Soviet Russia. For some time, the processes born in the crucible of the Civil War have been the subject of mature historiographical reflec-

¹ The analysis of the collective mentalities, the social psychology, and the cultural heritages linked to the reality and legacy of the wars, which has found significant fortune in Western historiography through studies by Paul Fussell, Eric Leed, George Mosse, and Jay Winter, is just starting out in the historiography of contemporary Russia. See, for example, Ye.S. Seniavskaja, *1941-1945 Frontovoe pokolenie. Istoriko-psikhologicheskoe issledovanie*, Moscow, 1995; Id., "Chelovek na voine: opyt istoriko-psikhologicheskoi kharakteristiki rossijskogo kombatanta", *Otechestvennaia Istorii*, 1995, no. 3; *Drugaja Voina 1939-1945*, edited by Yu.N. Afanasev, Moscow 1996.

² On the concept of "total war", see A. Marwick, *War and Social Change in the Twentieth Century*, London 1974; *Total War and Social Change*, edited by A. Marwick, London 1988; *Warfare in the Twentieth Century: Theory and Practice*, edited by C. McInnes and Y.D. Sheffield, London 1988.

³ The concept of the "second Thirty Years' War" can be traced back to Siegmund Neumann's book *The Future in Perspective* (1946), and has been re-proposed in the historiography by A. Mayer, *The Persistence of the Old Regime. Europe to the Great War*, New York 1981. The analogous concept of "European civil war" was re-proposed in a strictly ideological light by E. Nolte, *Der europaische Buergerkrieg 1917-1945. Nationalsozialismus und Bolschewismus*, Frankfurt/Main-Berlin 1987. For use of the same concept in a different and in many ways opposed interpretative context, see E.J. Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes. The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991*, New York, 1994.

⁴ See A.J. Mayer, "Internal Causes and Purposes of War in Europe, 1870-1956", *Journal of Modern History*, 1969, XLI; J.S. Levy, *Domestic Politics and War*, in *The Origin and Prevention of Major Wars*, edited by R.I. Rotberg and T.K. Rabb, New York 1989; K.J. Holsti, *Peace and War: Armed Conflicts and International Order 1648-1989*, New York 1991.

⁵ For criticism of the traditional view of the "primacy of internal policy" in the history of the USSR, see the remarks by D. Lieven, "Western Scholarship on the Rise and Fall of the Soviet Regime: the View from 1993", *Journal of Contemporary History*, 1994, 2. For a discussion of the interaction between internal and external context in the USSR, from the standpoint of comparing the modern empires, see J. Snyder, *Myths of Empire. Domestic Politics and International Ambition*, Ithaca and London 1991.

⁶ A significant study aimed at analysing the role of ideology and the internal institutional context in the origins of Soviet foreign policy is T.J. Ulrick, *Diplomacy and Ideology. The Origins of Soviet Foreign Relations 1917-1930*, London and Beverly Hills 1979.

tion, particularly as regards the militarisation of society and political thought⁷. However, much less reflection has been given to the role of foreign policy and its conceptual foundations in political culture. This role was more meaningful than has often been thought, even after the end of the illusion of expanding the Revolution in Europe and the conversion to "Socialism in one country"⁸.

The essential nucleus of the impact that international relations had on Bolshevik political culture and mentality was the experience and expectation of war. This was the consequence both of the original experience of 1914-21, and of a precise doctrinal element born over those years: the theory of the inevitability of war, a corollary of Lenin's analysis of imperialism and a premise for viewing the outside world as a world not only unstable and conflict-ridden, but implacably aggressive as well⁹. The main consequence of foreign policy, starting from the lesson of self-isolation that the Bolsheviks drew from the Treaty of Brest, was the precept of putting the conflicts between the capitalist powers to the purposes of Soviet power¹⁰. The catastrophe-based, isolationist concept contained in the theory of the inevitability of war and in the consequent outlook for warfare proved extraordinarily persistent. This doctrine was confirmed by the Bolsheviks even during the more pacific and less insecure period in Soviet affairs between the two wars, around the mid-1920s, and was affirmed by Stalin on the eve of the Revolution from above¹¹. It found new legitimacy and exercised its influence in the wake of the international crises leading to the Second World War¹². This persistence underscores the constant conditioning of a mentality stubbornly aimed at seeing confirmations of the original doctrine in international politics, and at conceiving events essentially as the past repeating itself. A similar outlook provided the general coordinates for and, in a number of respects, the language of the USSR's international relations.

