

Review Article

Years of War in the East, 1939–45: A Review Article

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Antony Beevor & Luba Vinogradova (eds), *A Writer At War: Vasily Grossman with the Red Army, 1941–45*. London: The Harvill Press, 2005, xxi + 378 pp., £20.00 h/b.

Simon Berthon & Joanna Potts, *Warlords: The Heart of Conflict, 1939–45*. London: Politico's, 2005, ix + 369 pp., £19.99 h/b.

Mary E. Glantz, *FDR and the Soviet Union: The President's Battles over Foreign Policy*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2005, viii + 253 pp., \$34.95 h/b.

Evan Mawdsley, *Thunder in the East: The Nazi–Soviet War, 1941–45*. London: Hodder Arnold, 2005, xxvi + 502 pp., £25.00 h/b.

Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War: The Red Army 1939–45*. London: Faber and Faber, 2005, xiv + 396 pp., £20.00 h/b.

IN THE SPRING OF 1941 IT WAS OBVIOUS TO ALMOST ANYONE IN-THE-KNOW, from Lisbon and London to Bucharest and Istanbul, that Nazi Germany was going to invade the Soviet Union. In Moscow, Soviet intelligence reports described the huge build-up of German armed forces on Soviet western frontiers. Based on decrypted German cable traffic the British government warned I. V. Stalin and his ambassador in London, Ivan M. Maiskii, that Hitler was loading his gun against the Soviet Union. On the eve of the German invasion a clerk in the British Foreign Office asked a question being posed all over Europe, how could the Soviet government be so complacent as a huge German army sat coiled on its frontiers ready to strike?¹

¹Untitled minute, E. O. Coote, Northern Department, 14 June 1941, N2805G/78/38, National Archives, United Kingdom, Kew (hereafter NAUK) Foreign Office (hereafter FO) 371 29482; and untitled minute, C. F. A. Warner, head, Northern Department, 29 June 1941, N3231/3/38, NAUK FO 371 29466.

How could Stalin have let his country be taken so unawares on 22 June 1941 when Hitler launched Operation Barbarossa, the invasion of the Soviet Union?

The books herein reviewed deal with this question and with many others about the war between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. Why did it start and how was the war fought? The reader can examine these questions from the perspective of the leaders of the belligerent powers and from the point of view of the Soviet soldiers who died or were wounded in their millions to repel the invasion of the Russian motherland and to track down the Nazis in their Berlin lair. Mary Glantz examines the origins of Soviet–American relations and Franklin D. Roosevelt’s policies toward the Soviet Union. Simon Berthon and Joanna Potts look at the war through the eyes of Roosevelt, Churchill, Stalin, and Hitler. Their popular study formed the basis for a BBC television series entitled *Allies at War*. Evan Mawdsley provides a narrative of the war from its opening days until the fall of Berlin and offers a context for the books by Catherine Merridale and Antony Beevor and Luba Vinogradova. The latter have translated and edited the war journals of Vasilii Semenovich Grossman, Soviet war correspondent and novelist. He was at the front of many battles from Bryansk to Stalingrad and Berlin. His journals record the tragedies, heartbreak, and unassuming heroism of the Soviet peoples. Catherine Merridale attempts a similar look at Ivan, the common soldier of the Red Army, as a contemporary historian.

Mary Glantz begins her account with background to the wartime ‘grand alliance’ of the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and the United States. Relations between the Soviet Union and the United States (and Great Britain and France also) were almost always bad. After the Bolshevik revolution, the United States government, and the State Department in particular, were at once hostile. ‘Almost without exception’, Glantz writes, ‘US diplomatic and consular officials in Russia greeted the new regime with loathing and despair’ (p. 7). The Soviet cancellation of the Russian state debt and Bolshevik advocacy of world revolution were shocking. In early January 1918 the Secretary of State, Robert Lansing, was riled by Bolshevik appeals ‘to the ignorant and mentally deficient, who by their numbers are urged to become masters. Here seems to me to lie a very real danger in view of the present social unrest throughout the world’ (Gardner 1984, p. 161). In February Lansing claimed that the Bolsheviks were a greater threat than Germany—with which the United States was at war—because they ‘threatened us with revolution’ (Foglesong 1995, p. 66). According to Glantz, debt repudiation and advocacy of world revolution provided the ‘foundation for the development of distrust and antipathy toward the Soviet Union among US Foreign Service officers’. The Soviet government could not be trusted; ‘normal’ relations with the Soviet Union were impossible. These permanent officials became ‘intractable foes of Bolshevism’ (pp. 8–9), and they passed on their hostility to the new generation entering the foreign service in the 1920s.

Loy Henderson, one of the younger generation of American diplomats, needed no anti-Bolshevik coaching. ‘The rulers of Russia’, he observed in the 1920s, ‘were united in their determination to promote chaos and revolution in the non-communist world until they could achieve their ultimate objective of a communist world with headquarters in Moscow’ (p. 12). In 1926 the Secretary of State, Frank Kellogg, rejected on ‘a question of principle’ Soviet overtures for improved relations: ‘We cannot recognize a regime whose very foundation principle is ultimately to bring about the overthrow of

every foreign government by revolution . . .'.² At the end of the decade, the American position was unchanged: 'We have waited 10 years for the Soviets to be overturned in Russia', wrote Robert F. Kelley, a State Department official.³ According to Glantz, Kelley influenced a generation of foreign service officers who hated the Soviet Union (p. 11).

In Britain and France the situation was similar. For most of the inter-war years the British government was dominated by Tory 'die-hards' like Winston Churchill. In 1919, when secretary of state for war, Churchill did his best to overthrow the 'Bolshies', although the Red Army thwarted him. In 1927 the Tory government broke off diplomatic relations with Moscow. In France too anti-communism often ran amuck, exacerbated by domestic electoral politics (e.g. Carley 2000, 2006).

The Soviet government was more pragmatic in its outlook and in the conduct of its foreign policy than most American and European diplomats would admit. Pragmatism was essential because Soviet Russia was ruined after seven years of war and civil war. To rebuild the country, Bolsheviks became businessmen and diplomats. They pursued a policy called 'peaceful coexistence' to obtain trade, credit, and diplomatic recognition in the West; a tactic, says Glantz, until Soviet Russia became stronger, but there is no saying tactics would not have become permanent *strategy* had these been successful. Like many historians, Glantz notes that the Soviet government pursued 'a dual foreign policy', pragmatic on the one hand, through the Soviet commissariats for foreign affairs (*Narkomindel*) and foreign trade, and revolutionary on the other hand, through the Communist International or *Comintern*. This 'dual policy' could also describe a conflict inside the Soviet government between old revolutionaries and new pragmatists, the latter looking to traditional diplomatic and commercial channels to strengthen the Soviet state. Western anti-communism weakened the hand of Soviet pragmatists and reinforced Soviet suspicions of a hostile capitalist West. As long as that hostility continued, the *Comintern* would have its uses.

During the 1920s the United States, alone amongst the great powers, declined to recognise the Soviet government. Circumstances changed in the 1930s: not State Department hostility, but rather the occupant of the American White House. Roosevelt was elected president in a landslide in November 1932. According to Glantz, he was well briefed on Soviet affairs and wanted to recognise the Soviet Union. When Roosevelt took office in March 1933, Hitler had taken power in Germany and Japan had withdrawn from the League of Nations. Nevertheless, FDR encountered State Department opposition when he sought to improve relations with the Soviet government. 'Two camps' formed, says Glantz: 'one that felt the Soviet Union could not and should not be trusted, and another that considered cooperation with the Kremlin vital to the interests of the United States' (p. 17). This same pattern had also developed in France and Britain. Roosevelt dealt with internal opposition by going

²Kellogg to A. B. Houghton, US ambassador in London, no. 212, strictly personal and confidential for the ambassador, 4 November 1926, 861.01/1175, National Archives, Washington, DC (hereafter NA), Record Group 59, M[microfilm]-316, reel 75.

