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Soviet Strategic Thinking, 1917-1962: Some History Reexamined

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Some observers have characterized the current mood surrounding relations between the superpowers as moving toward "détente," while others have decried the ever-growing Soviet military might, both strategic and conventional, claiming it represents the principal threat to Western security. The crucial issue in this vital contemporary debate is clearly the question of Soviet intent. Indeed, future policy decisions cannot be made without first resolving this point. Tentative answers to these vexing questions can perhaps best be reached by first investigating Soviet strategic thought as it has evolved within the matrix of Russian historical experience.

SOVIET STRATEGIC THINKING, 1917-1962

SOME HISTORY REEXAMINED

An article developed from a
series of faculty lectures given
at the Naval War College. [Editor]

There are no experts on the Soviet Union; there are only varying degrees of ignorance.

Ambassador "Chip" Bohlen

When Ambassador Bohlen made this remark and when Winston Churchill described the Soviet Union as a riddle inside an enigma wrapped in a mystery, they were both emphasizing how little we in the West really know about Russia. Our ignorance stems largely from the fact that the Soviet Union is a closed society in which information is controlled to an extreme which seems ridiculous to us. However, contributing to our ignorance was our failure to make any serious effort to collect information about the Soviet Union or to train specialists in Soviet affairs until the Second World War, and by then it was almost too late.

Over the last 20 years we have worked very hard to gain a greater

understanding of the U.S.S.R. Our knowledge today of things Russian may be far from complete, but it is infinitely greater than it was 25 years ago. We now recognize, for example, that our failure to appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of the Soviet Union has cost us very dearly; but fretting over *how* things might have been different serves no useful purpose. Instead, the purpose of this article is to go back to the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and review some key factors in the development of Soviet strategic thought from the vantage point of hindsight.

We are able to understand Soviet policy and strategy—and the motivations behind them—only to the extent that we are able to put ourselves into the other fellow's shoes and give serious consideration to his perspectives on the world. Therefore, let us take a look at the world as it appears from Moscow and not from Washington. Doing this

will help to provide some insights into *why* the Soviets behave the way they do and will make some of their strategic decisions a little easier to comprehend. It might also change some of our preconceptions about the other superpower.

First off, there are three basic axioms that one should keep in mind, because they are the underlying themes to our consideration of Soviet strategy.

- National policy is influenced by national character.
- Strategic thought is never separate from political thought.
- When you're second, you try harder.

Every country has a distinct national character which has been shaped by such factors as history, culture, traditions, geography, that is, by the sum total of its national experience. This national character has a strong influence on policy and strategy. While this is true for every nation, it is especially true for the Soviet Union.

Strategic thought cannot be separated from political thought in that strategy is no more than the handmaiden of politics. Strategic thinking determines the methods through which political objectives are attained. This is true for every country, but it is particularly true for the Soviet Union.

The third axiom speaks for itself. When you are in second place in the struggle for world power, you put forth a great deal of extra effort to catch up. This is especially true of the Soviet Union.

Why these three axioms seem to apply to the U.S.S.R. more than to any country becomes clear when one considers the manner in which Soviet strategic thinking has evolved. In considering its development, we shall examine Soviet strategic thinking in each of its four rather distinct phases. The first phase began with what the Soviets call the Great October Socialist Revolu-

tion of 1917 and lasted until approximately 1934.

It began on a rather phony note. There was no great revolution. The masses of the Russian people did not rise up to overthrow the old order, and they certainly did not insist that the old order be replaced by the socialism of Karl Marx. In fact, the Russian people had very little to do with it.

What happened was very simple. Courtesy of the Germans, Lenin was on the scene in Russia where he and his associates found political power writhing in the streets of the capital and they picked it up. Once they had the power they had coveted for so long, the new Bolshevik leadership was confronted by some very harsh realities, the first of which was the realization that the brave new world of communism stood a very good chance of being stillborn.

The country they sought to rule could only be described as being in absolute shambles. After 3 years of war, Russia had been bled white; politically, economically, and militarily. For all intents and purposes, public order was nonexistent, and famine was already imminent.

The army, historically ill-trained, ill-equipped, and ill-led, ran up an unparalleled record of defeat in World War I and could lay claim to the highest casualty lists in Europe—it lost over 3 million men in 1915 alone. Demoralization in the ranks, at least some of it caused by Bolshevik agitation, was virtually complete, and desertions had reached an astronomical rate.

While Russia no longer possessed a viable fighting force, the German Army, on the other hand, was deep inside Russian territory, ready and willing to resume a general offensive which could easily carry it to St. Petersburg and Moscow. In this situation, with the total collapse of the nation just around the corner, compelling necessity became the driving force behind Bolshevik actions.

Circumstances dictated policy at a time when there could only be one policy—that of survival.

If the Bolsheviks were to maintain their slim hold on power, if there was to be a continued national identity, if the country was ever to be rebuilt and transformed into the Communist utopia Lenin had promised, a peace treaty with Germany had to be concluded at once. It had to be a peace at *any* price, and it had to be a peace which would endure for many years.