However, the role and duration of this conception in Soviet political culture and practice would be difficult to understand without broadening our outlook to a larger landscape: that consisting of the external environment, how the Bolsheviks read and coded its dynamics, and their responses as to Soviet Russia's situation. The unifying feature can probably be seen in an inextinguishable perception of danger, related to the concept of the "state of permanent conflict" and the obstinate tendency to view other states and their interrelationships as an undifferentiated set, which defined

by reflex the separateness and antagonism of the Soviet world¹³. In some circumstances, the perception of menace held by the Soviet political elites was not groundless, particularly in the face of intervention by the Western powers during the Civil War, and subsequently *vis-à-vis* the Nazi menace and the hostile configuration arrayed by most Central European countries in the 1930s. Nevertheless, for the entire interwar period, the Soviets' international vision showed a characteristic mix of real figures and imaginary representations. This gave rise to a constant trend towards misperception and overreaction, which was to interact with the recurring waves of violence and terror from above that struck society and the state apparatuses. This was the setting for the formation and succession, in a ruinous dynamic, of the various stratifications of leading elites, from Revolutionary to Stalinist.

Therefore, this kind of perception of the threat presents a high degree of ambivalence. A significant indicator of this ambivalence lies in the persistent difficulty — despite the archives — of separating instrumentalisation from real, inspiring convictions; the classic example is that of Stalin's exploitation of the war danger in the context of internal political struggle¹⁴ as well as in the context of the "class war" in the campaigns and later, without major interruption, during the Great Terror¹⁵. It is hard for the historian to unravel this problem without taking into account the influence of a dogmatic mentality as well as the conditioning exercised by a perpetual sense of internal fragility and inadequacy in meeting the challenges of world politics. This latter inheritance of the Russian past was emphasised by the disaster of the Great War, and was not reversed under the new regime. It was with an eye towards the future repetition of a conflict potentially catastrophic for the USSR that Stalin reproduced a paradox of Russian history: building a powerful state aimed at projecting its ambitions of power in the international system, on weak and uncertain foundations¹⁶. However, the features of the internal regime and its interaction with the exterior do not appear to be a simple repetition of the Russian past. The inability to achieve a real stabilisation after the Civil War and the consequences of the earthquake caused by the revolution from above produced a syndrome of insecurity that had imposing domestic sources and unprecedented destructive dynamics, which was to sharpen in the uncertain and threatening context of European policy after the rise of Hitler.

⁷ See particularly M. von Hagen, *The Rise and Fall of the Proletarian Sparta: Army, Society, and Reformism in Soviet History*, in *Reexamining the Soviet Experience: Essays in Honor of Alexander Dallin*, edited by N. Naimark and D. Holloway, Boulder, Col., 1996.

⁸ J. Jacobson, *When the Soviet Union Entered World Politics*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1994. For a socio-cultural perspective, see *Rossia i Zapad. Formirovanie vneshnepoliticheskikh stereotipov v soznanii rossiiskogo obshchestva pervoi poloviny XX veka*, Moscow 1998.

⁹ R. Craig Nation, *War on War. Lenin, the Zimmerwald Left, and the Origins of Communist Internationalism*, Durham and London 1989.

¹⁰ R. Debo, *Revolution and Survival. The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia, 1917-18*, Toronto 1979; Id., *Survival and Consolidation: The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia, 1918-1921*, Montreal 1992.

¹¹ A. Di Biagio, *Le origini dell'isolazionismo sovietico. L'Unione sovietica e l'Europa dal 1918 al 1928*, Milan 1990.

¹² S. Pons, *Stalin e la guerra inevitabile, 1936-41*, Turin 1995.

¹³ J. Erickson, *Threat Identification and Strategic Appraisal by the Soviet Union, 1930-1941*, in E.R. May, ed., *Knowing One's Enemies: Intelligence Assessment Between the Two World Wars*, Princeton 1984.

¹⁴ J.P. Sontag, "The Soviet War Scare of 1926-27", *Russian Review*, 1975, 34; A.G. Meyer, "The War Scare of 1927", *Soviet Union/Union Soviétique*, 1978, no. 5; L.N. Nezhinsky, "Byla li voennaia ugroza v kontse 20-kh-nachale 30kh godov?", *Istoriia SSSR*, 1990, no. 6.

¹⁵ S. Fitzpatrick, "The Foreign Threat during the First Five Year Plan", *Soviet Union/Union Soviétique*, 1978, no. 5. See also M. Reiman, *The Birth of Stalinism. The USSR on the Eve of the "Second Revolution"*, Bloomington 1987.