³Kelley, chief, Eastern European division, State Department, to Secretary of State, 27 April 1929, 861.51/2280, NA, M-316, reel 123.

around it, excluding foreign service officers from his decision-making processes, and by appointing people to important posts who would be sympathetic, he hoped, to his ideas.

The Soviet government also worried about international developments. Maksim M. Litvinov, the Soviet commissar for foreign affairs, read Hitler's blueprint for conquest, *Mein Kampf*, and took it seriously. Soviet policy evolved; Litvinov called it 'collective security'. The Soviet government would seek to improve relations with the United States, France, and Britain in order to build a potential front against German or Japanese aggression. According to Jean Payart, the French *chargé d'affaires* in Moscow, Litvinov was 'a born tactician, more pragmatic than doctrinaire, and more concerned with day to day reality than with ideology'. His boss, Stalin, held similar views.⁴

In November 1933, the United States recognised the Soviet Union. Litvinov went to Washington to conclude a 'gentleman's agreement' with Roosevelt whereby the Soviet Union would pay a certain amount on an American loan to the Provisional Government in 1917 in exchange for a government-to-government long-term loan, or a guarantee of such a loan to the Soviet Union.⁵ Recently published Soviet documents—to which Glantz apparently did not have access before publication of her book—demonstrate that the State Department blocked the loan. Although Litvinov felt that the American government had gone back on its word, he still sought to conclude some kind of debts—credits agreement, which the State Department loaded with terms unacceptable in Moscow.⁶ Evidence in these new document collections thus supports Glantz's ideas. The Soviet—American honeymoon was brief, if indeed there ever was one. Similar tenuous improvements of relations did not survive long in France (1932–34) or in Britain (1934–36) in spite of the rising danger of Nazi Germany and Japan. At least, Churchill, the 1920s die-hard, moved to the side of the pragmatists in the mid-1930s and advocated an Anglo—Franco—Soviet 'grand alliance' against Nazi Germany (Carley 1996).

'As the decade passed', Glantz observes, nothing much changed in the United States (p. 29). Henderson and his colleagues in the State Department continued to criticise the Soviet Union, like their counterparts in France and Britain, as untrustworthy, unrequited revolutionaries awaiting their chance for murder and mayhem. They were aided in their endeavours by events, especially the electoral victory of the centre-left Popular Front in France and the beginning of the Spanish Civil War

⁴Jean Payart, French *chargé d'affaires* in Moscow, no. 386, 4 October 1934, Ministère des Affaires étrangères, Paris (hereafter MAÉ), Europe 1918–40, Z-URSS/1260, ff. 321–322; and Stalin to V. M. Molotov, *Politburo* member and Stalin's right arm, 29 August 1929 (Lih 1995, pp. 174–175).

⁵Litvinov to Stalin, secret, 25 December 1933 (Sevost'yanov *et al.* 2002, pp. 748–749).

⁶Litvinov to A. A. Troyanovskii, Soviet *polpred* in Washington, 14 March 1934 (Sevost'yanov *et al.* 2003, pp. 57–60); Litvinov to Troyanovskii, 3 April 1934 (Sevost'yanov *et al.* 2003, pp. 96–97); Troyanovskii to Litvinov, 16 April 1934 (Sevost'yanov *et al.* 2003, p. 119); Troyanovskii to Litvinov, secret, 24 July 1934, (Sevost'yanov *et al.* 2003, pp. 187–189); N. N. Krestinskii, deputy commissar for foreign affairs, to L. M. Kaganovich, secretary, central committee, VKP (b), secret, 13 August 1934 (Sevost'yanov *et al.* 2003, pp. 193–195); Litvinov to Sovnarkom, 8 October 1934 (Sevost'yanov *et al.* 2003, p. 241); Kh. S. Veinberg's summary of Soviet—American negotiations, very secret, 14 November 1934 (Sevost'yanov *et al.* 2003, pp. 269–274); and Krestinskii to Troyanovskii, personal, very secret, 17 May 1935 (Sevost'yanov *et al.* 2003, pp. 321–323).

(May and July 1936). Europe divided between left and right; fear of social revolution burrowed deeply amongst anguished governing and economic elites. Henderson and his colleagues appear to have been mistaken in believing that ‘Soviet intentions remained hostile’ and that ‘Soviet gestures of friendship were purely opportunistic...’ (Glantz, p. 29; cf., Carley 2004, 2006).

The Soviet archives provide a different perspective on the 1930s: there one can find expressions of anger and disappointment over the failure of numerous Soviet initiatives for collective security. These failures deepened suspicions, at least partially justified, that France and Britain would leave the Soviet Union alone to face the eastern expansion of Nazi Germany (Lacroix-Riz 2006). The Munich conference in September 1938, where the French and British governments accepted the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, represented for the Soviet government striking evidence of Anglo–French weakness and unreliability. Even Litvinov, the most important advocate of collective security, was bitter and cynical. In April 1939 he nevertheless made one last proposal to Paris and London to forge an anti-Nazi alliance. When the Anglo–French response proved unenthusiastic, he was sacked in early May (Carley 1999, 2006). Payart, still in Moscow, thought that British ‘procrastination’ on Litvinov’s proposals was the last straw that brought him down.⁷

The Soviet government did not help itself in its relations with the West. The Stalinist purges (1936–38), according to Glantz, confirmed ‘many American diplomats’ perceptions of both Soviet domestic and foreign aims’ (p. 27), and impeded Roosevelt’s efforts to establish more confident relations with Moscow. After Litvinov’s sacking, negotiations for an Anglo–Franco–Soviet alliance continued, although without success, and the Soviet government signed a non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany on 23 August 1939. These developments confirmed ‘Henderson and the other diplomats’ most pessimistic assessments of Soviet intentions’. The negative ‘perceptions of American diplomats’, shared by their French and British counterparts, produced ‘a self-fulfilling prophecy’, according to Glantz: anti-Bolshevism was so intense that agreement with the Soviet Union was impossible and led the Soviet government, *faute de mieux*, to conclude the Nazi–Soviet non-aggression pact (pp. 45–46).

Such views will sit uncomfortably with some historians of British and French foreign policy who argue that anti-communism was not a key factor in Anglo–French policy-making. Like Henderson and his contemporaries, these historians blame the Soviet government for the failure of the 1939 negotiations, although most have not read Soviet archival sources. One such observer recently opined that historians seeking out Soviet archives ‘cannot be fault[ed] for using the accessible material’ which seems a meagre concession from someone who cannot or has not consulted these sources (Strang 2006, p. 49). He and others appear to believe that bilateral or multilateral relations can be studied entirely from British archival or English language sources (e.g. Strang 2006; Neilson 2006). Yet another historian states that anti-communism should not be ‘exaggerated’: ‘much work remains to be done on the true extent and importance of anti-communism in France’ (Jackson 2004, pp. 528–529). New work is of course being published all the time based on multi-archival, multi-national research

⁷Payart, nos. 326–329, 4 May 1939, MAÉ, Papiers Naggiar, vol. 40.

(e.g. Lacroix-Riz 2006). Here is a contemporary comment on this very topic reported to the Foreign Office in early 1939:

The well-to-do people I happened to meet were nearly all rejoicing at the Munich Settlement. To them the enemy is the Jew and 'his ally' the Russian... The French society people I listened to told me that everyone who was 'against Munich' was paid by the Jews... many people would sooner see Hitler come into France and 'restore' order than leave things as they are. These society people were all against war with Germany and in favour of every concession to avoid it... My dominating impression is that there is forming in Europe a new 'international'—that of the well-to-do for I heard exactly the same arguments in Paris as in London, in favour of giving Hitler what he wants in the interest of peace, 'for Hitler represents order'. The difference between Paris and London is that Paris expresses itself with greater vehemence....⁸

Just common dinner table gossip, one might say, which of course should not be 'exaggerated', though such ideas explain why many people on the political right had little or no enthusiasm for war with Nazi Germany and were for surrender at the first serious reverse.

