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# Stalin at War, 1918–1953

## Patterns of Violence and Foreign Threat*

ABSTRACT: Joseph Stalin, dictator of the Soviet Union from the 1920s to his death in 1953, often invoked the specter of war. For some reason, however, we have never taken those invocations seriously. We have always understood them as a manipulative device, either to gain political advantage over his opponents, to mobilize the population, to deflect blame for ill-advised and extreme policies, or in some other way to consolidate the dictator's power. This article argues that the dictator's expectations of war were not just discursive or rhetorical, as most histories argue. In fact, Stalin's perceptions of external threat were inextricably intertwined with internal policies of mass repression, as well as campaigns of industrial mobilization. This article examines the patterns of radicalized internal violence that so characterized the Stalinist regime, and connects them to the dictator's perceptions of war and foreign threat. Discussion focuses on the crisis years 1927–1932, 1936–1939, the Great Patriotic War, and the last war crisis period, 1946–1952. Violent repressions under Stalin were cyclical, peaking and ebbing but, in each case, they were linked to Stalin's expectation of war and invasion, and they followed a pattern established during the dictator's experience as a military commander in the Russian revolutionary and civil wars, from 1918 to 1920. This article examines those links, and it compares the cyclical character of Stalinist repression to the pattern of cumulative radicalization of violence under the German National Socialist regime.
*Keywords*: Soviet Union – Stalin, Iosif V. – Foreign Policy – Political violence – 1920s – 1930s – 1940s – 1950s

Stalinism is one of those topics that has been studied from nearly every angle, and this is true especially of studies about violent repression during the Stalinist era. Scholars have built careers writing about one or the other of these episodes: the collectivization and dekulakization campaigns of the late 1920s and early 1930s; the famine of the early 1930s, especially the Ukrainian Holodomor; the political purges and mass operations

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of the late 1930s; the national deportations of the 1940s; and the anti-Jewish policies of late Stalinism. Nearly every aspect of these campaigns of violence has been analyzed, documented, dissected, and discussed. And re-discussed. The same is true of the history of Soviet foreign policy, from the Treaties of Brest-Litovsk and Riga to Stalin's complex maneuverings in the post-1945 world. In the last fifteen to twenty years, since the post-Soviet expansion of archive access, all manner of studies have appeared, both overviews and focused monographs, that examine Soviet perceptions of and struggles with the outside world.

What is missing from this plethora of works is the step back. Few have attempted to draw away some distance to try to discern patterns that might connect Stalinist paroxysms of violence with the vicissitudes of Soviet foreign policy. The traditional and still largely accepted view is that the Stalin leadership invoked war scares either to gain advantage over political opponents, to mobilize the population, to deflect blame for ill-advised and extreme policies, or in some other way to consolidate the dictator's power. In the traditional view, Stalin's manipulation of war scares was entirely cynical. He subordinated foreign policy, and particularly the threat of war, to his domestic political goals, especially the fight against perceived oppositionists.[1] In his classic biography of Stalin, Robert Tucker challenged this view. He concluded that Stalin truly believed in the threat of capitalist encirclement, hence explaining the massive Soviet industrial military buildup, even though Tucker agreed with traditional accounts that no coordinated plans or discussions existed to invade Soviet territory.[2] More recently, some scholars have connected specific episodes of domestic mass repression to the foreign context, most notably in histories of collectivization during the early 1930s and the mass repressions of the late 1930s.[3] Even these histories, though, focus on singular events or episodes. To date, no study has attempted to connect the cyclical patterns of violence perpetrated under Stalin with the waxing and waning of fears about invasion. Stalin certainly knew how to manipulate circumstances to his political advantage, but, as this article argues, the dictator's expectation of war was not just discursive or manipulative, as older histories assume. The Soviet leader was obsessed by the prospect that spies and insurgents were undermining the country from within, in conjunction with foreign powers, which were plotting from without. In fact, internal policies of mass repression, as well as campaigns of industrial mobilization, were inextricably intertwined with Sta-

1 For a classic statement of this view, see DANILOV K istorii stalinskogo terrora. In this account, Danilov argues that Stalin 'manipulated' war scares purely for purposes of domestic power and policy.

2 TUCKER Stalin in Power; TUCKER The Emergence of Stalin's Foreign Policy; HARRIS Encircled by enemies.

3 On collectivization, see, most importantly, ROMANO Permanent War Scare, and SIMONOV The "war scare" of 1927. Simonov makes an argument similar to that put forward earlier by BOETTICHER Industrialisierungspolitik und Verteidigungskonzeption. Both argue that defense buildup during the late 1920s resulted not so much from fear of invasion as a response to the fear that collectivization would lead to an internal civil war which, in turn, might invite intervention. On 1937/1938 see KHLEVNIUK The Reasons for the "Great Terror"; KUROMIYA Stalin's Great Terror and International Espionage; KUROMIYA/PEPLOŃSKI The Great Terror. Polish-Japanese Connections; ONS Stalin and the Inevitable War; WHITEWOOD The Red Army and the Great Terror.

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lin's perceptions of external threat. The waves of repression that Stalin launched inside the country coincided with periods of intense military-industrial buildup, and neither can be understood or fully explained without reference to Stalin's expectations of foreign intervention. This article examines patterns of violent domestic repression under Stalin, and it does so through the lens of war and the concern about invasion.

War was a constant motif for all the early Bolshevik leaders. All expressed belief in some inevitable conflict with hostile capitalist powers. Stalin shared this world view, but his obsession focused on specific threats from specific countries or alliances in specific circumstances; his was an obsession with specific threats, and grew out of real-life experience during the revolutionary and civil war years when Stalin was a field commander on the southern and western fronts from 1918 to 1920. All the elements that influenced Stalin's later strategies were present in that war: the obsession with spies and saboteurs working behind the lines, his distrust and repression of military and other specialists, and an obsession with securing the country's borders and defenses rather than spreading revolution. Stalin did not control policy during the revolutionary war era, but he applied the lessons he learned then to later crises. As he consolidated power, Stalin structured an information, intelligence, and repressive system – a whole regime – based on the expectation of war, and the mechanisms of his rule reinforced his real and concocted perceptions.[4] The scenarios of war and insurgency varied over the decades, but this single obsession runs like a red thread through the dictator's rule. Stalin was 'at war' – either involved in actual war, or mobilizing and preparing for imminent war – for much of his reign, from the time he put on his commander's tunic in 1918 until he was buried in his marshal's uniform in 1953.

Faced with war, or imminent war, Stalin reacted along three lines: violent internal repression to secure the domestic rear against spies and insurgents, rapid military and industrial mobilization, and intense international negotiations to prevent war or to gain time for preparation. The periods of war crisis coincided closely with the episodes of radical internal violence and mobilization that have become a hallmark of Stalinist rule – 1) the era of the first five-year plan, 1928 through 1932; 2) the crisis years, late 1936 to autumn 1939; 3) the years of the Great Patriotic War; and 4) the period from 1946 through the early 1950s. War, or the expectation of war, explains both the timing of repressions during these periods, and the groups targeted for repression. Violent repression under Stalin was cyclical, peaking and ebbing but, in each case, it was linked to Stalin's perceptions of hostile powers and their intentions to destroy the Soviet Union. This study explores those links.

4 On the self-reinforcing character of Stalin's information 'system', see, most recently, DAVIES/HARRIS Stalin's World.

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## Poland and the Crisis of War

Stalin's experience of war – his formative experience – occurred as military commander of Bolshevik forces, mostly in southern and western Russia from 1918 through 1920. Much of that experience involved the back and forth war with Poland that spanned Ukraine, Belorussia, and Galicia. That war ended inconclusively with the Treaty of Riga in 1921, which demilitarized the stalemate in the Bolshevik-Polish war, but which satisfied neither side. Each side remained wary of the other, and Bolshevik leaders, in particular, feared a renewal of hostilities from the Polish side. In 1922, just one year after signing the treaty of Riga, Sergei Kamenev, head of the Soviet military council, issued a statement about Polish and Romanian preparations for renewing an attack against the Soviet Union, with the hope of annexing Ukraine and Belorussia.[5] That assessment was based on information gathered by Feliks Dzerzhinskii, head of the OGPU, himself of Polish origin, and a former classmate of the Polish general Józef Piłsudski. Piłsudski, of course, commanded the Polish forces that routed the Russian Bolshevik armies at the battle of Warsaw, in 1920, and then drove the Bolsheviks out of Poland. Piłsudski headed the new Polish state from 1918 to 1922 as President, and then became its de-facto military dictator from 1926 until his death in 1935. Dzerzhinskii warned continuously about war with Poland, not only in 1922, but again just before his death in July 1926.[6] Throughout the 1920s, Soviet leaders, in general, worried about a scenario in which Poland, in alliance with Romania and possibly the Baltic states, and with the backing of Britain and France, would either invade Ukraine directly, or provoke a war.[7]

The possibility of war with Poland was especially acute for Stalin, who fought the Poles in Ukraine and parts of Galicia in 1919 and 1920, as commander of the Southwestern front. Poised with his forces near Lviv, Stalin opposed a direct assault on Warsaw in 1920. Most Bolshevik leaders, including Lenin, Lev Trotskii, Commissar of War, and Mikhail Tukhachevskii, who headed the Warsaw front, believed that capture of Warsaw would spark a general European wide revolution. Through Warsaw to Berlin was Tukhachevskii's famous phrase. Stalin believed that this was a dangerous fantasy. In contrast, he advocated for an incursion into Galicia, not to spread revolution, but as a military strategy to extend the new Soviet republic's borders and to end the Polish war.[8] Stalin's idea was to weaken Poland by cutting cut off that important region, and forcing the Poles to sue for peace from a weak position. If the Bolsheviks did not end the war in a position of strength, he believed, Poland would never accept the inclusion of western Ukraine within a Soviet socialist republic. Stalin was overruled, of course, and the Warsaw fiasco ensued, leading to a Bolshevik route and to a treaty signed from a position of Bolshevik compromise. Stalin regarded Lenin's settlement with Poland in 1921 as a

5 RGASPI, f. 558, op. 1, d. 2326, ll. 1–1ob.

6 11 July memorandum to Stalin. RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 726, ll. 56–56 ob. Published in KHAUSTOV/NAUMOV/PLOTNIKOVA Lubianka (2003), p. 118.