¹⁶ On this paradox of Russian history, see A.J. Rieber, *Persistent Factors in Russian Foreign Policy: an interpretative essay*, in *Imperial Russian Foreign Policy*, edited by H. Ragsdale, New York 1993. For a reflection on analogies between the strategic features of Russian Empire and of the USSR, see W.C. Fuller, Jr., *Strategy and Power in Russia, 1600-1914*, New York 1992.

Soviet foreign-policy responses to the Nazi threat were not univocal, despite the pervasive sense of insecurity. They oscillated between seeking multilateral security in Europe, which in fact rectified their mistrust over Versailles¹⁷, and seeking a unilateral security harking back to the tradition of Rapallo, centred on reaffirming a divisive diplomacy¹⁸. In parallel fashion, the formulation of Communist international policy was in turn to oscillate between the birth of a new anti-Fascist orientation and maintaining the anti-imperialist motif¹⁹; and between the catchphrase of "defending peace" and the outlook of preparing for war²⁰. Each of these responses could claim their own legitimacy in Soviet political culture, but not all had the same relationship with the inheritance of the war experience; anti-Fascism and "collective security" were orientations that implied the reshuffling of the psychosis of encirclement. The contradictions generated by these dilemmas constituted the authentic stuff of Soviet foreign policy in the 1930s. However, the relationship between the regime of the Terror and the inheritance of the war experience had a decisive influence on the Stalinist USSR's policy²¹. The recovery of a notion of power politics connected to the Russian imperial tradition, combined with the launching of a "national" rhetoric, did not obscure the imprint of the war experience. In the late 1930s, Stalin himself presented his rehabilitation of the state in the light of a traditional conflict-based view of international politics, dominated by the category of "capitalist encirclement". In so doing, he manipulated Marxist-Leninist tradition by appealing both to an ideological motif and to a key to reading Soviet Russia's experience in international affairs.

¹⁷ J. Haslam, *The Soviet Union and the Struggle for Collective Security in Europe, 1933-39*, London 1984. On Litvinov's role in the policy of "collective security", see Id., *Litvinov, Stalin, and the Road not Taken*, in G. Gorodetsky, ed., *Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917-1991. A Retrospective*, London 1994; S. Dullin, "Le rôle de Maksime Litvinov dans les années trente", *Communisme*, 1995, 42/43/44.

¹⁸ A distinctive emphasis on the consistency of the search by Stalin for a relationship with Germany can be found in R.C. Tucker, "The Emergence of Stalin's Foreign Policy", *Slavic Review*, 1977, XXXVI; Id., *Stalin in Power. The Revolution from Above, 1928-1941*, New York-London 1990. For a different approach to the issue, based on the USSR's security dilemmas, see T. Uldricks, *Soviet Security Policy in the 1930s*, in *Soviet Foreign Policy 1917-1991*; and also G. Roberts, *The Soviet Union and the Origins of the Second World War. Russo-German Relations and the Road to War, 1933-1941*, London 1995.

¹⁹ E.H. Carr, *The Twilight of Comintern 1930-1935*, London 1982; J. Haslam, "The Comintern and the Origins of the Popular Front, 1934-35", *Historical Journal*, 1979, no. 3; Id., *The Soviet Union, the Comintern, and the Demise of the Popular Front, 1936-39*, in *The Popular Front in Europe*, edited by H. Graham and P. Preston, Basingstoke 1987; S. Pons, *La diplomatie soviétique, l'antifascisme et la guerre civile espagnole*, in *Antifascisme et Nation. Les gauches européennes au temps du Front populaire*, directed by S. Wolikow and A. Bleton-Ruget, Dijon 1998.

²⁰ G. Procacci, *La lotta per la pace nel socialismo internazionale alla vigilia della seconda guerra mondiale*, in *Storia del marxismo*, III/2, Turin 1981; S. Pons, *The Comintern and the Issue of War in the 1930s: the Debate in March-April 1936*, in *Centre and Periphery. The History of the Comintern in the Light of New Documents*, edited by M. Narinsky and J. Rojahn, Amsterdam 1996.

²¹ For the impact of the Great Terror on Narkomindel and Comintern, see T.J. Uldricks, "The Impact of the Great Purges on the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs", *Slavic Review*, 1977, no. 2; F. Firsov, "Stalin i Komintern", *Voprosy Istorii*, 1989, no. 9; K. McDermott, "Stalinist Terror in the Comintern: New Perspectives", *Journal of Contemporary History*, 1995, XXX.