The Russo–Finnish or Winter War (1939–40) brought Soviet relations with the West to their nadir, and could have led to war with France and Britain in February–March 1940. Édouard Daladier, the French premier, was delighted by the opportunities that the Winter War appeared to provide for gaining an advantage over Germany in Scandinavia and for delivering a possibly fatal blow to the Soviet Union. Daladier was a closet anti-communist who 'came out' after the conclusion of the Nazi–Soviet non-aggression pact. To his mind the Winter War was an argument against those 'critics who maintained that effective collaboration with the Soviet Union was still a possibility'.⁹ As Daladier explained in a press interview in early March, the Soviet Union's

attitude was at once criminal and contemptible. It was her idea to cause the war to spread as much as possible in the hope that Bolshevism would find favourable soil. But recent events—and notably the defeats which the Russian Army had suffered in Finland...—had caused a considerable loss of prestige to Stalin and to Bolshevism....

In the French National Assembly the government boasted of its suppression of 'Hitlero-Communist activities', dissolving 620 communist trade unions and 675 'communist political groups', banning 161 communist newspapers, depriving 2,278 elected communist representatives of their mandates, and arresting 3,400 communist 'militants'. 'Many foreign accomplices had been interned in concentration camps or expelled', the government said, but 'the fight went on'.¹⁰

⁸Lady Violet Milner's record of conversations in Paris, 2 January 1939, C792/15/18, NAUK FO 371 22961. Milner was the editor of *National Review* in London.

⁹Untitled minute, Fitzroy Maclean, Northern Department, 2 January 1940, reporting a meeting with French embassy official Boniface de Castellane, on the previous day, N303/9/56, NAUK FO 371 24796.

¹⁰Ronald Campbell, British ambassador in Paris, no. 173, saving, 2 March 1940, C3260/1101/17, NAUK FO 371 24323; and Campbell, no. 336, confidential, 27 March 1940, C4517/1101/17, NAUK FO 371 24323.

When a Finnish delegation went to Moscow in March 1940 to sue for peace, Daladier directed his *chargé d'affaires* in Moscow, still Payart, to try to interrupt the negotiations in order to allow more time for Anglo–French military intervention. The Foreign Office condemned French ‘fairy stories’ to the Finns about promises of extravagant numbers of troops and arms to fight the Red Army. Daladier’s instructions to Payart, observed one senior Foreign Office official, were ‘most dishonest’.¹¹ The Finnish capitulation in mid-March without a doubt saved the Anglo–French coalition from ruinous folly. Yet even after the end of the Winter War, according to a Foreign Office official, ‘the French appear[ed] to welcome the prospect of open hostilities with the USSR’.¹² ‘*Incroyable*’, was nearly all one observer in Paris could say about French policy.¹³

Two months later France collapsed and Britain, quite sensibly, began to think of ways to woo the Soviet Union rather than to war against it. What a difference two months made. Churchill succeeded Neville Chamberlain as prime minister and committed the British government to determined resistance against Nazi Germany. Ignominious French collapse and lonely British resistance against Nazi Germany constitute the starting point for the other works examined here and for the continuation of Glantz’s narrative.

There are many histories of the war on the eastern front and of its great battles (e.g. Glantz & House 1995, Zolotarev *et al.* 1998; Erickson 1999a, 1999b). The new study by Evan Mawdsley describes Soviet resistance and mobilisation and suggests that even at the outset, the heretofore invincible German *Wehrmacht* might have bitten off more than it could chew. The numbers, says Mawdsley, in terms of population, territorial vastness, resources, and economic potential of the Soviet Union, were against Nazi Germany.

Mawdsley starts out by asking why Hitler would want to attack the Soviet Union and thus create a two-front war, an outcome that in the past he had been determined to avoid. According to Mawdsley, Hitler came to the conclusion that he could not knock Britain out of the war unless the Soviet Union was eliminated: ‘the defeat of Russia would make London see reason’ (p. 7). War with the Soviet Union would also satisfy Hitler’s desire to destroy the menace of Bolshevism. A swift, devastating summer campaign would extinguish ‘the USSR/Russia as a state’ (p. 9).

Mawdsley also asks how Stalin could leave the Soviet Union so ill prepared to counter a German invasion? The evidence of German preparations began to show during the summer of 1940. By early spring 1941 German intentions were an open secret in Europe. In June the Foreign Office had no doubt that a German invasion was imminent; the only remaining uncertainty was when it would launch. As Mawdsley

¹¹Daladier to Payart, nos. 103–105, extrême urgence, priorité, 8 March 1940, MAÉ, Papiers Naggiar, vol. 44; *Diplomatie* to Payart, nos. 111–113, 10 March 1940, MAÉ, Papiers Naggiar, vol. 44; untitled minute, Sir Alexander Cadogan, permanent under-secretary, 8 March 1940, N2935G/9/56, NAUK FO 371 24804; and untitled minute, Sir Orme G. Sargent, deputy permanent under-secretary, 9 March 1940, N2990/9/56, NAUK FO 371 24804.

¹²Untitled minute, F. K. Roberts, 26 March 1940, C4615G/1101/17, NAUK FO 371 24323.

¹³A marginal, undated but *post facto* note by Paul-Émile Naggiar, French ambassador in Moscow, recalled to Paris, on *Diplomatie* to Payart, nos. 111–113, 10 March 1940, MAÉ, Papiers Naggiar, vol. 44.

points out, Soviet intelligence was effective: Stalin received numerous reports of German preparations, but he did not think that Hitler would risk a two-front war as long as Britain remained a belligerent. 'Germany is involved up to its ears in the war in the West', Stalin said in mid-June (p. 36). Senior Soviet commanders were alive to the danger and wanted to mobilise, but Stalin held them back for fear of matters getting out of hand (Gorodetsky 1999). Stalin thought that Hitler was playing a game of bluff to extract economic concessions or to drag the Soviet Union into the war. Even if Hitler were not bluffing, Stalin reckoned that he had enough divisions along the frontier to contain a German invasion until the Red Army was fully mobilised. As Mawdsley stresses, Stalin thought he was acting from a position of strength, although this idea is not borne out by his deputy V. M. Molotov's reminiscences (Resis 1993). Berthon and Potts refer to Stalin's fear of the German army, which is why, they say, Stalin agreed to the Nazi–Soviet non-aggression pact.

It is often true that war does not go as generals and politicians expect. Hitler's attempt to destroy the Soviet Union in one quick, brutal campaign failed, although Stalin's over-confidence, if Mawdsley is correct, proved a horrible miscalculation. It was only at unimaginable cost that the German 'battle of annihilation' failed outside Moscow in December 1941. Few intelligence officers in the West gave the Red Army a chance against Hitler's invincible armies. Western assessments were often influenced by anti-communism and/or Russophobia. Glantz points to Major Ivan D. Yeaton, the American attaché in Moscow, a caricature of a bone-headed anti-communist who burned his papers in Moscow in July, thinking the Germans would arrive any day. He left Moscow in October 1941, and on the way home told a British intelligence officer that 'he was averse from giving Russians good modern equipment which he is convinced they are no more able to use to good effect than [the] Chinese and for same reasons'.¹⁴ Yeaton, it seems, mixed a dash of racism with his main dish of anti-communism.

British officers in Military Intelligence were no better. These gentlemen, according to one Foreign Office official,

were so anti-Russian as to be dangerous . . . I should not be surprised if they had a good deal to do with the W.O.'s [War Office] original low opinion of Russia's powers of resistance, which, I fear, led to our making a good many mistakes in our approach to the Russians on military matters at the beginning of our collaboration. But perhaps I exaggerate their power for evil.