Yet the Bolsheviks temporized. Even as he sent Trotsky racing off to Brest-Litovsk to negotiate with the Germans, Lenin instructed him to delay a peace settlement for as long as possible, but to secure a cease-fire.

His reasons for issuing such orders seem astonishing indeed. Minor mutinies in the French Army and German Navy had convinced Lenin that the war-weary soldiers of Europe were about to rise up in mass protest against further slaughter and seize power in the Communist world revolution which Karl Marx had envisioned. Thus, Lenin reasoned, an armistice would secure the time needed to consolidate the Bolshevik position at home, while every passing day would bring Europe closer to revolution. The Germans, fearful of developments in the Fatherland, would not insist upon very harsh terms in a peace treaty, so Lenin simply issued a call for revolution in Europe and then sat back and waited.

His reasoning was a classic example of the Communist desire to have the best of two worlds. More importantly, however, this is perhaps the first example of the process whereby the Soviet leadership, in viewing the outside world through the ideological blinders of Marxism, were led to a mistaken conclusion, but it was by no means the last.

An armistice was arranged in December 1917, and Trotsky began a brilliant campaign of holding off the German Army with words alone, waiting in vain for Europe to erupt. His tactics were

correct, but his strategy was wrong. On the 10th of February 1918, Ludendorff finally ran out of patience with Trotsky's campaign of delay. He was anxious to secure as much territory as possible for Germany and then to bring the war with Russia to a close so that he could shift his forces to the Western front before the American Army could go into action in France. Accordingly, he ordered a general offensive.

Within 3 weeks the German forces had advanced all along the front, penetrating from a minimum of 100 miles in the north to a maximum of over 600 miles in the south, to the west bank of the Don River. With the entire Ukraine thus occupied by the enemy, with German troops in the north in a position to threaten St. Petersburg and even Moscow, and with the Russian Army unable to put up more than token resistance, Lenin finally gave in.

On 3 March 1918, he at last sued for peace. The price was very high indeed. Russia lost Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and the entire Ukraine.

The cost was exceedingly high in terms of territory, but it was most painful, most agonizing in terms of economic capacity. In accepting the peace of Brest-Litovsk, Lenin gave up 34 percent of the population, 54 percent of the industrial plants, and 89 percent of the coal and iron mines of Imperial Russia. It is true that he got the Ukraine back after the German surrender in November 1918, but Russia was not to recover control of her other western provinces until World War II.

As excruciating as these losses may have been, the new Soviet regime considered that they were more than offset by what had been gained—the peace and time required to establish a new Marxist order.

This they immediately set out to do, and it could be quite helpful at this point to look very quickly at how they did it. From March to November 1917

the people of Russia had freedom within their grasp, only to give it back, as if it were almost too great a burden to bear, into the hands of another dictatorship. This is precisely what happened. We would indeed be mistaken to assume that the people were duped into accepting the Bolshevik regime's promises of freedom, equality of all men, an end to the exploitation of the masses, and public ownership of the factories. The new dictatorship succeeded because its leaders understood the Russian soul, and they traded on responses that were as old as Russia itself. Acceptance of authority is an ingrained characteristic of the people. It has been their lot for almost a millennium, since the year 988 when Prince Vladimir of Kiev was converted to Christianity.

From that time until the Bolshevik Revolution, there were three dominant influences in Russian life. These were:

- *Autocracy*—the absolute rule of the Czar, who occupied the throne because he was God's chosen representative on earth;

- *Orthodoxy*—the state religion of Russia which pervaded all aspects of life, first with its rigid doctrine and then with its belief that Moscow—the Third Rome—had received the charter to save the world from itself; and

- *Nationality*—that strange and strongly emotional sense of being a part of the people and a part of the soil that is perhaps stronger in Russia than anywhere else.

For a thousand years these influences formed the basis of allegiance to Moscow and to the person of the Czar. Then came the Bolsheviks, agitating for overthrow of the old order on the grounds that Karl Marx had found the only true solution to the suffering of the masses.

The revolution came, but what changed?

	<u>988-1917</u>	<u>1917-Present</u>
Autocracy	Czar	Commissar
Orthodoxy	State Religion	State Ideology
Nationality	Russianism	Russianism

What is the difference between the absolute rule of the Czar and the absolute rule of the Communist Party, the earthly inheritor and interpreter of Karl Marx? Is there any difference between Russian Orthodoxy and an enforced state ideology which teaches that the victory of Russian communism is inevitable and that Moscow therefore still has the charter to save the world from itself?

To be sure, the form of the new regime was considerably different, but the content was simply very much more of the same. National character had exercised a determining influence on national policy. Once the dictatorship of the proletariat—that peculiar fusion of traditional Russian psychology with Marxist claptrap—had been established, the first vague glimmerings of Soviet strategic doctrine began to appear. They appeared only slowly, and once again circumstances forced the men in the Kremlin to make some very hard decisions.