The isolationist and unilateral implications of this strategic thought were intertwined with the emergence of a strong geopolitical stamp and of a clear reference to Russia's past in Stalin's foreign policy during the time of the pact with Hitler²². All this was not to be removed by the resumption of the multilateral security approach during World War II, nor by the outlooks for consolidating the USSR's security positions, which appeared to be opened up by the War's geopolitical and international consequences²³. In Soviet political culture, World War II was to symbolise not only a "patriotic" and anti-Fascist war but also an international civil war and a war for survival falling into the groove of the cycle begun in 1914-21, and not necessarily concluding it. In truth, it may in this light be stated that under Stalin there was a constant intertwining between the theory of the inevitability of war, the appeal to the war experience, and the definition of the USSR's interests: a vicious circle that was never broken, and that helped towards impeding the articulation of security policies or, as it were, identifying foreign policy itself (and its internal foundations) with an exasperated notion of security.

Thus, the influence that ideology had on Soviet policy cannot be ignored without compromising our possibilities for historical understanding. But we cannot merely identify the ideology with the original revolutionary tradition. In other words, we are not dealing with a consistent, organic ideological body on which foreign policy conceptualisations and choices were integrally based, without significant variation over time. Interpretative axioms of the outside world were reproduced in different circumstances of internal and international order which were interdependent with systemic, political and security imperatives, and which sometimes concealed more fleeting and ambiguous stands. In this light, the terms of ideology and realism, which in our eyes still represent an irreducible dichotomy of the Bolsheviks' foreign policy, appear more complex and changing in their meanings than is commonly held. It is probably necessary to forego eliminating one or the other of the two terms from the field of interpretations, and instead to seek to explore more deeply their respective historical meanings.

²² V. Mastny, *Russia's Road to the Cold War. Diplomacy, Warfare, and the Politics of Communism, 1941-1945*, New York 1979. More recently, the recovery of the Russian imperial tradition in Stalin's foreign policy on the eve of World War II has been stressed by G. Gorodetsky, *Grand Delusion. Stalin and the German Invasion of Russia*, New Haven 1999. Russian historiography in more recent years has concentrated mainly on analysing the period from 1939 to 1941 in Stalin's foreign policy, presenting contrasting views as to the classic problem of whether the pact with Nazi Germany was necessary for the purposes of the USSR's security: cf. M.I. Semiriaga, *Tainy stalinskoi diplomatii 1939-1941*, Moscow 1992; V. Sipols, *Tainy diplomaticheskoe. Kanun Velikoi Otechestvennoi 1939-1941*, Moscow 1997; L.A. Bezymensky, "Sovetsko-germanskii dogovory 1939g.: novye dokumenty i starye problemy", *Novata i noveishaia istoriia*, 1998, 3. For a discussion between Russian and Western historians, see the essays collected in *Voina i Politika 1939-1941*, edited by A.O. Chubarian and G. Gorodetsky, Moscow 1999.

²³ Some arguments in this vein are presented in M. McGwire, *National Security and Soviet Foreign Policy, in Origins of the Cold War. An International History*, edited by M.P. Leffler and D.S. Painter, London and New York 1994. For an assessment of the features of Stalin's foreign policy during World War II, see A. Filitov, *The Soviet Union and the Grand Alliance. The Internal Dimension of Foreign Policy, in Soviet Foreign Policy 1917-1991*; L.B. Pozdeeva, *Sovetskii Soiuz: geopoliticheskaia diplomatia*, in *Soiuzniki v voine 1941-1945*, edited by A.O. Chubarian, W.F. Kimball, D. Reynolds, Moscow 1995.

In this way, our focus on the war experience leads us to highlight the complex nature of the interaction between Soviet Russia's internal and international contexts, as it relates to the evolution of political culture, for the entire historical period that marked the formation of the USSR's essential features and its emergence as a great power in world politics. The reader will decide whether and to what extent this collection of essays achieves that objective.

* * *

The relationship between war experience, national identities, and political and state membership appears rich with implications for understanding the original context of Russia's entry in the Age of Wars. Mark von Hagen's contribution reconstructs the process by which the crisis of autocracy was joined during the First World War to the emergence of new forms of national and ethnic identity. The opening of an ideological space, resulting in the weakening of autocratic and dynastic legitimacy, was filled by new forms of national belonging — unstable and fragmentary memberships, which were also fed by the policies of national mobilisation promoted first by the imperial government and then by the provisional one in the attempt to provide more solid foundations for Russia's participation in the conflict. This phenomenon described by von Hagen assumed not only irredentist form (as with the Ukraine), but was also expressed in terms of the new rhetoric for the renewing of the Russian nation, which was to be shared on different sides by the chauvinist, slavophile right and by most of the revolutionary movement. The strengthening of the various national ideas against the backdrop of the weakening of the old foundations for legitimising the imperial regime was to polarise the peripheral leading groups along ethnic/national lines, to spread among the Russian elites feelings of suspicion and mistrust with the continuing military crisis, and to reformulate in new but unstable terms the political and social conflicts that accompanied the final crisis of the old regime and of the provisional government.