The chair of the Joint Intelligence Committee, Victor Cavendish Bentinck, put it this way:

Whenever the Russians achieve some success or even succeed in stemming the German advance these officers become plunged in gloom. A Russian defeat fills them with joy. On account of their prejudices, whenever making enquiries regarding the situation on the Russian front, I always check their information . . . I also agree that [they] . . . were largely responsible for the original low opinion held by the War Office of Russian powers of resistance. However even if there had been less prejudiced officers in charge of the Russian section of Military Intelligence Directorate, the War Office would nevertheless have

¹⁴Deputy Director Military Intelligence, Far East, to War Office, no. 07367, important, 3 November 1941, N6515G/78/28, NAUK FO 371 29493.

been anti-Russian. I have a feeling that our War Office regards Russian officers as not being nice people to associate with. Moreover they have a deep—and unfortunately unjustified—contempt for all foreign officers, with the exception of Germans, *vis-à-vis* whom they suffer, perhaps rightly, from an inferiority complex. However against the very dangerous anti-Russian prejudice, which is at times so strong as to be almost fanatical . . . we must set the fact that they are less stupid than many of the officers in the M.I. branch of the War Office.¹⁵

According to Glantz, Yeaton's successor, Joseph Michela, was just as purblind, which led him 'to misjudge Soviet military capabilities' (p. 51).

Whatever the opinions of Russophobic anti-communists in London, Churchill immediately made a broadcast on the BBC saying that Britain would do all it could to support Soviet resistance against the common enemy. British assistance to the Soviet government was more rhetorical than real, although one might perhaps argue that Churchill's eloquent denunciations of Nazism were worth something in terms of Soviet morale.

Berthon and Potts pick up the story in May 1940 at the time of the collapse of France. Churchill was stunned and so was Stalin. 'Couldn't they [the French] have put up any resistance at all?', Stalin complained. 'Now Hitler's going to beat our brains in!' (p. 25). While Stalin sought to put off war as long as possible, Churchill calculated on how to bring in the United States. When the *Wehrmacht* invaded the Soviet Union, Churchill broke out cigars, and continued to court FDR. The Soviet government immediately asked for British help in stemming the Nazi invasion. Stalin pressed Churchill for large forces to fight on the Russian front or on a second front in Western Europe. Impossible, Churchill replied, offering instead bombing raids on Germany and advice from the British military mission in Moscow. British officials in the Foreign Office saw a problem. The Red Army was the only army fighting the Germans on the ground in Europe. North Africa was a side-show, the scene of mainly 'rearguard actions'. As one Foreign Office official put it, 'the Russians think that they have nothing to learn from our soldiers except evacuation which they consider that they can do just as well themselves'.¹⁶

Mawdsley describes the Soviet disaster in detail. Red Army losses in the first three months of the war amounted to 2,050,000 soldiers with an additional 950,000 to the end of December 1941. Between 70% and 80% of these losses were prisoners of war. The Soviet high command wrote 177 divisions out of its order of battle, and most of these were lost in the June–September period (p. 86). The German army let Soviet POWs starve to death, while *SS einatzgruppen* followed behind advancing German divisions, to kill communists, Soviet officials, intellectuals, Jews, Gypsies, or anyone who looked at them the wrong way. There are documentary films of Soviet Jews being lined up naked in front of trenches waiting to be shot, but they were not the only, or most numerous victims of the attempted Nazi genocide. German forces looted local populations and left them to starve. Even 'Ukrainian Quislings', who hoped for

¹⁵Untitled minute, Warner, FO, 3 December 1941, N7081G/122/38, NAUK FO 371 29501; and Cavendish Bentinck's untitled minute, 4 December 1941, N7081G/122/38 NAUK FO 371 29501.

¹⁶'Mr. Warner', Brigadier E. O. Skaife, 16 June 1941, N3500G/3014/38, NAUK FO 371 29561; and untitled minute, Cavendish Bentinck, 16 September 1941, N5219G/3014/38, NAUK FO 371 29563.

liberation from communism, were disillusioned fatalities, although Ukrainian volunteer police helped to round up Jews for killing in Nazi occupied territory.¹⁷

Given these extraordinary Soviet losses, a reader may wonder how Berthon and Potts could write that Stalin had ‘an unlimited appetite for aid’ (p. 101), as though he was unreasonable when the Red Army had suffered such grievous losses. And there is a further remarkable statement, that in December 1941 ‘Churchill was still fighting alone against Hitler in Europe and North Africa’ (p. 121). In fact, the British army was not fighting at all in Europe, unless these authors were thinking of the British action at Spitzbergen in the late summer of 1941. The BBC publicised this insignificant, unopposed operation, and Sir Stafford Cripps, the British ambassador in Moscow, was furious, thinking the Russians would laugh at them or resent even more the British failure to fight in Europe.¹⁸ Mawdsley focuses on the numbers (on 1 July 1942): three German divisions in North Africa, 183 in ‘the East’ and in Finland (p. 242). In North America and the United Kingdom, historic documentaries often feature the ‘turning point’ North African and Normandy campaigns. The United States is the worst offender with its overpowering cultural ethnocentricity about how ‘America won the war’. As Mawdsley puts it in so many words, the United States paid in Lend-Lease Studebakers and Jeeps, the Soviet Union, in millions of lives, although 85% of the value of Lend-Lease aid did not arrive until after the Red Army victory at Stalingrad in January 1943 (pp. 192–193).

Churchill had a ready response to Stalin’s resentment over British shirking: the Soviets ‘brought their own fate upon themselves when by their Pact with Ribbentrop they let Hitler loose on Poland and so started the war’; the Soviet Union ‘let the French army be destroyed’ and Great Britain had to fight alone for over a year ‘while every communist in England, under orders from Moscow, did his best to hamper our war effort’.¹⁹ Stalin did not comment at the time, but he might have observed that the non-aggression pact came *after* the Munich debacle and after six *years* of dismissive Anglo–French rejections of Soviet calls for cooperation against Nazi Germany. He could have added that certain people in Britain and France would have been pleased to give ‘Herr Hitler’ a free hand in the east. Not that Britain did much to help France in its peril: in early 1939 the British government planned to send *two* divisions to fight in France.²⁰ In 1940 there were only nine. Stalin could also have asked why he should help the French army when two months before the fall of France, the French and British governments planned to make war against the Soviet Union. Churchill knew all this, but preferred to select the memories he would share with Stalin.

As Glantz emphasises, one cannot blame FDR for leaving the Soviet Union in the lurch. He ignored Yeaton and Michela and the State Department regulars. Henderson was still around and still writing rubbish in memoranda about the Soviet Union. All these gentlemen, Glantz notes, ‘continued to allow their anti-Soviet prejudices and

¹⁷Untitled minute on the ‘Ukrainian Quislings’, Cavendish Bentinck, 30 September 1941, N5447/78/38, NAUK, FO 371 29490.

¹⁸See the papers in jacket no. N5169/78/38, 10 September 1941, NAUK FO 371 29490.

¹⁹Churchill to Cripps, no. 47, immediate, 28 October 1941, N6583G/3/38, NAUK FO 371 29471.