7 KEN/RUPASOV Zapadnoe prigranich'e, p. 79–82; TVSHN "Voennaia trevoga", 1927.

8 RIEBER Stalin and the Struggle, 57.

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stop-gap measure, a hostile cease fire at best. Stalin understood that war with Poland was not finished.[9]

This inconclusive war with Poland, and the conviction that it was not finished, figured prominently in Stalin's calculations for the following ten to twelve years. As Oleg Ken argues, the scenario of renewed war with Poland provided a major framework for nearly all foreign policy initiatives, and this was true for domestic considerations, as well, during the 1920s. Unlike E. H. Carr, Ken argues that Germany was not the navigating star of Soviet foreign policy. The 1920s Bolsheviks were as much concerned about their borderlands, and Poland was a key focus of their foreign policy and security concerns.[10] Both Molotov and Stalin opposed Maxim Litvinov's advice to orient policy around Germany. Throughout the 1920s, Stalin in particular, focused much of his attention on Poland.[11]

The murder of the Soviet envoy, Petr Voikov, in Warsaw, in early June 1927, only confirmed to Stalin what he already believed. The foreign affairs commissar, Chicherin, believed Voikov's murder was a singular act by a deranged former white guard soldier, but Stalin saw it as part of a broader pattern of provocation. This he communicated to Molotov the day after receiving the news of the murder. In a now well known telegram, Stalin advised Molotov, confidentially, that he sensed Britain's involvement in the murder in an attempt to provoke war. According to Stalin, the incident provided a justification for the 'rout' of all monarchist and white guardist cells supposedly operating under Polish command in the USSR. Given the Polish-English provocation, immediate mass purge was necessary, he concluded, to "strengthen our own rear areas".[12]

Stalin's suspicions triggered the first 'mass operation' of repression by the political police, the OGPU, since the civil war. Voikov was murdered on 7 June. By 10 June, the OGPU had summarily executed twenty former notables. Overall, during the 'June Operation', political police organs conducted over 20,000 searches and arrested at least 9,000 individuals. Not surprisingly, most of the focus of the purge was on Ukraine, bordering on Poland, and the North Caucasus, which had been a stronghold of Mensheviks during the civil war.[13]

Given Stalin's civil war experience, it is not surprising that he should interpret Voikov's murder as part of a Polish war plot. It fit seamlessly into his understanding of the post-1920–1921 world. The expectation of war with Poland also makes sense of and ties together other episodes, which otherwise seem puzzling and isolated, and even nonsensical. These include the Shakty trial of industrial engineers in 1928 and, more broadly,

9 On Stalin's strategy to take Galicia before peace negotiations, see, for example, RGASPI, f. 558, op. 1, d. 1737, ll. 1–2; RGASPI, f. 558, op. 1, d. 1481, ll. 1–4; RGASPI, f. [illegible], op. 1, d. 1833, ll. 1–5. On Stalin taking a position against any deep incursion into Poland, see RIEBER Stalin and the Struggle, 57; KOTKIN Stalin, pp. 357–358.

10 Ken Collective Security.

11 Ken Collective Security, p. 14.

12 RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 71, ll. 2–3; KHLUSTYUK, [illegible], p. 133.

13 DANILOV K istorii stalinskogo terrora, pp. 310–312. In his account, Danilov noted the similarities between 1927 and the Great Terror of 1937–1938, but [illegible] connection to Stalin's civil war experience.

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the investigation of the Donugol and Glavmetal administrations that culminated in both the Industrial Party and Menshevik trials in late 1930 and early 1931.

These trials and repressions have usually been interpreted as fabrications within two related contexts: Stalin's struggles against his political rivals and, relatedly, as a means to distract the population, to deflect blame for the excesses of collectivization policies and the blunders and wastes of the industrialization drive.[14] There is no doubt that these trials were fabrications, but there is ample reason to think that Stalin believed his own fictions. In Stalin's thinking, all of these repressions were linked to the scenario of foreign intervention, particularly Polish intervention. Indeed, there was a perverse logic in these repressions when seen against the backdrop of war. In particular, the connection to war makes sense of Stalin's micromanagement of political police investigations. During the interrogations leading up to the Industrial Party trial, Stalin wrote to Menzhinskii, the head of the OGPU, ordering him to press the defendants especially hard about the timing of an invasion, and especially about its supposed delay. In a letter from October 1930, Stalin wanted to know why Poland and its allies postponed an intervention that Stalin believed would come that year. "Is Poland not ready? Is Romania not ready? Maybe, because the [Baltic] states have not yet joined with Poland? […] What does it mean to say (according to Ramzin's interrogation) that intervention 'can' be postponed?" Stalin pressed Menzhinskii to determine if the invasion would come in 1931, or possibly as late as 1932. Stalin urged his OGPU chief to try to obtain coherent, clear statements from the defendants that could be publicized in the "widest" way. Doing this, he insisted, would allow the Soviet Union to "paralyze [and] undermine attempts at intervention for the next year or two, which is not unimportant for us".[15]

This kind of precise and urgent demand makes little sense as part of a calculated strategy to isolate or discredit political opponents. It does make sense against the backdrop of a decade of war and a hostile ceasefire with Poland. It also makes sense given the accumulations of events, especially in 1926, and what Stalin was reading. Stalin knew, for example, about the secret protocols signed in March of that year by the Romanian and Polish general staffs to provide mutual support in case of war with the USSR. Then, in April, Genrikh Iagoda, assistant head of the OGPU, reported on intensified activity by Polish agents and insurgents in Ukraine and Belorussia.[16] Piłsudski came to power in Poland in May, and his coup brought the possibility of war a step closer to concrete reality. Based on these events, Dzerzhinskii wrote his letter in July warning of imminent invasion. In 1927, the murder of Voikov and the rupture of relations with Britain reinforced the impression that Poland and Britain were conniving in provocations for war. In August 1928, Stalin received yet another intelligence report from the foreign section of the OGPU that purported to give precise proof that Poland and Britain were planning military intervention to begin in January 1929. This report even gave details of Polish strategy, first to sweep into right-bank Ukraine, with the expectation that Soviet

14 Most recently, see KOTKIN Stalin, pp. [illegible].
15 KHAUSTOV/NAUMOV/PLOTNIKOVA Lubianka, 2003, pp. 255–257.
16 KHAUSTOV/NAUMOV/PLOTNIKOVA Lubianka, 2004, pp. 117–118.

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forces would fall back to regroup for a counterattack. Bolshevik forces had employed this tactic successfully in 1919 and 1920 to drive the Poles back out of Lviv and further west. To avoid that same scenario, the report detailed how, once securing the western half of Ukraine, Poland would then invoke the British to blockade the North Sea, and the Romanians to drive south with the Poles to take Odessa.[17] Such a report would have seemed plausible to Stalin, since he already knew fairly precisely (also from intelligence reports) how much Poland had spent to modernize its chemical, munitions, and military transport and logistics capabilities since the 1920 war. Those expenditures were considerable, including the purchase of Italian Fiat and American Ford military manufacturing.[18] Throughout 1929, Stalin received intelligence reports from various sources about Poland's intention to go to war with the Soviet Union: in October 1929, for example, from agents placed within the Turkish General Staff:

> "The Turkish General Staff has received intelligence [svedeniia] from Germany, Poland, and England that war between the USSR and Poland will happen in 1930. Poland is seriously preparing for war [...] Rumors are circulating also among the Moscow [military] attachés about a war coming soon [Stalin's underlining] [...] according to the Japanese military attaché in Turkey, there may soon be war between the Finns and the USSR in the north, and Turkey in the south, but that most likely there will be war with Poland."[19]

Against the backdrop of such information, Stalin's urgent missive to Menzhinskii about invasion plans takes on a particular significance. In Stalin's view, every year delay was crucial in allowing the country to strengthen itself. If the anti-Soviet coalition was forced to postpone invasion plans, that was a sign to Stalin that his policies of massive industrial and agricultural mobilization were the correct policies. It seems reasonable to argue that Stalin's rush to industrialize and collectivize was not motivated by an unexplained hasty penchant for results, or by some ideological principle. To modernize was certainly socialist. To collectivize was also socialist. It was the pathological forcing that needs to be explained, and that seems most explicable within the context of Stalin's expectation of invasion.

Other clues also give insight into Stalin's possible mental landscape, which, in the 1920s and early 1930s, was still the landscape of the civil war, the landscape of 1919 and 1920. Convinced that war with Poland was a likely proposition, the Politbiuro, in June 1927, passed a secret resolution, put forward by Kliment Voroshilov, to create special military units to intercept Polish raiding parties crossing over the border. These units were to be patterned on the same kind of formations created during the war with Poland in 1919.[20] Emendations to the first five-year plan also called for a steep increase in military

17 KHAUSTOV/UL'/ZAKHAROV Glazami razvedki, pp. 261–[illegible].

18 KHAUSTOV/UL'/ZAKHAROV Glazami razvedki, pp. [illegible].

19 RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 184, ll. 45–45 ob. In fact, much of the speculation about war at the time revolved around European diplomatic rumors [illegible] the USSR would take unilateral action against Romania, for supposedly occupying Soviet territory in Bessarabia. [illegible] careful track of this speculation. RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 184, ll. 53–93.