The same uncertainty in the ethnic definition of new, national legitimacies during the first world conflict is described by Peter Gatrell. In this sense, he identifies in the movement of the refugees a context fraught with differing and conflicting tensions. On the one hand, the central authorities attempted to use their mobilisation potential to provide a foundation for the new rhetoric of national consciousness (in the case of Russian-nationality refugees); on the other, in the case of the non-Russian nationalities who were also massively affected by the internal migrations, ethnic and cultural ties cutting across internal differentiations (as was the case with the Jewish communities) were strengthened, and measures were adopted to protect against the risks of cultural contamination associated with uprooting and geographical movement. These differentiated tensions, taken together, accompanied the national policy development put into effect during the war years, and above all helped strengthen the feeling of belonging to different political and national communities.

The impact of the war experience on the Russian Empire is the historical setting for interpreting the developments of Bolshevism. This is a recurring historiographical theme, particularly in studies devoted to the revolu-

tionary crisis, which the volume deals with by leaving the problem of state militarisation in the background, and focusing on the relevance of the Bolshevik visions of international reality in the aftermath of the First World War. Of these elements, the vision of Europe is the one that is richer with implications for later Soviet affairs. As Robert Service reads it, the entire parabola of Bolshevism, from its Marxist, anti-populist genesis to the affirmation of the Stalinist formulation of "Socialism in one country", was marked by persistent reference to Germany as the hinge of the vision of Europe. And through this theme the top-level representations of the role of Soviet Russia in Europe took shape. Through the impact of World War I, the affiliation with Germany as fatherland of social democracy took on features of referring to the single national revolution that more than all the others was to grant indispensable maturation to the Soviet experience — even conditioning, as Service sees it, the early years of Soviet Russia's agrarian and military policies, oriented as they were towards preparing the Soviets for lending assistance to a possible Socialist regime in Berlin. Similarly, even the Nazis' coming to power was read by the Stalinist leadership on the basis of the persistence of the German theme — therefore, as a turning point capable of destabilising the order of Versailles and breaking the encirclement of Soviet Russia.

An additional contribution to the reflection on the war experience is provided by Antonella Salomoni's essay focusing on war communism as an autonomously political experience. Choosing to detach Soviet Russia's economic organisation in the Civil War years from the regime's defence needs and the requirements of internal militarisation, Salomoni places war communism within the framework of an economic experiment guided by the ideologies of modernity belonging to the Socialist context at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The essays by Anna Di Biagio and Andrea Romano examine two critical passages for the representation of Soviet Russia's role in the world in the late 1920s. The first is classically defined by Western historiography as the war scare: the 1926-27 crisis in the USSR's international relations, triggered by seriously worsening relations with Great Britain and a European situation fraught with unknowns for the Soviet state. Di Biagio's interpretation concentrates on the discussion which, as the international crisis worsened, developed among the Soviet leadership as to the role of the Communist International and the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs in conducting the Soviet state's international policy. In choosing to considerably reduce Comintern's role as an instrument for the USSR's defence, as the Soviet leadership did with the growing alarm over the international situation, Di Biagio does not see a moderate option prevailing in Soviet foreign policy. Rather it was the abandonment of a strategy to prevent war by means of the political instruments of the international Socialist movement, because pursuing this strategy would have forced the Soviet leadership to operate in alliance with European social democracy in pressuring European governments. But above all, at the test of a truly perceived war alarm such as that of 1926-27, an isolationist option of foreign policy (with a priority of keeping Soviet Russia out of international tensions), quickly joined by the onset of autarkic-type industrial and economic policies, prevailed in Moscow.

Romano's contribution also deals with the "war psychosis", but with a different timeframe. Here, the perception of the war danger appears to be an autonomous element of the political culture of the leading classes, disconnected from the concrete reading of the international scenarios and anchored to the dynamics of social and political conflict that was to mark the Soviet domestic scene between the late 1920s and the early 1930s. As Romano sees it, during the years of the Stalinist Revolution, the regime's leadership formed a particularly alarmed perception of the risks of an external attack against Russia. But this was determined not so much by the international balance of power tilting against Moscow as by a vision of the fragility of the Soviet edifice, caused by the very violence of the internal conflict. It was this awareness of the weak basis for the regime's consensus that pressed upon the Soviet elites a renewed, acute perception of the danger, in the knowledge that any external attack could cause a system already shaken to its very foundations to collapse. This vision of fragility was determined by both political and military leaderships in a symptomatic contamination between the vision of internal policy and Soviet Russia's representation of itself on the international scene. Lastly, this vision of fragility in its more traumatic features was to combine with the formative experience of the Civil War in accentuating the weight of the war psychology in the political culture of the leadership class.