²⁰‘Secretary of State’, Sir Robert Vansittart, chief diplomatic advisor, 19 December 1938, C358G/281/17, NAUK FO 371 22922; and untitled minute, Edward Lord Halifax, foreign secretary, 23 January 1939, C940G/281/17, NAUK FO 371 22922.

biases to fog their perception' (p. 57). American journalist C. L. Sulzberger, made jokes about Yeaton being 'dumber than a dumb Englishman' (p. 66), which Cavendish Bentinck might have allowed was very dumb indeed. One Foreign Office clerk worried about whether the United States would support the Soviet war effort:

Mr. Roosevelt has long been accused of radical tendencies and not a few of his supporters [are]...widely regarded as of Communist leanings. The Finnish war, the long record of Communist intrigue in America, the long excesses of the Communist element in labour and the fact that Communism has been the great bogey of American political life since 1918, have given special position in the American mind, and any suggestion that the United States should help the Soviet will be most unpopular and might well be politically disastrous for the Administration.²¹

The U.S. War Department welcomed the Soviet entry into the war, but only in the sense that it would give Britain a three-month respite from possible invasion. Soviet defeat was 'a foregone conclusion' (p. 73). Nevertheless, on 24 June Roosevelt took the first steps toward extending aid to the Soviet Union. In July Roosevelt sent his right arm, Harry Hopkins, to Moscow, who concluded that the Soviet Union would stay in the fight. Before Hopkins left for Moscow, he had a long conversation with K. A. Umanskii, the Soviet ambassador in Washington. Roosevelt was determined, said Hopkins, to do all he could to help the Soviet Union. To this end Soviet requests for assistance were being removed from the authority of the State Department and 'and its bureaucrats'. A 'special organization' (*apparat*) was being set up which would have authority 'over the bureaucrats and outside of them'. It's true, Hopkins admitted, that in the bureaucracy, especially the State Department, there were 'not a few people whose political prejudices towards the USSR were stronger than their loyalty to carrying out the orders of the head of the government and armed forces...'. Roosevelt would use 'a heavy hand' in dealing with these individuals and Hopkins asked Umanskii to advise him of any 'concrete cases of sabotage'. There were problems during the summer: Umanskii complained to Moscow that he was being sent in circles, 'from Pontius to Pilate', to get supplies moving. He took up his complaints with both the Secretaries of Treasury and State, and reported in September that matters had taken a turn for the better.²² In September Roosevelt sent W. Averill Harriman to Moscow to conduct negotiations with Stalin about Soviet supply needs. Glantz says that Umanskii was not much liked in Washington (p. 81), and no wonder, Hopkins and others had told Umanskii about anti-communist opposition to aid for the Soviet war effort and Umanskii was trying to overcome it.

²¹Untitled minute, F. E. Evans, Northern Department, 14 June 1941, N2793G/78/38, NAUK FO 371 29482.

²²Excerpt from Umanskii to Narkomindel, 13 July 1941 (*Dokumenty vneshei politiki*, vol. 24, Moscow, 2000 (hereafter *DVP*), pp. 147–49); Umanskii to Narkomindel, 17 July 1941 (*DVP*, pp. 160–62); Umanskii to Narkomindel, 29 July 1941 (*DVP*, pp. 192–93); Umanskii and F. I. Golikov, head of the Soviet military mission in Washington, to Narkomindel, 31 July 1941 (*DVP*, pp. 203–05); Umanskii to Narkomindel, 5 August 1941 (*DVP*, pp. 216–18); Umanskii to Narkomindel, 8 August 1941 (*DVP*, pp. 223–24); and Umanskii to Stalin, 13 September 1941 (*DVP*, pp. 299–300).

'Bureaucratic resistance' weakened in the autumn of 1941: the War Department recognized that if the Red Army collapsed, Nazi Germany would become 'invincible' (Glantz, p. 81). In November Roosevelt announced that Lend-Lease would be extended to the Soviet Union. On 5 December the Red Army launched a counter-offensive, which threw back German forces, in some places in the south nearly 300 kilometres, inflicting a strategic defeat on the once invincible *Wehrmacht*. Two days later the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. As Mawdsley notes, the Hitlerite *blitzkrieg* had failed, perhaps it could never have succeeded: 'The weekend of 6–7 December can be seen as the turning point of the Second World War as a whole' (p. 117).

The Red Army and the civilian population suffered unspeakable losses, but the Red Army continued to fight. In reading Vasilii Grossman's wartime journals, one can begin to understand why. In spite of the often brutal stupidity of the Stalinist government, the Soviet peoples, most of them anyway, rallied. While two million soldiers surrendered, others broke out of German encirclements to rejoin the Red Army or they fought to the death against the invader. On a fortress wall, a wounded Red Army soldier wrote, 'I am dying, but I am not surrendering' (Zolotarev *et al.* 1998, pp. 160–161, Vol. 1). The fortress of Brest near the German frontier held out to the last man at the end of July when German divisions were far to the east. Grossman wrote about the growing resistance, without ignoring acts of treason, poor morale, and government and military bungling. He became a journalist for *Krasnaya Zvezda*, the popular Soviet armed forces newspaper. The editor David Ortenberg hired him because 'he knows about people's souls' (p. 5). He did indeed, and his stories became immensely popular in the Red Army. In the midst of the war Grossman wrote a novel, *The People Immortal*, which front-line soldiers, the *frontoviki*, followed in instalments in *Krasnaya Zvezda*.

Within weeks Grossman was at the front where he witnessed the defeat and retreat of Red Army forces. At a railway station near the front 'every corner is filled with Red Army soldiers', he observed: 'Many of them are badly dressed, in rags. They have already been "there"' (p. 7). In another place near the front Grossman leafed through a recent newspaper: 'The much-battered enemy', it said, 'continued his cowardly advance' (p. 11). Grossman did not ignore the scope of the Red Army's defeat: 'Everyone who has escaped back can't stop telling stories about being encircled, and all the stories are terrifying. A pilot escaped . . . wearing only his underwear, but he had held on to his revolver' (p. 12). There were more mundane observations: 'A chicken belonging to the headquarters staff is taking a walk . . . with ink on its wings'. He saw mushrooms in the forest and was sad to look at them (p. 13). 'Chimneys have grown very tall, they are standing tall amid the ruins' (p. 14). There were of course army jokes like this one reflecting the idea that Red Army soldiers did not have great confidence in the aim of their pilots: 'Ours, ours?' went the joke, 'then where's my helmet!' (p. 15).

Grossman recorded heroic acts and cowardly betrayals. 'I am a simple soul', said one brave soldier, 'as simple as a balalaika. It isn't afraid of death. It's those with precious souls who fear death'. And there was a badly wounded officer who refused to be carried to the rear: 'I've still got my voice and I am able to give orders. I am a communist and I can't leave the battlefield' (p. 14). The Germans called out for Red

Army men to surrender: 'Hey, Zhuchkov . . .'. Zhuchkov answers sullenly: 'Fuck you' (p. 18). 'It is hard to surrender one's own land', said another soldier, 'If only we could advance soon' (p. 72). But a Ukrainian traitor from Chernigov was caught and interrogated: 'The Germans had bought him for a hundred marks'; 'It was only a hundred marks', the traitor replied, as if to diminish his treason. 'He isn't a human being any more', observed Grossman, ' . . . his noisy, greedy breathing . . . belongs to a creature that senses . . . imminent death' (p. 28). Many soldiers failed to stand their ground: ' . . . Deserter Toropov was shot in front of [his company]'. Then there were the Dolenkos: 'Her husband went off with [Soviet] partisans, and she went away with the Germans' (p. 73). An old man asked Grossman: 'Where are you retreating from?' (p. 44).

Grossman also noticed the women who were left behind in villages emptied of military-age men.

The whole heavy burden of work now rests entirely on them. Nyushka—as if made of cast iron, mischievous and whorelike: 'Ah, it's war now', she says. 'I've already served 18 [men] since my husband left. We have a cow between three women, but she lets only me milk her . . .', she laughs. 'Now it's easier to persuade a woman than a cow'. She grins offering us her love . . . (p. 122).

Women served at the front and amongst partisan units behind enemy lines. One was a school girl from Moscow, Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya. Tanya was her *nom de guerre*; she was caught by the Germans and hanged. 'You'll never hang us all', she shouted, waiting to die, 'My comrades will avenge me' (p. 121). They did too, and Zoya became an iconic image of Soviet resistance against the fascist invader.

Grossman noted less dramatic scenes. Women were talking in a canteen; one says: 'Oh this Hitler, he's a real Satan! And we used to say that communists were Satans' (p. 123). But there is also this:

I don't know if any population could be strong enough to carry this terrible burden. The tragic emptiness of the villages. Girls are driven away in vehicles. They are crying, and their mothers are crying, because their daughters are being taken away to the army (p. 124).

They served in the front lines, one million strong, as signallers, nurses, gunners, or fighter pilots, and many did not come home.