20 KHAUSTOV/NAUMOV/PLOTNIKOVA Lubianka, 1[illegible], note 56.

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industrial spending, and Stalin was especially insistent on purging the military industrial branches of weak leaders.[21] In a letter to Molotov in September 1930, Stalin again expressed his concern about war, especially against a block of Baltic countries, headed by Poland. If Poland succeeded in creating such a block, then there would most likely be an invasion, he insisted. As a result, Stalin called for an increase in army strength by nearly one-third, from 640,000 to 700,000. Without such an increase, Stalin claimed that the country could not guarantee the defense of Leningrad or Right Bank Ukraine.[22] In each of these scenarios, Stalin reached back to his civil war experiences to understand the realities he thought he faced.

Not content with defense measures and internal repression, Stalin moved on the diplomatic front, as well. In 1931, Stalin reopened negotiations with the Polish government for a non-aggression treaty. The Soviet Union had initiated these negotiations in 1926, but suspended them in 1927 after Voikov's murder. In the summer of 1931, however, Stalin understood that it was imperative to come to some kind of arrangement. After a year of exchanges, Polish and Soviet diplomats signed a treaty in July, 1932, and it took effect in late December. The Polish agreement came amidst a series of non-aggression treaties in those years, with France, also in November 1932, with Latvia, Lithuania, Finland, Estonia, and Romania, all in 1931 and 1932.[23]

## The War against the Peasants

Signing the Polish treaty came at a crucial moment in the rural collectivization campaigns. This was no coincidence, since the two issues – collectivization and the Polish war threat – were closely related, overlapping fronts in two ongoing wars.[24] One war involved a potential conflict with Poland and loss of Ukraine. The second war, more specifically domestic, involved the Bolsheviks' ongoing war with the peasantry. The return to forced requisitioning in the countryside in 1928, and the collectivization and dekulakization campaigns that followed were, as several historians have argued, part of war, a war that was put on hold in 1920 and 1921, and to which Stalin returned in 1929.[25]

Contemporaries understood this clearly. In his diary, the writer M. M. Prishvin noted that the whole *piatiletka* (Five-year plan) was a war. Living in Sergiev Posad, a rural town not far from Moscow, Prishvin witnessed the effect of the regime's policies in the villages and countryside. He described the procurement campaign as the "preliminary

21 On other measures to mobilize the army and military industry, see SIMONOV "Krepit' oboronu"; KEN Zapadnoe prigranich'e, p. 81.

22 KOSHELEVA [et al.]: Pis'ma I. V. Stalinia V. M. Molotovu, pp. 209–210. Stalin insisted unashamedly that they pay for this by an increase in vodka production. [illegible]BER Stalin and the Struggle, p. 124.

23 See the telegram from I. M. Maiskii to M. M. Litvinov from 5 December, 1932, congratulating Litvinov on the success of these treaties. http://doc20[illegible]/pe?e/1842[illegible]1.10.2016).

24 SNYDER Covert Polish Missions.

25 GRAZIOSI Great Soviet Peasant War; [illegible]OLA Peasant Revolts, especially p. 39: "For Soviet power, peasant culture became yet another enemy to be [illegible]mined", and p. 109 on the civil war "culture" of the first five-year plan. See also VIOLA/DANILOV/IVNITSKII (War against the Peasantry.

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artillery bombardment" by the Bolsheviks in their ongoing war with the peasants, before the main "attack" of dekulakization. Prishvin, among others, understood the connection between 1921 and 1930, that the five-year plan was a resumption of the civil war. "Now, following the [actions of the] Bolsheviks", he wrote, "everyone understands that all this can only end in war. The Bolsheviks held to this view for twelve years. The only question is when we will have to drink from this cup of sorrow."[26]

The argument connecting collectivization and the civil war is well known, but it needs to be emphasized, and explicitly connected to the ongoing difficulties with Poland. Both of these war crises were connected, and had roots in the civil war. By 1920 and 1921, the Bolsheviks had defeated the various military opposition forces ranged against them, but they were stalemated in deadlock against both the Poles and against the country's peasants. Ukraine is where the two wars connected, since the Poles supported Ukrainian independence from Moscow and, as Andrea Graziosi has argued, Ukrainian nationalism was centered in the peasant movements and their resistance to the Moscow Bolsheviks. As commander of the southern front, Stalin fought against both the Poles and the (Ukrainian) peasants. Lenin came to terms with both, in the form of a ceasefire with Poland, and with the semi-capitalist policies of NEP in Soviet Russia. Bolsheviks understood both of these actions as compromise, as a retreat. Like most leaders, Stalin acquiesced and, until 1927, he played a moderating role in the Politbiuro. The procurement crisis of that year, however, and the simultaneous renewal of tensions with Poland, brought him to the conclusion that it was time to resolve both questions. To Stalin, the situation in 1927 and 1928 looked similar to the situation in 1920 and 1921. This time, however, the Soviet state was better prepared to settle the war with the peasants, if not a possible war with Poland.[27]

As Stalin launched a mass purge of groups inside the Soviet Union in possible collusion with the Poles, he also began measures to reopen the front against the peasants. And, again, in Ukraine, the two were linked. This is why Stalin steered the investigation against the Industrial Party group toward Poland. In the meantime, the OGPU fed Stalin numerous reports about Ukrainian peasant resistance to collectivization being the work of Polish agents. Here was the classic motif for Stalin, which appeared over and over, and which stemmed from his civil war experience: invasion from abroad in collusion with subversion at home by some category of the population. Certainly, Stalin was motivated by socialist ideology as he launched collectivization. Certainly, creation and repression of the so-called Right Deviation among the moderate leadership helped Stalin consolidate his power, as did the various opposition trials of the period. At the same time, these repressions, and collectivization, were not just about ideology or personal power; they were mainly about war, and mobilization for war.

Concern about renewed war with Poland was central to the intensifying debates about agrarian (and industrial) policies inside the country. Debates within the leadership about the procurement crisis of 1927, in 1928, and collectivization in 1928 and 1929,

26 PRISHVIN Dnevniki, p. 43.

27 STALIN K Voprosam agrarnoi politiki, [illegible]

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boiled down to debates about levers of mobilization and control in what was widely perceived as a pre-war emergency.[28] In the eyes of a number of leaders, the policies of NEP had shifted resources and capital to those very segments of the population hostile to the state, namely, the peasants. By 1927, it was clear to all Bolshevik leaders that the peasantry was withdrawing from interaction with the state, withholding their grain and taxes, and reverting back to their autonomous agrarian community life. This situation was the prophecy coming true of the left communists in 1920 and 1921, and whether this was for economic or political reasons did not matter. The disconnection of the peasantry from state markets not only limited the regime's economic maneuverability, it severely disrupted plans for increased industrial modernization. It is no coincidence that these debates, from 1927 to 1929, took place at the height of a multi-year war crisis. The fear of war was not just Stalin's unique fantasy.

The sense of war crisis reached its peak between spring 1930 and summer 1932. As most historians describe, the initial "assault" on the peasantry was a success, from late 1929 through the winter of 1930. Employing tactics used in the civil war, the regime was able to exploit long-standing divisions within rural society to turn poor peasants and marginal populations against the more successful strata of farmer-peasants. Through dekulakization, the regime succeeded in removing close to 2.5 million peasants from villages, many of these the most active economically, politically, and socially.[29] After this initial success, however, confrontation with the countryside stalemated, as it had in 1920. In early spring 1930, Stalin published his famous "dizzy with success" article, blaming the harsh collectivization drives on excesses by over zealous local officials. This article signaled a temporary retreat from the initial and harsh campaign of collectivization and dekulakization. Many peasants mistakenly saw this temporary retreat as a victory, although, as Alfred Rieber has noted, Stalin's retreat was most likely prompted by concern about possible uprisings in Ukraine accompanied by Polish invasion.[30] This interpretation is bolstered by Stalin's correspondence with Molotov, noted above, about fear of a Baltic coalition against the Soviet Union. In any case, Stalin's March 1930 article prompted a mass exodus of peasants from collective farms, and ushered in a period of passive resistance to state policies.[31] Passive resistance denied the state its ability to confront militant insurgent groups in open and decisive conflict, and this dangerous stalemate on the country's western borders continued into 1931.

In September of that year, with tensions strained in the countryside, and between Poland and the USSR, Stalin's attention was drawn suddenly east, and to the prospect of war with Japan. In that month, Japanese forces entered China, moved across Manchuria, and threatened the Soviet eastern borders. Through intercepted dispatches, Stalin was aware that certain groups in the Japanese military and diplomatic corps favored imme-

28 See, for example, discussion at the July 1928 Central Committee plenary meetings, DANILOV/MANNING/VIOLA Tragediia sovetskoi derevni, T. 1, pp. [illegible]

29 GRAZIOSI Great Soviet Peasant War, p. 51; VIOLA Peasant Rebels, pp. 28, 37; DANILOV K istorii stalinskogo terrora, p. 319.