The intertwining of the changing foreign policy options between the 1920s and 1930s and the management of the apparatus by which this policy was conducted is the basic characteristic of the essay by Sabine Dullin. This essay shows the relative autonomy that Maxim Litvinov was able to give to the Soviet diplomatic apparatus during the decade when he was conducting the USSR's foreign policy, based on the strategy of collective security. The weakening of this option, starting in 1936, marked the beginning of the dismantling of the apparatus created by Litvinov; as the conflicts with the NKVD grew, the Soviet diplomatic corps was stricken by the purges and its functional autonomy was drastically reduced. Litvinov's fall in 1939 actually took place long after his substantial loss of influence over the USSR's foreign policy.

The essays by Geoffrey Roberts and Oleg Khlevniuk both focus on the relationship between the perception of external threat and the internal security regime towards the end of the 1930s. Roberts focuses his investigation on the Fascist nature of the threat perceived by Moscow, exploring the various assessments that existed on this point within the Soviet leadership. Here as well, Litvinov appears to promote a more pragmatic reading of the Fascist phenomenon. The winning option of Stalin and Molotov, which was on the contrary marked by interpreting the Fascist threat in the vein of continuity with the imperialist threat of the Civil War, was to set the stage for rearmament and a new strengthening of systemic isolationism. At the centre of Khlevniuk's essay is the Great Terror of 1937-38, reinterpreted through the lens of the Stalinist leadership's perceptions of security; the knowledge of an impending, inevitable war against the USSR characterised not only economic and military policies in the late 1930s, but also the assessment of the degree of Soviet society's political and moral unity. The fear that the enemy could count on the internal support of a considerable portion of Soviet society was a decisive factor in encouraging the Stalinist

leadership to launch the Terror campaign – a full-blown preventive campaign aimed at preventing a "fifth column" opening the way for the enemy in the USSR, as in the Spanish war. On this basis, the Terror appears as an operation carefully planned by the Stalinist leadership and carried out by local operating bodies based on rigorous coordination from the Muscovite centre. Beyond those belonging to the various oppositions within the Party, those stricken were all the segments of society that might have been a factor in weakening Soviet society's "political and moral unity": national minorities, former *kulaki*, and other social groups that in the early 1930s had been victims of the social violence that had accompanied the Stalinist revolution.

The essays by Steven Main, Lennart Samuelson, and Vladimir Pozniakov constitute a single thematic unit centred on the instruments of the Soviet state's internal and external security between the 1920s and 1930s; this not only in an industrial and technological sense, but also regarding aspects related to how the enemy was represented and the hypothetical war scenarios conceived. This is a classical ground for observing the interactions between internal and external policy, particularly as regards the relationships between the view of external world and the functioning of crucial state apparatuses, such as defence. From this standpoint, the three contributions by Main, Samuelson, and Pozniakov make a common, paradoxical observation: between the end of the Civil War and the onset of World War II, the Soviet Union's internal and external security policies were to be impoverished, conceptually and in their efficiency, whenever war psychology dominated representations of national security were to prevail among the political elites.

Main develops this observation with respect to the historiographically classic case of the purges of the Red Army's Officer Corps between 1937 and 1938. His main thesis is that the purges not only brain-drained the Soviet army, but were followed by completely insufficient work to replenish the military's energies of intellect and command. One of the indirect consequences of this was the disappearance from the Soviet scene of high-profile military theorists who, starting in the mid-1920s, had been capable of conceptually highly sophisticated (even as compared with the international debate) elaboration on the features of the future war. Samuelson's essay also moves from the Soviet theoretical reflection on the future war, concentrating on the aspects related to industrial mobilisation. He discusses how Tukhachevsky's work in the 1920s intuited the essential role of industrial mobilisation in the twentieth-century total war, and how, starting in the mid-1920s, he had maintained the need to coordinate economic with military planning. It was this conceptualisation of the foundations of that military/industrial apparatus that was to be among the most enduring features of the mature Soviet system – a form of co-decision between the military and political elites, and not of the military's lobbying over civilians – and was to survive the purges of 1937-38, to re-emerge at the test of 1941 in a form that guaranteed a rapid reconstruction of Soviet defensive capacities after the evacuation of the country's western areas.