Women also played a more traditional role waiting for their men to return. 'Wait for me and I'll come back', went the popular poem written by Konstantin Simonov:

. . . Wait throughout the gloom and rack of autumn's yellow rain. Wait when snowstorms fill the way, wait in summer's heat, wait when, false to yesterday, others do not wait. Wait though from that far off place no letters come to you. Wait when all the others cease to wait, who waited too. Wait for me and I'll come back . . . Defying death . . .

Frontoviki often kept a copy of the poem in a breast pocket for luck (p. xvi).

However terrible the losses, the Soviet 'motherland' rallied after the first crucial victory of Soviet arms before Moscow. A stern-faced Mother Russia, dressed all in red and wrapped in a heavy shawl, called from thousands of posters for her sons and daughters to fight the fascists, despoiling her lands and murdering her children. 'The

spirit of the army—a great, subtle force . . . is a reality’, Grossman wrote (p. 70). Then he made this entry: ‘Night. Snowstorm. Vehicles. Artillery. They are moving in silence. Suddenly a hoarse voice is heard at a road junction: “Hey, which is the road to Berlin?” A roar of laughter’ (p. 68). The hymn, *Svyashchennaya voina* (‘Sacred War’) captured the rising defiance of the Soviet peoples. It was a call to arms: ‘Rise up vast country, rise up in the deadly battle, with the dark force of fascism, with the damned horde. Let our noble rage boil up like a wave. The war of the people is being fought, the sacred war. . .’. If you hear this song, you will understand its power: Grossman always got to his feet when he sang it.

The Red Army suffered further terrible defeats in the spring of 1942 around Kharkov, and the *Wehrmacht* launched a two pronged offensive aiming at Stalingrad on the Volga and the Caucasian oil fields. On 29 July Stalin issued his order no. 227:

The German occupiers are struggling to get to Stalingrad . . . and the north Caucasus . . . To retreat further means to doom yourself and with it to doom our Motherland . . . Not a step backwards! . . . It is necessary steadfastly, to the last drop of blood, to defend each position, each metre of Soviet territory, to hold every patch of Soviet soil . . . (Mawdsley, pp. 167–168).

Deserters were shot or sent to penal battalions as *smertniki* where they did the most dangerous jobs and had short lives. Order no. 227 was probably Stalin’s admission of failure, according to Mawdsley (p. 168).

Grossman watched the retreat to Stalingrad during the summer of 1942: ‘This war . . . on the lower reaches of the Volga, gives one a terrifying feeling of a knife driven deep . . .’ (p. 124). From his notebooks an old woman lamented: ‘These fools have allowed [the enemy] to reach the heart of the country, the Volga. They’ve given them half of Russia . . .’ (p. 127). ‘Ah, you bastards’, another woman cursed, when Red Army soldiers hid and did not shoot at a diving enemy plane (pp. 126–127). The Germans levelled Stalingrad, killing 40,000 civilians in a few days, but they could not take the city. Fighting went on from factory to factory, house to house, basement to basement, from rubble pile to rubble pile. Reinforcements on the east bank had to cross 1,300 metres of open water making them easy targets of German fighters and artillery. It was like descending into hell. No, Grossman noted, it’s ‘ten times worse than hell’. Mercy for weakness was in short supply: one Red Army man ‘shot his comrade who had been carrying a wounded man back from the battlefield and had raised his hands in surrender. After this the soldier brought the wounded man back himself’ (p. 136). ‘Seven Uzbeks were guilty of self-inflicted wounds. They were all shot’ (p. 149). Grossman asked a soldier if he felt any pity for a deserter he had just executed: ‘How can one speak of pity’, he replied (p. 167). Death could come at any moment, while peeling potatoes, or laughing. General V. I. Chuikov commanded the defence. Grossman thought him a brave soldier, who refused to duck when German shells went off nearby. ‘Soldiers notice these things’, Chuikov said (p. 146). The Stalingrad inferno produced ‘a wild anger, an inhuman anger, toward Germans’ (p. 151). ‘Blood for blood, death for death’, went the Red Army imprecation (Zolotarev *et al.* 1998, pp. 320–321, Vol. 1). Grossman found a letter from a dead soldier: ‘. . . I miss you very much. Please come and visit. I so want to see you, if only for one hour. I am writing this, and tears are pouring. Daddy, please come and visit’ (p. 152).

The behaviour of the Americans Yeaton, Michela, Henderson, among others, and the 'stupid' War Office intelligence officers seems sordid in comparison with the unimaginable suffering and sacrifice of the Soviet peoples. Did their millions of dead count for nothing? One might wonder a little in reading the book by Catherine Merridale. While Grossman recorded his impressions of the common people as an eye witness, Merridale undertakes a similar examination as a historian interviewing veterans (about 200) and examining Soviet archival records. Grossman observed acts of treason, stupidity, poor morale, but he was not distracted from the essential task of winning the war against a murderous invader. Merridale, on the other hand, does the reverse. She acknowledges the resistance of the common soldier, but then focuses on evidence of cowardice and brutality.

The title, *Ivan's War*, is attractive, but not quite on the mark. It was Zoya's and Nyushka's war too. It was everyone's war, like it or not. The title, however, does not give away Merridale's bias. That comes a little later. Like Mawdsley she notes the extraordinary scale and destructiveness of the war, and observes how the Red Army had to hold the line alone against the Nazis. Surrender was not an option: defeat would have meant 'the genocide of Slavs and Jews' (p. 3). Merridale wants to know more about the common soldiers of the Red Army: 'Those millions of conscript Soviet troops, for us, the beneficiaries of their victory, seem characterless' (p. 4). Almost immediately Merridale perceives a paradox: 'few have reflected on the motivation of soldiers whose lives had been poisoned by the very state for which they were about to fight'. She does not accept the heroic characterisation of Ivan as 'simple, healthy, strong and kind . . . selfless and unafraid of death . . . no Soviet book . . . ever mentioned panic, self-mutilation, cowardice or rape' (pp. 5–6).

In her determination to deflate Ivan's heroic images, Merridale is careless in generalisation and use of evidence. The Russian government is worried about 'reparations claims' and 'looted art' (p. 9), and does not 'encourage' research, even though the sixtieth anniversary of the war stimulated the publication of much new scholarship based on archival work (e.g. Zolotarev *et al.* 1998). She herself appears to have had good archival access, though research in Russia is difficult and requires the patience of a saint. For Merridale, it is not the Soviet Union, but 'Stalin's empire' (p. 21), 'Stalin's regime' (p. 196), or the 'Soviet empire' (p. 291). The October Revolution was a 'Bolshevik coup' (p. 26) or 'Lenin's coup' (p. 295). Before thinking about Soviet sacrifices during the war, Merridale does not allow the reader to forget about the Stalinist purges, collectivisation, and the Winter War. The non-aggression pact made Stalin and Hitler 'allies' (p. 248). She asserts that Molotov had reminded Soviet citizens in his radio address on 22 June 'that just a few hours earlier Germany had been the Soviet Union's ally' (p. 78). If readers will check Molotov's speech, they will find that he made no such reference to Nazi Germany.²³

It does not take a post modernist to 'unpack' Merridale's language. She found the same stories which a reader will encounter in Grossman, but in Merridale the stories have a different slant. Where Grossman did not give up hope, in Merridale there was 'no hope', only doom and 'constant failure' (p. 133). Where Grossman focused on Red

²³Text of V. M. Molotov's radio address, 22 June 1941, published in *Izvestiya*, 24 June 1941 (DVP, pp. 8–9).

Army breakouts from encirclement, Merridale emphasises surrender, panic, collapse. Stalin anticipated 'total collapse' in the autumn of 1941 (p. 109). Not really, according to Mawdsley: this is 'a war of machines', Stalin said in November 1941: 'The war will be won by the one who produces the most motors' (p. 193). That could only be the Allied coalition. In the autumn of 1941 Ambassador Cripps, although he wobbled a little, believed that the Red Army would fight from the Urals if necessary; it would not surrender.²⁴ Stalin stayed in Moscow when it was threatened by the enemy and reviewed Red Army units on the way to their front at the traditional 7 November parade. In his address to the troops, he invoked the memory of Russia's great soldiers. To a visitor in Moscow, Stalin observed that Russian troops in the past had been twice to Berlin: 'and they will be there a third time' (Roberts 2006, p. 112). These were not the words and actions of a leader anticipating 'total collapse'.