30 RIEBER Stalin and the Struggle, p. 17.

31 DANILOV/MANNING/VIOLA Tragediia sovetskoi derevni, T. 3, p. 8.

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diate invasion of the Soviet Union, and the Japanese invasion of Manchuria seemed to portend the opening act of that plan. In December, Molotov raised the serious possibility of war with Japan at a meeting of the government's Central Executive Committee. Throughout 1932, correspondence among top leaders – Stalin, Kaganovich, and Molotov – reveals how seriously they took the threat.[32]

During these two years, then, spring 1930 to summer 1932, Stalin and the Soviet leadership confronted the serious prospect of war along two borders, and an internal civil war. As a result, signing the Polish and other Baltic treaties in mid-summer 1932 came at a crucial moment, allowing the Soviet leader to move ahead on both the peasant and the eastern front. By the spring of 1932, it was clear that rural areas were not going to meet the procurement quotas set by the regime, in part because of passive resistance, and in large part because of a poor harvest in 1931. This was especially true in Ukraine, where numerous officials were declaring openly that expectations for the 1932 campaigns were unrealistic.[33] Stalin understood this as war and sabotage, "quiet and outwardly harmless", but war nonetheless.[34]

By mid-1932, as Graziosi writes, there was "little or nothing" to export, the strains of industrial investment had created currency and commodities collapse, and a return to urban rationing of staple goods. A realistic prospect of bankruptcy loomed.[35] At the same time, the first signs of famine began to appear, still localized, but threatening to deepen if the regime continued its push for quotas. Here was 1920 and 1921 all over again: stalemate in the countryside and the beginning of famine. This time, however, Stalin was in charge, and he pressed the peasant war forward, even as he secured the country's borders with the Polish non-aggression treaty. Certainly, it was no coincidence that the treaty with Poland was signed in the same weeks that Stalin ordered Lazar Kaganovich, V. Balitskii, a particularly ruthless OGPU commander, and others to go to Ukraine to bring the republic into line. The Polish treaty was signed July 25, though not ratified until December, but, signing the treaty was good enough. Stalin now believed that he had a free hand in Ukraine, even as he felt the situation there to be in crisis, both because of what he regarded as national resistance, and because of Ukraine's proximity to Poland. Stalin's now famous letter to Kaganovich in August 1932 made his concern about Ukraine clear, as it did the connection between the Ukrainian and Polish crises. As is well known, Stalin insisted to Kaganovich that, if Ukrainian resistance continued, they could "lose" the republic. Stalin not only underlined this point, but repeated it again at

32 On Japanese war plans, see for example the reports transmitted by the OGPU foreign department, especially in December 1931, in: RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 85, l. [illegible]: "O iaponsko-sovetskikh otnosheniyakh … i razveditel'noi rabote v Iaponii." On correspondence, see KALINIUK [et al.]: Stalin i Kaganovich, pp. 14, 32–33, 39, 77, 103, 115, 129, 156.

33 GRAZIOSI Great Soviet Peasant War, p. [illegible]52. On the connection between peasant resistance and nationalism in Ukraine, see VIOLA Peasant Rebels [illegible]pp. 10, [illegible].

34 Quotation in GRAZIOSI Great Soviet Peasant War, p. [illegible]51.

35 GRAZIOSI Great Soviet Peasant War, p. [illegible].

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the end of the letter.[36] Stalin may have been paranoid, but he was not given to histrionics, and the tone of this letter was "desperate", as Graziosi correctly describes.

But, what did Stalin mean by losing Ukraine? How could the regime lose Ukraine? Certainly not by outright revolt. Soviet forces were certainly strong enough to quash such an insurgency. That is where the Polish question came into play, and it is what made the Ukrainian situation so dangerous. In Stalin's reading of reports, the Poles were supporting and fostering Ukrainian resistance to Soviet authority. Stalin worried about Polish agents attempting to exploit Ukrainian peasant uprisings against collectivization in 1930, and he continued to be concerned even after 1932.[37] Despite the newly signed non-aggression treaty, Stalin did not trust the Poles: "Piłsudski is not snoozing", wrote Stalin to Kaganovich.

> "His agents in Ukraine are many times stronger than [S.] Redens and [S.] Kosior think. [Stalin was aware that, in June alone, more than twenty Polish agents had been arrested in Ukraine – DRS.] Keep in mind, also, that in the Ukrainian Communist Party (500,000 members – ha ha) there are a lot (yes, a lot!) of rotten elements just hanging about, conscious and unconscious Petlurites, and the direct agents of Piłsudski. As soon as things get worse, these elements will not hesitate to open a front inside (and outside) the party, against the party. The worst thing is that the Ukrainian elite does not see these dangers."[38]

As is well known, Stalin did what he thought necessary to secure the country's western border. Dispatching Kaganovich to bring the Ukrainian Party command in line, he also replaced Stanislav Redens, the Ukrainian OGPU head, with Balitskii, in preparation to subdue the Ukrainian countryside. With the Polish treaty ratified, and a new command in place, Stalin was able to turn back to and finish the peasant war. Outright conflict had proved unfeasible after 1930, but Stalin had another weapon, which was hunger. Hunger had played a crucial role in the civil war stalemate, but in that case, in favor of the peasants. The famine of 1921–1923 eventually put an end to the state of confrontation with the countryside, and led to the semi-capitalist concessions of the NEP era. The 1932–33 famine, however, after threatening the regime's very survival, assured it by breaking the back of peasant conflict and resistance to collectivization. Stalin did not plan the famine of 1932–1933, but he used it to break peasant resistance, not just in Ukraine, but especially in Ukraine, and in areas of the Kuban, areas that had been the center of armed peasant insurrections in 1919 and 1920, and of mass resistance in 1930–1932.

By the summer of 1933, the Stalinists' victory over peasants was complete. The famine put an end to peasant resistance, as well as to millions of peasants. Kaganovich celebrated the procurement campaign of that year as a "stunning" success for Soviet power and for Stalin, personally.[39] As early as January 1933, even before the depth of the famine

36 KHLEVNIUK [et al.]: Stalin i Kaganovich, p[illegible]–3[illegible].

37 On 1930, see KHAUSTOV/NAUMO[illegible]OTNI[illegible]OVA Lubianka (2003), pp. 235–236.

38 KHLEVNIUK [et al.]: Stalin i Kag[illegible]novi[illegible] p. 74[illegible] the [illegible]s of agents, see RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 185, l. 73. S. Redens headed the Ukrain[illegible]an O[illegible]U at t[illegible]e tim[illegible] S. K[illegible]sior was Party head in Ukraine.

39 As quoted in GRAZIOSI Great Sov[illegible] Pe[illegible]t W[illegible] p[illegible].

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in March and April, Stalin declared "victory" at that month's Central Committee plenary meetings. It was in January 1933, at that same meeting, that the regime declared the first five-year plan already completed, an enormous success, and began to scale back the pace of industrial investment toward a more moderate and balanced level. This 'retreat' has usually been explained as a result of the dire straits of the domestic economy, and the realization by the regime's leaders of coming collapse.[40] At the same time, we should not forget the context of war. The country, or at least the regime, had been at war and in war mobilization for several years, at least since 1928, and especially between 1930 and 1932, but that war and the prospect of war had now been resolved, and resolved on all three fronts. Stalin had treaties protecting his western borders, the regime had broken the peasants, and relations with Japan had also eased. By early 1933, Stalin no longer perceived the Japanese presence in Manchuria with as much alarm as he had two years earlier. The Soviet Union was in negotiations with Japan over fishing rights in the Sea of Japan, the possibility of joint ownership of the Far Eastern Railway, which ran from the Soviet Union through Manchuria, and a non-aggression pact similar to that with Poland. From the point of view of the Stalinist leadership, the country had, indeed, passed through a severe crisis, and had done so because of Stalin's "resolute" leadership.

Stalin harbored no doubts about the wisdom of his policies. In his remarks to the January 1933 plenum, the Soviet leader made explicit the connection between forced mobilization and war. If it had not been for the pace and scale of the five year plan – the forced industrial mobilization of the country – there was "no doubt", he declared, "that there would have been military intervention; instead of non-aggression treaties, there would have been war, dangerous and deadly, bloody war, and an unequal [war] because in that war we would have been nearly defenseless before our enemies". Only the forced pace of modernization, and especially the forced strengthening of the country's military capabilities had led to peace treaties rather than to war.[41] In Stalin's thinking, then, the turn away from forced industrialization after 1933 was likely not so much a retreat or a thaw as the consolidation of a new strategic situation.

Stalin's pronouncements about war and the first five-year plan were no mere rhetoric. Piłsudski, in fact, actively considered invasion. After his return to power in 1926, he vigorously funded Ukrainian independence movements, an aggressive spying program, and military rearmament in case of war with the USSR. Timothy Snyder has argued that 1930 was probably the last year that such an invasion had any realistic opportunity for success, but Piłsudski contemplated intervention even as late as 1933, despite the non-aggression treaty.[42] Piłsudski finally scotched intervention plans, understanding that the rapid Soviet military industrial buildup had changed the correlation of forces in the Soviets' favor. Famine also played a role in Pilsudski's decision. The Polish leader realized that, by 1933, famine in Ukraine had reduced almost to nil the ability of Ukrainian

40 See, most recently, DAVIES The Industrialisation, p. 14.
41 STALIN Sochineniia. T. 13, pp. 74–75.
42 SNYDER Covert Polish Missions, p. 69.

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peasants to sustain a rebellion, which would be key to a successful invasion.[43] For Stalin, the 'successful' collectivization campaign, rapid industrial-military investment, and the treaty with Poland, had secured the country's western border and avoided a near war, at least with a foreign power. The internal war that claimed millions of lives seemed to have been of secondary consideration.