The focus of Pozniakov's essay shifts to the intelligence apparatus, in an investigation into the modes by which information originating from the military services influenced the Soviet leadership's perceptions of the

international political and strategic situation between the 1920s and 1930s. Pozniakov identifies two phases: an initial phase in the 1920s, during which a high degree of efficiency in military information was accompanied by a clear representation of the enemy (generally identified with Great Britain) and by just as linear a use of this information to support Soviet foreign policy; and a second phase, from the early 1930s to 1939, in which the increased uncertainty as to identifying the enemy in the international arena set the stage for progressive deterioration of the information's quality.

The final chapter of the *Age of Wars*, the "Great Patriotic War", is the subject of essays by Gabriel Gorodetsky, Vladimir Nevezhin, John Barber, and Silvio Pons. Gorodetsky stresses the rational – rather than ideological – basis for the lines that guided the Stalinist leadership's foreign policy choices on the eve of the Second World War. According to Gorodetsky, these lines were of a classically geopolitical character, in a design aimed basically at keeping Soviet Russia out of the conflict and that took its cue from the interpretation of some passages of Russia's pre-revolutionary foreign policy (such as the Crimean War, or the Turkish War of 1877-78) and their consequences for the Empire's internal policy. Nevezhin places his analysis of the changes in Soviet war propaganda from 1939 to 1941 against a different backdrop: that of the traditionally expansionist and offensive attitude that was to mark the lines of Soviet foreign policy from Lenin onwards. On this basis, support for the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact was aimed basically at weakening French and German imperialism, which was prerequisite for a Soviet offensive strategy in postwar Europe. According to Nevezhin, this backdrop explains most of the contradictions with which Soviet propaganda recorded the shift of axis towards hostility against Nazi Germany – a shift whereby anti-Fascism could only be opposed and limited by the enduring ideological characteristics linked to the anti-imperialist tradition in Soviet foreign policy.

In John Barber's essay, the siege of Leningrad is the occasion for a reflection on the changing profile of the regime's popular consensus during the conflict, and on the roots of some of the persistent features of the postwar relationship between the state and Soviet society. The thesis hinting that the Leningrad tragedy was accompanied by significant reduction of totalitarian pressure is not supported by evidence. According to Barber, the siege did not prevent the internal security regime from maintaining its grip on society, while in terms of popular perceptions, the power continued to be experienced mainly in its despotic features. Beyond the topos of the Great World War as a source of new legitimisation for Stalin's regime, which in this case is not denied, Barber inquires as to how the trauma of the conflict's human costs weighed on postwar relations between the state and society. The war experience, suffered in Leningrad in its dimension of maximum tragedy, was the final source of disillusionment with the potentials of the Soviet regime. But at the same time, it served as a deterrent against society's aspirations for change: where the War generated pressure to overturn the regime, the vast scale of human devastation that it brought served as a factor of mortification and collective resignation. According to Barber, this was the real basis for the Soviet regime's survival after the conflict.

The essay by Silvio Pons concludes the volume with a reflection on the impact of World War II on the security paradigm that in 1939 had motivated the Stalinist leadership's foreign policy: a paradigm marked by the combination of a renewed isolationist tradition and an all-inclusive concept of internal security, which had first emptied of meaning and then replaced the paradigm of collective security. Pons's investigation is developed in two contexts: the diplomatic plans for the USSR's postwar role in Europe, and the internal ideological scheming on the foundations of national interests. Different options emerged about a re-assessment of foreign and security policy, in particular as to whether or not to maintain pre-war strategies of isolationism. However, neither context for discussion removed the persistence of the territorial security paradigm in the views of the Soviet leadership: an element of continuity which after 1945 was to quite significantly limit the Soviet leaders' ability to conceive European reconstruction in terms other than what occurred after World War I, which is to say as a transitory, unbalanced process, with no foundations of stability or consensus. The propensity of the Soviet leadership groups to view international policy as an inextinguishable conflict caused the Second World War to be seen as just one chapter in an age of catastrophes: a perception that put down its roots in the prewar period and was to prove more tenacious than any tendency towards conceptual and political change.

tant to make use of the Comintern as a tool for the defence of Soviet security. The motives for this reluctance were many and varied. They lay partly in the profound political and theoretical implications which using the Comintern as an instrument for the defence of the Soviet Union would have produced: it would have been necessary to substantially re-think Leninist doctrine on war, and a willingness to consider the idea that it was possible to prevent (or at least, delay) war by exerting pressure on "bourgeois" governments, and to do so in close alliance with the Social Democrats. "Class" interpretation of war, on the other hand, left little room for prevention of war. Rejection of the social democrat notion of "social peace" left even less. Acceptance of the idea of social peace was a logical corollary of international peace. But social peace meant giving up the idea of "class struggle" and accepting that it was necessary to work towards international stability rather than overthrow of the international order. To fit the idea of diplomatic manoeuvre into the Marxist doctrine and political practice of the Comintern would have implied laying aside those revolutionary and internationalist principles which constituted its very *raison d'être*.