Merridale denigrates the last man defence of the fortress of Brest: 'these brave men and women had no choice'. The defenders were forced to stay at gunpoint, according to hearsay from 'local people' in Kerch. How would they know and how far is Kerch from Brest? 'The Red Army collapsed', she said, 'in the first weeks of the war' (p. 87). The Polish, French, and Belgian armies collapsed and the British army was driven out of Dunkirk without its guns. But the badly beaten Red Army did not collapse; it kept fighting and killing Germans, and this was a new experience for the *Wehrmacht*. In July the Red Army was inflicting 7,000 casualties a day on the enemy, though its own losses were far greater (Roberts 2006).

When Merridale comes to the victorious Soviet counter-offensive in front of Moscow in December 1941, it seems out of the blue after so much negativity. Suddenly the Red Army began to find its cohesiveness driven by the desire for revenge. *Pravda*, the Moscow daily, changed its masthead to 'Death to the German invader' (p. 115). Merridale deflates this first Soviet victory: 'the German army had turned back from Moscow' (p. 163). In fact, the overextended Germans were *driven* back from the capital by the Red Army.

Victory at Stalingrad in January 1943, according to Mawdsley, was a 'devastating', 'catastrophic' blow to Nazi Germany. It was the beginning of the end (pp. 182, 204). FDR thought Stalingrad made victory certain (Berthon & Potts, p. 184). Not Merridale: she calls into question General Chuikov's courage, based on flimsy hearsay, and then writes that 'the gains of February 1943 were not to last... [referring to the serious Soviet reverse at Kharkov]. The outcome of the Soviet Union's war was still unclear' (p. 176). This barrage of revisionism begins to sound like cheap shots. Of course, the reader has a choice between Mawdsley's judgement and Merridale's. Grossman and the *frontoviki* took heart from victory at Stalingrad: they began to hope for a better life after the war without secret police and fear.

While the battles in southern Russia raged, another battle, a squalid one, was going on in the American embassy in Moscow. This conflict was between the American military attaché Michela and Brigadier General Philip Faymonville, head of the Lend-Lease office in Moscow. Faymonville did not report to the American ambassador or to Michela, and this caused friction. The real problem was that

²⁴Cripps, no. 1107, immediate, most secret, 7 September 1941, N5113G/78/38, NAUK, FO 371 29490; and Cripps, no. 111, confidential, 15 September 1941, N5447/78/38, NAUK, FO 371 29490.

Michela and others in the US embassy were rabid anti-communists. Like his predecessor Yeaton and British intelligence officers in London, 'Michela consistently expressed disdain for the Red Army' (p. 128) even as it pushed the Germans back from Moscow. According to him, the Red Army had no reserves in November 1941 even when these were about to fall upon the *Wehrmacht*. In December he described the German withdrawal in Russia as 'quiet and unhurried' when in fact it was precipitous and often panic-stricken. Not everyone in the US embassy was hostile to the Soviet Union, but most were.

Michela resented Faymonville for his successful relations with Soviet authorities. Faymonville had been military attaché in the late 1930s, and was a lonely advocate of increased cooperation with the Soviet Union. The anti-communists in Moscow and Washington considered him a 'pink' whose ideas should not be taken seriously. According to a well-connected American journalist, Roosevelt had pulled Faymonville out of 'the boondocks' where he had been sent by 'reactionary officials in the War Department' because of his 'pro-Soviet' reports on the Red Army. He said it could fight. FDR made no secret of the fact that he felt deceived by the State Department which had predicted the collapse of the Soviet Union in three or four weeks; he sent Faymonville to Moscow to get better information.²⁵ Intrigues against him then resumed. Michela finally resorted to the old accusation that Faymonville was 'pro-Soviet' and to a new one, that he was a homosexual. The FBI investigated and found that Michela was the problem, but both were recalled. Glantz reminds her readers that Faymonville was carrying out Roosevelt's policies while Michela and others like him intended to sabotage them. State Department anti-communism strengthened as the Red Army crushed the *Wehrmacht* and incidentally spared the lives of perhaps hundreds of thousands of American, British, and Canadian soldiers. FDR understood, but apparently not the State Department.

Churchill's traditional anti-communism also revived as the Red Army won victories. Berthon and Potts pick up that story: 'it would be a measureless disaster', Churchill told his foreign secretary, Anthony Eden (late 1942), 'if Russian barbarism overlaid the ancient states of Europe' (p. 131). 'We mustn't weaken Germany too much', Churchill told his Cabinet (autumn 1943), 'we may need her against Russia'. Cabinet colleagues were apparently 'horrified' (p. 206); this was the revival of Neville Chamberlain's former policy. Churchill was undeterred, but so was FDR who had different ideas about future relations with the Soviet Union. Churchill wanted his second front to be in Italy (p. 197). His idea was to get into the Balkans before the Red Army to block the spread of Soviet influence. Stalin wanted a second front through northern France; it was the shortest direct route from the west into the heart of Germany. FDR agreed with Stalin, not Churchill. The PM persisted: 'Stalin seems obsessed by this bloody second front . . . I can be obstinate too . . .' (pp. 208–209). 'The PM is untameable', reported one observer: 'He cannot leave well enough alone and he loathes the Russians' (p. 210). 'The real problem is Russia', Churchill said, but 'I can't get the Americans to see it' (p. 217). Churchill would have been relieved to know about Michela and his colleagues; it was FDR who kept them in check. The point is that Red

²⁵Record of conversation with Maurice Hindus, S. A. Lozovskii, deputy commissar for foreign affairs, 13 June 1942 (Sevost'yanov *et al.* 2004, pp. 242–246).

Army victories emboldened the anti-communists, who bided their time, waiting for and wanting conflict with the Soviet Union.

The question of the second front was settled at the Teheran conference in November 1943. Churchill still resisted, but vainly against Roosevelt and Stalin. 'I can't understand you at all', Stalin cracked at Churchill, 'in 1919 you were so keen to fight; now you don't seem to be... What has happened? Is it the result of advancing age? How many divisions have you got in contact with the enemy?...' (p. 222). Readers can well imagine Churchill's fuming reaction to such mockery, but Operation Overlord, the invasion of northern France was on. Winston did not change his mind about the 'Russians' and why should he: 'Trying to maintain good relations with a communist is like wooing a crocodile', he told his Cabinet in January 1944: 'You do not know whether to tickle it under the chin or to beat it on the head. When it opens its mouth you cannot tell whether it is trying to smile, or preparing to eat you up' (p. 230). Stalin of course might have said something similar about the British.

By the time the Allies met at Teheran the Red Army had delivered crushing blows against the *Wehrmacht*. At Kursk in July 1943 the last German offensive failed and in November the Red Army liberated Kiev after sweeping across eastern and central Ukraine. Grossman was there, writing with pride of Soviet victory and with sorrow for the many fallen Red Army soldiers. From Kursk onward the Red Army never lost the initiative against the *Wehrmacht*. Before the war, Western military observers, like Yeaton and Michela and their French and British counterparts, had said the Red Army could not fight on the offensive. These gentlemen might have eaten their helmets, but for their anti-communist hubris. From the Stalingrad counteroffensive in November 1942 onwards, the Red Army high command launched a series of sophisticated, coordinated 'deep operations' which drove the *Wehrmacht* out of the Soviet Union. The greatest of these offensives was Operation Bagration in June 1944 just after the Normandy invasion, which destroyed the German Army Group Centre in Belorussia. On a vast front in the centre of the German line the Red Army pushed westward some 500 kilometres to the outskirts of Warsaw at the end of July. German losses were 589,000 men, Mawdsley notes, as opposed to 157,000 on all other fronts including France (p. 308). Stalin reckoned the Red Army was strong enough 'to finish off' Nazi Germany, but all the same he welcomed the second front in France (Berthon & Potts, p. 248). One can imagine Grossman rising to his feet with his comrades to sing songs of victory:

... We will blow out the brains of the rotten fascist scum. For the evil spawn of mankind, we are making a well-built coffin. Let our noble rage boil up like a wave. The war of the people is being fought, the sacred war....