## Mobilization and War, 1936–1939

The famine in the country, and especially in Ukraine, reached its height in the early spring of 1933, even as Stalinist leaders began to scale back the intensive level of investment in industrial-military projects, and in the campaigns of police repression. In early May, the regime severely limited the power of political police and local non-judicial sentencing boards, the infamous *troiki*, and officially reestablished judicial oversight over repressive practices.[44] This was a relative social truce, since the regime, while it reduced levels of state violence, nonetheless intensified measures of social surveillance and restrictions on migration and residence. Civil police were subordinated to the political police, and police, in general, were given the power to implement and enforce stringent internal passport and residence laws, especially against supposedly "dangerous" social elements thought to be hostile to Soviet power. Political and civil police engaged in campaigns to clear strategic areas of unregistered and suspect populations, which included cities, industrial areas, railroads, and border zones. Denied access to internal passports, the great majority of peasants were confined to their regions of residence, a new kind of serfdom, while other areas of the country were divided into military and residence districts, so-called "regime" and non-regime areas, with commensurate restriction on who could live and work in different areas. Throughout the middle years of the 1930s, in other words, the regime acted toward the Soviet population as an occupying army, implementing a kind of martial-law, or militarized form of socialism.[45] Still, the several years following the Polish and Baltic treaties amounted to a period of relative normalcy and social peace. Surveillance campaigns and social repression reflected the regime's suspicions of its own population, but leaders deescalated state violence from the massive and deadly scale of the war crisis years of 1927–1933.

The murder of Sergei Kirov, the Leningrad party chief, in December 1934, changed the situation again. Kirov's assassination set off another escalation of police repression, but the nature of that repression, and Stalin's interpretation of danger, evolved. Throughout 1935 and part of 1936, Stalin seemed to have fixated on the threat supposedly posed by oppositionists working on behalf of and under direction of émigré organizations, supposedly coordinated by Trotskii in alliance with internal enemies around Grigorii

43 SNYDER Covert Polish Missions, [illegible] 70.
44 KHAUSTOV Lubianka, 1922–1936. [illegible]talin, [illegible] 436
45 SHEARER Policing Stalin's Socialis[illegible]

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Zinoviev.[46] This was the scenario that underpinned the first major Moscow show trial in August 1936. Sometime in the second half of that year, however, Stalin's focus began to widen to include collusion of opposition blocs with foreign spies and governments. Stalin once again connected internal and external threats of war, although this time not primarily with Poland. In 1934, the two countries had renewed the 1932 non-aggression treaty, and Piłsudski, Stalin's nemesis, died in 1935. In the spring of 1936, however, fascist and pro-fascist forces precipitated a civil war in Spain, and the French government nearly fell to fascist political parties. By 1936, Stalin's main concern focused on National Socialist Germany and, just as immediately, on Japan, which had occupied the major part of Chinese Manchuria in the early 1930s and threatened the Soviet eastern borders. In the new scenario, Trotskyist and Zinovievist forces had joined cause with the rising German fascist state, along with Japan, to try to assassinate Soviet leaders, and prepare for invasion and overthrow of the Soviet regime. This was the same plot as before. The correlation of forces arrayed against the country differed, but it was war all the same in Stalin's thinking.[47]

A number of other events in that year very likely made the danger of war specific and imminent rather than vaguely inevitable. In March, Hitler blatantly violated the Versailles treaty ending the Great War by remilitarizing the Rhineland areas, and in January 1937 he completely abrogated the Versailles treaty. The start of the Spanish civil war and the fascist threat in France was also of concern to Stalin, since it brought Europe one step closer to the brink of general conflagration, and it threatened the balance of power in favor of a hostile fascist alliance. During that summer, as Oleg Khlevniuk has argued, Stalin's reading of intelligence reports about the civil war in Spain likely convinced him of the possibility of fifth-column dangers in the Soviet Union in the event of war.[48] At the same time, Stalin had in hand Hitler's secret memorandum from August about the need to prepare the German military and economy for war against the USSR sometime in the following four years. Stalin was wary about the authenticity and origin of the memorandum, but it provided one more piece of evidence of impending disaster.[49] The anti-Comintern treaty signed by Germany and Japan in November seemed to seal a pact by the two powers to act against the Soviet Union. By the time of the second major Moscow trial, in late January 1937, the scenario of betrayal focused heavily on the collusion of oppositionists with foreign spies and governments.[50]

Stalin's response to these combined threats followed a similar scenario to the crisis period 1927–1933: radicalization of repression against domestic groups, a jump in military-industrial investments, and intensive negotiations to achieve international security. Even as police continued their social cleansing campaigns, Stalin mobilized them in the hunt for oppositionists and spies. Throughout 1935 and 1936, commissariat heads were

46 Grigory Zinoviev: Old Bolshevik, active party leader, and then opponent of Stalin, in alliance with Trotskii.
47 HASLAM The Soviet Union and the Threat from the East; KUROMIYA/PEPŁOŃSKI The Great Terror. Polish-Japanese Connections, p. 647.
48 KHLEVNIUK The reasons for the "Great Terror".
49 KUROMIYA Stalin's Great Terror and International Relations, pp. 246–247.
50 WHITEWOOD The Red Army, pp. 216–222.

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given secret instructions to vet all subordinates for former or hidden connections to anti-Bolshevik parties of the civil war era – the SRs and Mensheviks, especially.[51] At the beginning of 1937, Stalin instructed Georgii Malenkov, the head of Party affairs in the Central Committee, to compile a list of all former Party members who, now, in Stalin's thinking, could form the administrative and command infrastructure for an internal insurgency organization. Malenkov reported some 1.5 million people in this category, and identified well over 100,000 as "socially harmful" or "alien", or as Trotskyist or Zinovievist sympathizers. Stalin underscored these figures, and these became prime targets in the great purges of the late 1930s, a war in the absence of war.[52]

By early 1937, then, the political atmosphere was filled, once again, with expectations of immanent foreign threat. The Party and institutional purges of those years should be seen as a peculiarly Stalinist form of mobilization for that coming war, as should the mass repression operations of 1937 and 1938, and the operations associated with particular national movements. Together, the so-called mass operations accounted for well over a million victims, either executed or imprisoned. The nationalities operations, in particular – the so-called Polish, German, Lithuanian operations – were not directed specifically against those ethnic groups, but included Russian and other ethnic groups who supposedly were collaborating with those governments against the Soviet Union. Of course, anyone with those ethnic ties was immediately suspect, as were all foreigners, even and especially naturalized citizens. In March, a directive from the security organ of the NKVD, the internal affairs commissariat, ordered the police Visa and Registration Department to submit lists of all foreigners granted citizenship since 1 January 1936. Several weeks later, the head of the Police noted in a memorandum to his subordinates that it was a "proven fact" that the "overwhelming majority" of foreigners were agents working for hostile governments against the Soviet Union.[53]

The great purges of the late 1930s represented the convergence of several fears that Stalin linked to likely invasion. He spelled out the connections in his speech to the February-March 1937 Central Committee Plenary session. In case of invasion, former party members, who had administrative experience, would make up the command staff of an insurgent army working in collusion with the invaders. This command staff, of several tens of thousands of people, worked under control from the Moscow central organization coordinated by Trotskii and Zinoviev. The command staff would orchestrate sabotage by criminal elements, former kulaks, and other disaffected social groups, who had been repressed in the hundreds of thousands during the 1930s, but who had reinfiltrated the cities, farms, factories, cooperatives, and other Soviet institutions. Stalin spoke several times about how easy it would be, during a national emergency, for one or several persons to blow up rail junctures and bridges, to set fire or create explosions in factories, to sabotage hydroelectric dams, to spread disease among livestock. In order

51 GARF, f. 8131, op. 38, d. 16, l. 13; f. 8[illegible] p. 38, [illegible]19, l. [illegible].

52 RGASPI, f. 17, op. 2, d. 733, ll. 110, [illegible]5.

53 GARF, f. 9401, op. 12, d. 135, doc. 1[illegible] KU[illegible]MIYA [illegible]EPL[illegible]ŃSKI, The Great Terror. Polish-Japanese Connections, p. 648.

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to protect against such a scenario, the regime needed not just to contain "dangerous" elements, but to eliminate them.[54]

Stalin had his proof that such plots existed. In late 1936, for example, gas explosions in the Kemerovo coal mines were ascribed to sabotage, as was an explosion in a chemical plant in Cheliabinsk. The trials of the "diversionaries" were given widespread national coverage, as were other such incidents and trials. Throughout 1937, political police and military intelligence plenipotentiaries were dispatched to find the kind of evidence that would support this scenario. Reports from Western Siberia, for example, confirmed that former kulaks were waiting for invasion by Japan, which would be the signal to rise up against their collective farms. The well known June 1937 report from the head of the Western Siberia NKVD, Sergei Mironov, counted the thousands of exiles who were waiting to form an insurgent army.[55] This was the backdrop for the mass killing and imprisonment of ordinary citizens under the infamous order 00447 from July 1937, and other operations of mass repression from those years.[56] Prior to this operation, and the related 'nationality' operations, the police had isolated socially marginal groups, such as former kulaks and criminals, and exiled them or restricted where they could live and work. Now, under the threat of war, policies to deal with these populations became radicalized, from social isolation to physical extermination.

As in the late 1920s so in the late 1930s, Stalin was obsessed with the idea of spies and fifth-column saboteurs, who would act in the event of war.[57] This is clear from his remarks to the 1937 Central Committee plenary sessions in late February and early March. In those remarks, Stalin felt the need to impress upon his audience that his warnings about spies, sabotage, and capitalist encirclement were more than the usual Bolshevik rhetoric about inevitable confrontation. These were not "empty" phrases, but referred to a "very real and unpleasant phenomenon".[58]

Stalin drew on other sources, as well, to reinforce his perceptions. In early 1937, he commissioned the head of military intelligence, Semen Uritskii, to prepare several extensive reports on how spies infiltrated the USSR, who they were, and how they recruited networks of residents, agents, and diversionaries. Gathering a "research" group, Uritskii complied and, in April, sent to Stalin the drafts of several articles to be published, as well as confidential reports. The reports covered the activities of various governments, from the late nineteenth century, the Great War, and especially contemporary "fifth column" activities by Japanese spies in the Far East.[59] Uritskii noted that Japanese activity was especially intense in recent years, and that this followed a classic pattern. Once the Japanese General Staff targeted an area for military intervention, they first inundated

54 STALIN Sochineniia. T. 14, pp. 151, 169. "It takes thousands of people to construct a huge railroad bridge, but only several people to blow it up. There are tens and hundreds of such examples."