In any case, Moscow had no interest in accepting the Comintern among the tools to defend its security because it quickly recognised that it could not control it otherwise than with difficulty, nor turn it into an unconditionally loyal subordinate. It was, after all, necessary that the Communist Parties should have a relative autonomy if they were to organise effective mass action on behalf of the Soviet state in their respective countries. Furthermore, coordination between the Comintern and the NKID would have worsened, rather than solved, Moscow's problem of presenting two separate faces to the external world. It would also have tied its hands in foreign policy, reducing the effectiveness of its diplomatic manoeuvres – given the revolutionary spirit the Comintern would presumably have injected.

In the end, therefore, Moscow opted for isolationism. In domestic policies, this meant an autarkic industrial and economic policy, and in foreign policy it implied trying to avoid all involvement in international conflicts. In this context it was inevitable that the Comintern should work in strict subordination to Politburo defence policy, to the extent that it became a tool of the latter. There were various ways in which the Comintern could have been imagined as an instrument for the defence of the USSR. The only feasible way, however, seemed to be to turn it into a purely propagandist organisation with limited aims – feeding the myth that there was "growing sympathy among the working class" of foreign countries for the USSR⁶⁷, for example, or organising agitation and disturbance when it suited Moscow and Soviet national interests. In reality, this was not a real choice between the various possibilities available. Moscow leaders were extremely careful to avoid the Comintern turning into a political tool for preventing conflicts of all kinds. By the end of the 1920s Soviet leaders thought of the Comintern as "a great burden they cannot get rid of"⁶⁸.

⁶⁷ The creating of this myth was criticised by Rakovsky at the 15th Congress (*Piatnadsatsyi sezd VKP(b)*, I (1961), p. 210).

⁶⁸ This statement was attributed to Togliatti in an anonymous report on the proceedings of the 6th Comintern Congress sent to Trotsky (cited by Carr, *A History of Soviet Russia. Foundations*, Italian translation p. 201).

Permanent War Scare: Mobilisation, Militarisation and Peasant War

Andrea Romano

The constant presence of war scare in Soviet policy during the "Stalinist revolution" has often been remarked upon by Western historians. Two kinds of interpretation of the phenomenon have traditionally been given: some commentators have stressed the leadership's desire to push through modernisation in order to free the country from the danger of encirclement by the capitalist nations¹. (We may recall Stalin's famous dictum that the USSR would be "defeated" by the external forces unless it managed, within ten years, to make up the gap of fifty or a hundred years which divided it from the most advanced countries².) The second kind of explanation refers to internecine struggle within the party (the paradigmatic case here is the use of the 1927 scare against Bukharin³), or to the need to mobilise the population which accompanied the first five-year plan (the threat from outside helping to weld people together and provide the authorities with legitimacy⁴). Both these approaches focus on crucial aspects of the Stalinist system and see war scare as having roots *outside* the leadership's perception of the danger of war, viewing it as essentially instrumental – a weapon in the leadership's arsenal helping it to pursue industrialisation, dominance in the party, mobilisation of the nation, etc.

The aim of this paper is to suggest that "war scare" (in the sense of a constant presence of the "threat of war" theme exercising a general influence on numerous aspects of domestic policy) was a factor which had an autonomy of its own at the time of the decisive social and political struggle over full collectivisation. So I will ask how the threat of war was perceived by the Soviet leadership, what ideas filtered through about the conflict be-

¹ The classic example of this interpretation is R.C. Tucker, *Stalin in Power. The Revolution from Above, 1928-1941*, London and New York 1990.

² "Compared to the advanced countries, we are fifty or a hundred years behind. We must make up this gap in ten years. If we do not manage this we will find our road blocked". I. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 13, Moscow 1951, p. 39.

³ Cf. A. Di Biagio, *Le origini dell'isolazionismo sovietico. L'Unione sovietica e l'Europa dal 1918 al 1928*, Milan 1990, pp. 211-40.

⁴ Sheila Fitzpatrick's work exemplifies this kind of explanation: a synthesis of her ideas is given in "The Foreign Threat during the First Five-Year Plan", *Soviet Union-Union Soviétique*, 1978, V, pp. 26-35.