On 1 August 1944 the Polish Home Army rose up against the German forces still occupying Warsaw. Its intention was to seize the city, not to help the Red Army, as Mawdsley puts it, 'but to take the city *before* the Red Army'. The Home Army 'wanted to present Stalin with a *fait accompli*' (p. 330). Merridale comments on these events. Like the British intelligence officers in 1941, who were 'plunged in gloom' by

Red Army successes, Merridale becomes increasingly critical as she acknowledges Soviet victories in the latter stages of the war. According to Merridale, 'the Soviets made no effort to intervene' in Warsaw (p. 249); but Mawdsley reports, *inter alia*, that the Soviet air force flew 5,000 missions, half of them supply missions, to support insurgent forces. The Red Army appears to have tried to take Warsaw in August and September in the face of strong German resistance, and Stalin bitterly resented Polish attacks on him for the failure of *their* premature, disastrous uprising (Roberts 2006). Merridale acknowledges that Operation Bagration may have been played out, but she notes that the Soviet failure to relieve the Warsaw Poles 'poisoned' Polish–Russian relations for decades. The reader should not make too much of these comments: Polish–Russian relations had been 'poisoned' for centuries. Nevertheless, the American ambassador in Moscow, then Harriman, thought the Soviet government had deliberately halted its advance outside Warsaw to let the Home Army be crushed (Glantz, p. 167; Hixson 1989).

In London Churchill was gloomy. 'Good God', he complained to an aide, 'can't you see that the Russians are spreading across Europe like a tide...' (Berthon & Potts, p. 254). Roosevelt did not buy Churchill's line; he wanted to expand cooperation with the Soviet Union, not prepare for a fresh conflict with it after the end of the war. The early return of Churchill's anti-communist hostility is perhaps the most interesting point in the book by Berthon and Potts. They report a conversation between FDR and Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau in late August 1944: 'There are two kinds of people [regarding the Soviet Union]', observed Morgenthau, 'one like Eden who believes we must cooperate with Russia... and there is the school, which is illustrated by... Mr Churchill...'. 'That's very well put', Roosevelt replied, 'I belong to the same school as Eden' (Berthon & Potts, p. 260). Incidentally, so did Litvinov and Maiskii, then heads of commissions in Moscow to study post-war questions, who advocated cooperation with the West. Stalin also hoped for post-war Allied cooperation (Roberts 2006).

Roosevelt, still trying to secure his Soviet policy, chose Harriman to be ambassador in Moscow, but Glantz notes that Harriman 'was forced to turn to the very people [in the Moscow embassy] Roosevelt had bypassed for over a decade' (p. 163). By 1945 Harriman had crossed to the other 'school'. Roosevelt tried 'to reorganise resistance out of the State Department', says Glantz, but never succeeded. After FDR died in April 1945, it was back to business as usual at the State Department. The 'bureaucrats' triumphed 'simply by outliving the president and all his men' (Glantz, pp. 174, 177). After the war Litvinov blamed his own government for the rapid deterioration in relations with the United States (Roberts 2002), but with FDR dead, or alive for that matter, it is doubtful whether Litvinov's more conciliatory approach would have worked any better than it had before 1939.

Merridale comments on the last months of the war, focusing on the brutal behaviour of Red Army soldiers who looted and raped as they entered enemy territory for the first time. She blames the desire for revenge on the Soviet government, as though Red Army soldiers, on their own initiative, could not want vengeance for the deaths of parents, children, siblings, other family and friends. Hitler's Germans killed some 28 million Soviet soldiers and civilians. This was genocide and not only against Soviet Jews. Merridale remembers the Soviet dead,

but then blames Ivan for the widespread destruction in Germany: ‘The Red Army’s own campaigns had destroyed Germany, but now—just like their former enemies—they had to make a life amid the dust and rubble that they had created’ (p. 299). ‘Just like’ Nazi Germany? The author appears to be trying to establish some kind of equivalence between German invaders and Soviet victims. Did not Hitler and the German people bring destruction upon themselves? ‘Was it I who came to attack them?’ a Red Army soldier asked (Beevor & Vinogradova, p. 108): had not Nazi Germany reaped the whirlwind? Grossman thought so. Entering Berlin, he admired the devastating work of American and British bombers; in fact, Anglo–American bombing was responsible for more German civilian deaths than the Red Army (Mawdsley, p. 405). In her interviews with veterans, Merridale appears to want to get at *their* guilt in the war, but they were having nothing of it. Neither is Mawdsley: whatever the behaviour of Red Army soldiers in Germany, tarnishing their reputation, it was far better that they had won the war, and not the *Wehrmacht*.

Grossman, the witness, went with the advancing Red Army into Germany: ‘It is foggy and rainy’, he wrote: ‘A smell of forest mould. Puddles on the road. Dark pine woods, fields, farmsteads, barns, houses with pointed roofs. A huge poster: “Soldier, here it is! The Lair of the Fascist Beast”’ (p. 325). He observed the looting and raping too: there was ‘horror in the eyes of women and girls’. A ‘girl was raped by a soldier from the signals company... He is also here, pink-cheeked, fat-faced, sleepy. The commandant is interrogating him without much enthusiasm’ (pp. 326–327). Red Army soldiers saw the prosperity of Germany and wondered why the Germans had invaded poor, backward Russia: ‘Why did they come to us? What did they want?’ (p. 342). Grossman reported the joy of liberated Nazi victims:

Huge crowds on the roads. Prisoners of war of all nationalities: French, Belgian, Dutch, all loaded with looted things. Only Americans are walking light... They don’t need anything except alcohol. Some of them greet us waving bottles. The Civilian International of Europe is moving... It is a mad chaos, full of joy. Where’s East, where’s West? (p. 327).

There was no joy amongst Germans, but what victims of Nazism would have cared about that? Grossman remembered the Red Army joker near Moscow asking the way to Berlin, and wondered if he were still alive and those others too, who had laughed with him. ‘I wanted to shout’, wrote Grossman, ‘to call to all our brothers, our soldiers, who are lying in the Russian, Ukrainian, Belorussian and Polish earth, who sleep for ever on the fields of our battles: “Comrades, can you hear us? We’ve done it!”’ (p. 330).

They had indeed, and Merridale’s deflation of their valour and tenacity is unpersuasive, because she herself does not appear to be entirely persuaded. Mawdsley at the end of his impressive history of the war, noted that the Soviet Union had won, but that in the long run it had lost. The Soviet Union contributed mightily to the destruction of Nazi Germany, but was so damaged that it could not recover. A reader might think that Britain and the United States would have owed something to the Soviet peoples who had paid such high a price for their common victory. It was not to be, nor perhaps could it have been. FDR was dead and the State Department, ready for business as usual. The far greater tragedy is that Stalin was also, dashing the hopes

of Grossman and the *frontoviki* for a better life after the war without secret police and new purges. Victory over Nazi Germany could have been Soviet redemption, but it did not happen.

Every 9 May, on ‘Victory Day’, Russians remember their war-dead. Veterans, men and women now in their late seventies or eighties, come out into the streets in uniforms that do not always fit or in their best holiday clothing, chests pinned with rows of ribbons and jingling medals. In seeing them, a Western visitor in Moscow wondered how they could have endured such hardship and peril. On the way back to his hotel, that visitor, sitting next to a veteran in the Metro, leaned over and whispered *spasibo veteran*, ‘thank you’. The old man nodded slightly and returned to his private thoughts.

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