55 GANO, f. 4, op. 34, d. 26, l. 2. See the published report in Tragediia sovetskoi derevni. T. 5, kn. 1, pp. 256–257.

56 KHLEVNIUK The Reasons for the "Great Terror"; DEKONSPIRATSIYA Accounting for the "Great Terror"; SHEARER Policing Stalin's Socialism, chapter

57 On the analogy between 1928 and 1937 POPOV Stalin and the Inevitable War.

58 STALIN Sochineniia. T. 14, p. 153; POPOV Stalin and the Inevitable War, p. 79.

59 For reference to fifth columnists, "5-i kommunisticheskii" GASPI f. 558 op. 11, d. 1594, l. 14.

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that area with spies and diversionary groups. This had been the case in Korea, Manchuria, and Shanghai, and was occurring in Mongolia and the Soviet Far East.[60] Uritskii provided detailed descriptions of how these groups were supposedly organized and trained, how they crossed the "still weakly protected" borders, made their way to their specified target locations, where they settled, what kind of jobs they took, how they blended into their new locations, the kinds of sabotage equipment they possessed, and the tasks and targets they were assigned. Uritskii claimed to have this information from the numbers of such spies already captured.

Recruits for this kind of activity were plentiful, according to Uritskii, given the large numbers of émigrés, "white guardists", and other Russians and former Soviet citizens who had worked on railroads or in other capacities in northern China. According to Uritskii, Japanese intelligence was already "widely using" the "most notorious" of those "white bandits" who were

> "ready to do anything in their savage hatred of socialist countries, without waiting for a war. Spies are recruited from among the Russian Whites in large numbers, and are being transferred to Soviet territory with all manner of tasks, beginning with recruitment and collection of data and ending with sabotage."

Uritskii claimed that the Japanese were sending agents in "mass" numbers because they estimated that the great majority of them would fail in their missions, and that only fourteen to twenty percent would succeed. Still, this was plenty enough to create chaos and do major damage.[61] Stalin underlined sections of Uritskii's report in heavy pencil as he read. Stalin read Uritskii's report in April 1937. There can be little doubt that this kind of reading led to the dictator's decision to launch mass operations in the summer of 1937, in particular the infamous "Kharbintsy" operational order, in September, to arrest anyone having had association with the Chinese Eastern Railroad. That order, 00593, claimed that some 25,000 people who had worked for the Chinese Eastern Railroad were Japanese spies. In fact, NKVD records report that 48,133 people were arrested under the order, and close to 31,000 were shot.[62]

Stalin's devastating purge of the military command corps in 1937 and 1938 also makes a perverse kind of sense within this scenario of war and sabotage. At the very least, his purge of the high command followed a pattern of previous behavior. In fact, Stalin's suspicion of military specialists went back to the civil war, when key elements of the southwestern front command staff defected to the White forces in 1919. A. L. Nosovich, especially, head of the North Caucasus military district, had been a former tsarist military officer who initially joined the Bolshevik cause, but then began secretly to work for the White forces of generals Denikin and Wrangel. Stalin had arrested him and others

60 RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 1594, ll. 14–1[illegible]

61 RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 1594, l. 20. [illegible]or the [illegible] report, see ll. 1–47.

62 VERT/MIRONENKO Istoriia stalin[illegible]o Gul[illegible]a. T. [illegible], pp. 282–283. See also the NKVD secret circular accompanying that order, *O terroristicheskoi, diversionno-shpionskoi deiatel'nosti Iaponskoi agentury iz Kharbintsev*, 20.9.1937. Published online by Tsentr dosudzhennia vyzvol'noho rukhu, in: Lviv: http://cdvr.org.ua/node/2604 (18.8.2016).

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on exactly this suspicion, but Stalin's order was countermanded by Trotskii. Similarly, in 1920, a large unit of cavalry defected to the Poles, near the Polish-Russian frontier, the "betrayal" planned "very carefully" by the unit's commanders.[63] In these, and other cases, Stalin was correct about spies and saboteurs, and such incidents gave Stalin a long-standing antipathy toward and mistrust of military specialists.[64] In the 1920 report that Stalin forwarded about the military betrayal, he also included a lengthy discussion of Polish spies and diversionaries for the Ukrainian leader Semen Petliura. These diversionaries were operating "everywhere", according to Stalin, and made the Red army rear vulnerable to sabotage. In 1920, as in later years, he castigated the special units and counter-insurgency agents designated to fight against this kind of activity. "They are weak and do nothing", he wrote, leaving the army's rear undefended.[65]

Stalin's antipathy to military specialists during the civil war led him to do more than arrest. He had a reputation for imprisoning and executing former white officers, *en masse*, both as a commander on the south-western front and when he was commanded to Petrograd in 1919 to help protect the city against capture by White forces. In Petrograd, Stalin also engaged in widespread executions of former white officers, nominally working for the Bolsheviks. Stalin's antipathy toward specialists found expression even against Bolshevik military experts. In 1919, ignoring advice from naval specialists, Stalin succeeded in re-taking the Red Hills fortress along the Gulf of Finland coast, near the naval base of Kronstadt. This fortress was a vital point of defense for the city of Petrograd, and had fallen into White hands. Overruling naval commanders, and using a combination of land, sea, and even air power, Stalin managed to recapture the fortress, which helped secure the city against attack. In a telegram to Lenin, Stalin disparaged the advice of naval specialists, and their "science", declaring that success had been achieved only and because of his own "crude interference".

Stalin's disdain for specialists, and his penchant for "crude interference" proved disastrous during the first months after the German invasion of 1941, of course. Taking direct military command, Stalin repeatedly ignored the advice of his military staff, and Soviet forces suffered catastrophic defeats. The dictator came eventually to trust his military generals more explicitly.[66] In the paranoiac atmosphere of the mid and 1930s, however, Stalin's civil war experience reasserted itself. As before, Stalin's constant fare of intelligence reports during the 1930s certainly reinforced his suspicions about plots in the military.[67]

Even as Stalin was purging his military command in 1937 and 1938, he initiated serious increases in investment toward military industries, especially air power and tank production. These increases began already in 1936, amounting to sixteen percent of

63 RGASPI, f. 558, op. 1, d. 5466, l. 5.
64 VOLKOGONOV Stalin, p. 91; KOTKIN Stalin, pp. [illegible]
65 RGASPI, f. 558, op. 1, d. 5466, ll. 1–6, e[illegible]
66 See, for example, KHLEVNIUK Stalin, [illegible]p. 22[illegible]
67 See a summary of these reports, from 1933 through 1936, in KHAUSTOV/ZAKHAROV Glazami razvedki, pp. 462–469. WHITEWOOD The Red Army.

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the state's budget, a significant increase from the modest levels in 1934 and early 1935.[68] These increases adversely affected the improvements in consumer spending that were part of the second five-year plan. New economic priorities included not just increases in military-industrial production, but also improvement in the performance of existing equipment, significant increases in the number of recruits, and in general military preparedness. Civilian industrial sectors were ordered to draw up contingency plans for rapid conversion to military manufacture in case of invasion.[69] In 1938, Stalin initiated negotiations with Finland to try to gain access to key defensive islands in the Gulf of Finland. The Finns refused repeated requests, which eventually led the Soviets to take Finnish areas by force in the 1939–1940 Winter War, but Stalin's initial requests in 1938 show that the dictator was already thinking about war defenses to strengthen the approaches to Leningrad.[70] Even the Komsomol, the Communist Youth Organizations, inaugurated systematic drilling and military-like physical training among its members.[71] By 1937 and 1938, Stalin was at war, again.

Stalin brought the mass purges to a halt in November 1938 and, as a number of scholars have noted, the timing may very well have been linked to the Munich conference that September, in which Britain, France, and other western powers consented to Adolf Hitler's demands for the partition of Czechoslovakia. Until that conference, the Soviet foreign affairs commissar, Litvinov, had worked to form an anti-fascist block, but with little success. The Soviets were not invited to participate in the Munich conference, even though they had a protection treaty with Czechoslovakia. The Munich agreement may well have nudged Stalin toward a new and suspicious view of the European democracies, and a willingness to deal directly with Germany.[72] Regardless of the motivation for a German pact, Stalin abandoned the idea of collective security. Very likely, he hoped to do with Germany, a potential enemy, what he had accomplished with Poland, an earlier enemy. The resulting 1939 non-aggression treaty between Germany and the Soviet Union gave Stalin the hope (or delusion) of neutrality and protection from war, or at least time to prepare. The secret protocols of that agreement also allowed the Soviet leader to accomplish, in the event of a German-Polish war, what he had advocated in 1919 and 1920 – to annex parts of Poland and the Baltic states, and parts of Romania. Stalin had a long memory, and the Polish, Baltic, and Romanian annexations of 1939 finally brought the war of 1920 to a successful end, fulfilling the dictator's delayed dream.[73]

68 Armaments and aircraft production in 1936 was twice what it had been at the end of the first five-year plan. DAVIES The Industrialisation, pp. 326–331; DAVIES/HARRISON Defence spending and Defence Industry, pp. 73, 79, 86–87.

69 HARRISON Soviet Planning in Peace and War; GORODETSKY Grand Delusion.

70 CHUBARYAN/SHUKMAN Stalin and the Soviet-Finnish War; EDWARDS White Death.

71 BERNSTEIN Raised Under Stalin.

72 Reports from the Ukrainian NKVD described "widespread panic" among security agency officials for what the Munich accords might mean for the Soviet Union. VIOLENCE Stalinist Perpetrators, p. 170. In contrast, Gabriel Gorodetsky has argued that the Munich [illegible] may not have been that significant in Stalin's strategic thinking. GORODETSKY Grand Delusion, pp. [illegible]-5.

73 As Gorodetsky and Rieber note, Stalin's [illegible] revolution was subordinate to his pursuit of security for

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Stalin's pattern of actions in the late 1930s closely resembled his actions in the late 1920s. Faced with the imminent threat of war, he radicalized internal policies of repression and mobilization (both social and economic) and sought to find diplomatic means to delay or avoid an invasion. The latter he thought he had accomplished in autumn 1939, with the German treaty. The simultaneous victory over the Japanese in those same months no doubt added to Stalin's feeling of security. The Soviet victory along the Manchurian-Mongolian border in the summer and autumn stopped Japanese military movement west and north. Instead, the Japanese high command turned their attention to the Pacific, and the Dutch oil fields of south-eastern Asia. The short and little known war over Nomonhan (Khalkhin Gol) was a decisive turning point, and it and the German treaty allowed Stalin to believe that his borders were safe, at least for the immediate future.[74]

## The Great Patriotic War

Stalin no doubt believed that, in October 1939, he had done with Germany exactly what he had done in 1932 with Poland. In 1939, following in the pattern of the mid-1930s, Stalin, again, deescalated levels of state sponsored violence, while maintaining a high level of social and military-industrial mobilization. Germany was not Poland, of course, and Hitler had his own plans for expansion of the German empire, which he inaugurated on 22 June, 1941. As is well known, Soviet defenses were unprepared for the German invasion on that day, and much controversy still surrounds Stalin's refusal to believe in the German threat, even though he had supposedly been expecting such a war for years. As Gabriel Gorodetsky has written, however, Stalin was keenly aware of the German military buildup, even possessing detailed reports about German troop deployments. According to Gorodetsky, Stalin refused to permit forward troop deployments to counter the German buildup because he believed such a move would be seen as a provocation.[75] In hindsight, we may assess Stalin's inaction as irrational, but Stalin may have based his decision in 1941 on his experience in previous war crises. In 1930, Stalin opposed suggestions that the military reinforce the Soviet side of the Polish-Soviet border, and he scotched similar suggestions in 1939 on the Manchurian border. In both cases, he refused to make forward advances so as not to give provocation to a hostile power.[76] In 1930 and 1939, Stalin guessed correctly. In 1941, his decision proved disastrous, but there was a logic to it that derived from the dictator's previous war experience.

There is an increasing body of literature about the Great Patriotic War, and especially about the annihilating character of war on the eastern front of Europe. It is not surpris-

the USSR. GORODETSKY Grand Delusion, pp. [illegible] Rieber agrees with this argument with qualification, RIEBER Stalin and the Struggle, p. 200.

74 GOLDMAN Nomonhan; KUROMIYA The Mystery of Nomonhan.

75 GORODETSKY Grand Delusion, pp. 27[illegible]316.

76 KEN Zapadnoe prigranich'e; GOLDMAN Nomonhan.

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ing that such a war exaggerated to the extreme many of the practices of the Stalinist regime in terms of both repression and mobilization. As Mark Harrison has pointed out, mobilization led to hypercentralization of an already centralized and militarized industrial economy. At the same time, the Soviet economy of shortages intensified, which affected not only the civilian population, but created near death-camp conditions inside the Soviet penal system of labor camps, colonies, and settlements.

Policies of repression also escalated in intensity and sharpened in focus, and the onset of actual war also led to a shift in the focus of repression. During the crisis period 1936 to 1939, mass repression fell mainly on social categories of potentially disaffected segments of the population. The nationality operations of 1937 and 1938 certainly caught up many people of specific ethnic backgrounds, but these operations did not target ethnic groups, *per se*. They were part of Stalin's war against what he perceived as an orchestrated campaign by foreign governments and intelligence agencies to destabilize the Soviet regime. In 1937, the entire Korean population residing along the eastern borders was removed to settlements further in the interior or the country. This operation targeted a specific ethnic group, but it was conducted as a precautionary measure, and the Koreans were never officially regarded as a penal population. The war changed this dynamic. As the war deepened, repression shifted almost exclusively toward punishment of whole ethnic populations. If, in 1937, the Koreans were resettled on grounds of suspicion, the actual war led to a much harsher fate for other groups. Chechens, Germans, Tatars, and other ethnic groups were categorically defined as enemy nations, in collaboration with the country's enemies, and deported as hostile groups to areas in Central Asia.[77]

## The Post-War War

Although the Great Patriotic War started disastrously for the Soviet Union, it ended in the crushing defeat of Germany, and the extension of Soviet power throughout eastern and central Europe. After the defeat of Germany, Stalin still operated in the framework of ultimate conflict and war, this time with America and possibly the UK, but after 1945, he operated, or thought he operated, from a position of strength rather than weakness. The immediate threat to Soviet territory had been routed, in both the west and the east. After defeating Japanese forces in Manchuria in 1945, Soviet troops stretched from the Sea of Japan to Berlin, and even into Iran. Despite the temporary nuclear advantage of the United States, Stalin was prepared to assert Soviet interests, especially territorial interests, aggressively, even as he was cautious not to push the country into another war. By 1945, the Soviet Union was one of the two military-industrial superpowers. Stalin had extended Soviet revolutionary hegemony to fulfill what, for Lenin, had been only a dream in 1919 and 1920.

77 Among many works, see, POLIAN [illegible]

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Despite these achievements, Stalin still felt that the country was vulnerable. In fact, his view of the world oscillated between two poles. On the one hand, he hoped that the Soviet Union could exploit rivalry among the capitalist powers, especially Britain and the United States, in their competition over colonies and the remains of the European pre-war system.[78] On the other hand, Stalin believed that the capitalist world would never accept the existence of the Soviet Union, and would seek any means and every opportunity to undermine or destroy it.[79] If Stalin hoped to find a *modus vivendi* in 1945 with the war-time allies, that hope faded by 1946.[80] By the war's end, military and other resources were stretched very thin, and insurgency wars flared all along the country's new western republics and border areas well into the late 1940s. These insurgencies were fueled by both internal factors and support from the Soviet Union's war-time allies. Military expenditures were dramatically cut after 1945, but as early as 1946, Stalin made it clear that civilian post-war reconstruction would have to wait. As Vladislav Zubok writes, Stalin, as early as 1946, set the Soviet Union on a course of war mobilization in anticipation of conflict with the new world capitalist powers.[81] Indeed, Stalin's speech on the occasion of the Supreme Soviet elections of 1946 sounded like a replay of his famous 1929 speech. In the 1929 speech, the leader declared that the USSR needed to make up 100 years of industrial military backwardness in ten, or be crushed. In 1946, he declared that the USSR faced the necessity to increase its military industrial output three times over the pre-war levels, or face dire consequences. Based on prewar experience, Stalin estimated that it would take at least three five-year plans – fifteen years – to prepare the country for "any eventuality". Dashing hopes for economic and social relaxation, Stalin reaffirmed the 1930s order of strict and centralized collectivization and military and industrial reconstruction.[82] No sooner had the Great Patriotic War ended than Stalin was mobilizing the country for yet another, future, cataclysm, even as the populace, and most officials in the state apparatus and military expected demobilization after 1945.

As in earlier war mobilizations, the post World War II mobilization also involved repression, as well as investment in industrial-military, technological and other state economic development (especially nuclear and rocket technologies). In the post-war period, however, repression followed a somewhat different pattern than in the late 1920s and the 1930s war mobilizations. Certain kinds of repressive policies followed closely the pre-war practice of linking repression with international threat. Mass repressions in the country's new territories closely resembled the pre-war operations against kulak, socially dangerous, and other anti-Soviet "elements". Igor Casu has argued that, although Soviet policies did not cause the famine of 1946–1947, Stalin used it in Moldavia in much the same manner as the 1930s famine in Ukraine, as a means to break peasant resistance to collectivization, in this case in western territories occupied after the war.[83]

78 STALIN Sochineniia. T. 6, pp. 175–178.
79 As Stalin declared to Milovan Djilas in 1944; s[illegible] Beseda so Stalinym, p. 36.
80 ROBERTS Stalin's Wars; ZUBOK Failed [illegible]ire.
81 ZUBOK Failed Empire, p. 52; HARRIS[illegible] [illegible]s.
82 STALIN Sochineniia. T. 6, pp. 14–15; G[illegible]/KHLEVNIUK Cold Peace; KHLEVNIUK Stalin, p. 267.
83 CASU Stalinist Terror in Soviet Moldav[illegible]

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The purges of prominent Jews, and the intensifying anti-Jewish policies of the regime, followed the war-time pattern of targeting ethnic groups because of suspected ties to hostile powers. Stalin made it clear that Jews were too cosmopolitan, and provided a conduit for American influence and spies into the USSR.[84] Likewise, Stalin continued wholesale ethnic deportations from the Caucasus regions for supposed ties to cross-border enemies in Turkey and Iran. Azeris and Kurds were hit particularly hard in 1947 deportations. Repatriated Armenians from Iran and former Turkish citizens in the South Caucasus also suffered from the suspicion that their numbers were "saturated" with spies and diversionary elements.[85] In November 1948, the Politbiuro reacted harshly to the lenient practice, increasingly common within the MVD, to allow exiles to resettle in their former homes. The Politbiuro ruling (*postanovlenie*) affirmed the permanent exile status of all ethnic groups that had been subject to deportation during the war.[86]

These kinds of mass purges linked state security with categorical repression of social and ethnic groups. As in the prewar period, party purges were also linked to allegations of espionage, as in the purges of the Leningrad party organization in 1949.[87] At the same time, mass social purges, at least within the country's 1939 borders, became decoupled from expectation of invasion and foreign intrigue. In the post-war years, hundreds of thousands of people were repressed and sent to labor camps and colonies, more even than in the pre-war years, but most of these were convicted by courts for violations of the regime's harsh labor and anti-theft laws, not by administrative police boards for spying and diversionary activities. This was the converse of sentencing practice from the 1930s. In 1937, for example, slightly more than 100,000 people were sentenced by state security organs for spying and insurgency. In 1938, this figure reached over 200,000, and these did not include the hundreds of thousands swept up in the mass repression orders against potential insurgent groups. In 1947, slightly more than 6,000 individuals were sentenced for the same kinds of spying activities.[88] In contrast, in 1947, alone, more than one million people were convicted and sentenced to some kind of punitive measures for violation of labor laws.[89] These statistics show that, in the post-war years, and within the country's 1939 borders, repression continued, but became increasingly de-politicized. Stalin was still obsessed about spies in the post-war years, but, with the exception of Jews, he did not focus on whole categories of the population. Stalin's regime continued to repress millions of people in a military-barracks fashion, but for reasons of social and economic discipline, not for espionage and insurgency.

It is unclear what brought about this depoliticizing of the social sphere, but, in his 1946 speech about the Supreme Soviet elections, Stalin signaled at least a political truce with the population. He made no comments about spies and agents lurking in the guise

84 Much has been written about post-war Soviet anti-Semitism. For recent discussion, see, for example, KHLEVNIUK Stalin, pp. 285–286; SLEZKINE Jewish Century.

85 On Armenians, see KHAUSTOV/NAUMOV/[illegible] Lubianka (2007), pp. 47–48.

86 KHAUSTOV/NAUMOV/PLOTNIKOVA Lubianka (2007), pp. 237–238.

87 On the espionage connection, see ROBERTS Stalin's Wars, pp. 338–339.

88 MAZOKHIN Pravo na repressii, pp. 460, 462–463, 538–539.

89 SOKOLOV Forced Labor in Soviet [illegible]

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of party cadres or collective farmers or industrial workers. That was the language of the 1930s, when the regime did not trust its own citizenry. In his 1946 comments, Stalin referred to the whole of the Soviet population as "one general collective of Soviet peoples", regardless of who they were, or whether they were or were not party members. This was different, according to Stalin, from "previous times" when enemies hid behind masks of party and non-party members, alike. It was the war that had changed this, Stalin declared.[90]

Stalin's words were more than rhetoric. After the war, the decoupling of ordinary criminality from anti-Soviet activities was reflected in the operational and administrative separation of the civil police and the state's security organs. Inside the 1939 borders, criminality became, as in the 1920s, a matter of social "anomaly", rather than a reflection of anti-Soviet intentions. Once again, criminality came under the jurisdiction of civic justice and punishment organs, not the state security police.[91] The regime was no longer at war with its own population.

## War, Radicalization, and Violence

War, or the expectation of war, radicalized the Stalinist regime toward bursts of state-sponsored violence. As many scholars point out, war also radicalized the National Socialist regime of Germany, and much has been made by way of comparison of the two regimes in this context. The well-known formulation of "cumulative radicalization" of German National Socialist ideology and practice was put forward most forcefully by Hans Mommsen to explain the origins of the Holocaust. In developing this idea, Mommsen argued that the exterminatory policies of the Final Solution were not premeditated, but the result of a coincidence of radicalizing actions that began with the invasion of the Slavic lands, and especially the Soviet Union. It was war, especially war in the east, against the Soviet Union – Jews and Slavs – that activated the essential and extremist plans and values of Nazism. National Socialism evolved in cumulative stages of radicalization toward a total and final annihilating war.[92] Others have elaborated on this thesis, arguing that the nature of the war on the eastern front led to an annihilating "system of violence" that engulfed both the Soviet and German sides.[93]

90 STALIN Sochineniia. T. 6, p. 15. See also, WEINER Making Sense of War.

91 SHEARER Policing Stalin's Socialism, pp. 420–425.

92 Mommsen stresses the "functionalist" interpretation, which he helped promote, in arguing that the escalation to extreme violence evolved out of circumstances. GORDON/REICH/GOLDBERG Interview with Hans Mommsen.

93 In a recent iteration of this tradition, Mark [illegible] and [illegible]el Geyer stress premeditated intent, more so than the circumstantial accumulation of events. Still, they emphasize what they call a mutual and "relentless escalation" of violence, a synergistic system of violence" in the Soviet-German sphere of conflict from 1941 through 1945. The war between the two powers was, in their view, not just about territory or achieving political goals "by other means". For the Germans, it was, from the beginning, and increasingly so for the Soviets, a war of extermination of one side against the other. EDELE/GEYER States of Exception. See also LEVENE The Crisis of Genocide (2013), pp. [illegible]234. LEVENE The Crisis of Genocide (2015), pp. 242–43.

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War radicalized both the Stalinist and National Socialist regimes, but the relationship between war and radicalization followed a different dynamic in each case. In the Soviet case, radicalization was cyclical rather than cumulative. Having resorted to violence, Stalin proved capable of managing the violence of repressive policies, and of deescalating the violence once he decided that he had achieved his goals. Much has been written about why Stalin engaged in violent episodes of repression – dekulakization, the Great Terror, and so on – but what is just as interesting is that he was able to dismantle the mechanisms of violence once they were set in motion. The Soviet dictator's ability to manage and de-escalate violence stood in sharp contrast to the cumulative spiral of violence that ultimately destroyed the National Socialist regime in Germany.[94]

## Conclusion

It is not a new idea to say that Stalin's world was formed in the crucible of Bolshevik ideology and civil war. What is surprising, even remarkable, is the extent to which Stalin's rule followed the script produced by that war. The scenarios of Stalin's civil war experience created a pattern of behavior that played out in each crisis that the dictator faced. The expectation of imminent war both linked and repeatedly radicalized Stalin's policies along the same lines: massive internal repression tied to urgent economic and social mobilization, and intense diplomatic maneuvering. The expectation of coming war explains the dictator's sudden and radical turn in 1927, and the radicalized and horrific policies he forced on the country from then until early 1933. The treaties with Poland and the Baltic states led to a partial scaling back, but palpable expectations of war brought a new cycle of radicalization, from late 1936 until early autumn 1939, along related lines of repression, mobilization, and foreign diplomacy. The Soviet-German pact and the Manchurian conflict with Japan in 1939 led to a reduction in levels of repression, even though Stalin continued to strengthen the military-industrial sectors of the economy, and to maintain a high level of social mobilization. The onset of actual war in 1941 once again exacerbated policies of hypercentralized mobilization and mass repression, the latter shifted now from social to ethnic categories. The post-war years brought yet another expectation of conflict, now with a new enemy, but with a similar combination of repression and military-industrial mobilization.

In each of the war scenarios described above, the policies of internal repression were closely related to the purported character of foreign threat. Collectivization and dekulakization hit all peasants hard, but especially in Ukraine and Belorussia, the two areas that bordered on and had close historical ties to Poland. The mass purges of the mid and late 1930s replayed the script of the civil war – to secure the country against internal insurgencies – fifth-column enemies – in expectation of war with Japan or Germany, or both. During the war years, nationality purges hit those ethnic populations that Stalin

94 One important work that focuses on both escalation and deescalation of Stalinist violence is KHLEVNIUK Khoziain, especially chapters 4 and 5.

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suspected of collaboration with, and ethnic connection to, the country's enemies. Similarly, the anti-Jewish campaigns of the post-war years reflected Stalin's paranoia about American influence and sabotage. The final purge that Stalin was planning seems to have targeted that same group, perhaps in combination with the purge of an intelligentsia that Stalin saw as disloyal and too cosmopolitan.

Stalin was a dictator who connected dots, at times too many dots. As we know, he was a ravenous consumer of information and, in his suspicions, he connected everything, usually in a web of intrigue and conspiracy. This was both a strength and a weakness. It protected him from plots that existed and did not exist, but it also led him to misjudge, for example, by connecting the random murder of a Soviet diplomat in 1927 with a grand plot by Britain to provoke war. Still, and despite Stalin's tendency to see plots where none existed, we cannot ignore the dictator's penchant to weave together the disparate strands connecting foreign and domestic policy. For whatever reasons, there has been a tradition in historiography to analyze these aspects of Stalinist history separately. From the evidence that exists, however, it seems clear that Stalin did not consider domestic policies distinct from external relations and expectations. The kinds of population groups targeted during the different peaks of radical repression do not make sense from a purely domestic perspective. There exists, however, a paranoid but logical connection between episodes of repression internally and perceptions of immediate threat externally. The violence of Stalinism was cyclical rather than cumulative, but that violence was rooted in war and the threat of war. Stalin was a dictator at war for much of his rule, from 1918 until his death in 1953.

## Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| GANO | Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Novosibirskoi Oblasti (State Archive of the Novosibirsk Region), Novosibirsk |
| | Fond 4: Sekretnyi otdel Novosibirskogo Kraikoma (Secret Department, Novosibirsk District [Party] Committee) |
| GARF | Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (State Archive of the Russian Federation), Moscow |
| | Fond 8131: VTsSPS (All Union Council of Trade Unions) |
| OGPU | Ob"edinennoe gosudarstvennoe politicheskoe upravlenie (United Political Administration of the State – Organ of political repression) |
| NKVD | Narodnyi Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del (The People's Commissariat of the Interior) |
| RGASPI | Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'no-politicheskoi Istorii (Russian State Archive of Social and Political History), Moscow |
| | Fond 17: Tsentral'nyi Komitet KPSS (Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union) |
| | Fond 558: Fond Stalina (The Stalin Fund) |
| SR | Socialist Revolutionaries |

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