We need only to recall that peace with Germany did not immediately bring peace at home. There were vast numbers of people who did not accept bolshevism—Russians, and especially Ukrainians, rallied around anti-Communist leaders like Admiral Kolchak and General Denikin, and 4 years of incredibly bloody war resulted. The situation was further complicated by the intervention of the Allied Powers, who sided with the anti-Communist white forces in a vain attempt to get Russia back into the war.

Furthermore, the end of the war in Europe had brought the creation of a belt of independent states across Eastern Europe—Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. Western statesmen made no secret of the fact that these small nations formed a *cordon sanitaire* designed to separate Europe from the Communist menace.

Time does not allow a more detailed treatment of these events. Suffice it to

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say that the Bolsheviks came to understand that they were not very popular in the world. Nobody liked them very much, and there was no one anxious to extend the vast amounts of economic aid they had somehow come to expect.

There was no alternative to what they did. They took it for granted that the new Soviet state was surrounded by hostile capitalist countries which would seek to crush the proletarian revolution and the U.S.S.R. This notion, which divided the world into two opposing camps, was sanctified in the doctrine of "capitalist encirclement." This was not a Marxist idea; it originated with Lenin and became the chief tenet of Josef Stalin, who forever preached that imperialism existed for the sole purpose of destroying socialism.

Stalin added to Communist dogma the accompanying idea of "socialism in one country." This was his own way of acknowledging that world revolution was not a realistic possibility and that, with no outside help, the Soviet Union would go it alone.

These two doctrines were born of political necessity, and they forced upon Moscow the only strategic posture possible under the circumstances—a posture of defense. If it was true that the Soviet Union was surrounded by hostile states, and if it was true that conflict between capitalism and communism is inevitable, then Moscow had to have a strategy which would ensure the security of the U.S.S.R. at all times and which would guarantee victory in any war the capitalists might start.

This also meant that the Kremlin was not about to embark on any adventures that might bring it into conflict with the capitalist world, because there was no real military power standing behind the strategy.

World War I, the civil war, and early Communist policy had combined to wipe the Russian Army out of existence. The tremendous casualties incurred over almost 10 years of constant

fighting had taken an unbelievable toll of military manpower and had created a war weariness which was to last for a long time to come. But the determination of the Communists to destroy all vestiges of the Czarist army did almost as much damage. Basing themselves on some vague, ill-formed notions of what the world's first proletarian army ought to be, they attempted to do away with anything that smacked of traditional militarism. In the new "Workers and Peasants Red Army" ranks were abolished, saluting was abolished, officers were elected by the troops, everybody wore the same kind of uniform, and it was even possible for soldiers to vote not to accept the orders of their commanders.

This was a nonsensical state of affairs, of course, and it did not last long. Trotsky fought against it, but in essence it was corrected by Mikhail Frunze, the first of the great Communist military leaders. He became Commissar of war in 1924 and immediately went to work convincing his masters in the Kremlin that some changes had to be made. They finally agreed, and Frunze began the Herculean task of creating an army. He reintroduced compulsory military service for all males of 21 years or older, reinstated ranks and insignia, and brought back the traditions and the rigid discipline of the old army. He began to rebuild a professional officer corps and sought training for the brighter Russian officers in the academies of the German general staff. In return, the Soviets permitted German officers to visit Russia, where they tested armored tactics away from the prying eyes of the Western Powers.

But from the standpoint of strategy as such, Frunze could do nothing more than to accept that defense of the Soviet regime was the first purpose of the Red army. Accordingly, he dispersed 90 percent of his forces along the borders of the U.S.S.R. and used the remainder as territorial units to garrison

the interior. At night he must have prayed to Karl Marx that there would be no war.

Frunze did not live long enough to see his efforts bear fruit. He died after a year in office and was replaced by Kliment Voroshilov. Voroshilov took on the job of equipping the army, for it had very little to fight with. Beginning with the first 5-Year Plan in 1928, the cream of industrial production began to go to the armed forces, and by 1934, aircraft, armor, and weapons of the latest type were going to the army in substantial numbers.

Militarily, the Communists had made good use of the breathing spell Lenin had won. How well they used it can best be appreciated by remembering that the rebirth of a modern army took place under almost impossible circumstances. These were the years when Stalin and his henchmen in the Kremlin had to give all their energies to rebuilding the entire national economy and shaping it in a Communist mold. These were the years of the collectivization of agriculture. These were the years of forced draft industrialization, when coal and iron to produce heavy machinery and new factories took precedent over everything else.

These were the years when the Russian people felt the lash on their backs as Stalin whipped up a national frenzy of trying to catch up with the West. And these were the years when it became clear that Stalin intended to maintain himself in power by the brutal physical elimination of all opposition, real or imagined.

That the army was reborn at all seems a miracle in itself. If there was no great strategic thought, it was because the demands of reconstruction left little time for thinking about strategy. In any case Russia had not produced a single strategic thinker worthy of the name since Marshal Kutuzov, who forced Napoleon out of Russia in 1812.

The first period in the evolution of

Soviet strategic thinking, then, ended with the creation of a large standing army committed to defense alone and trained and equipped well enough to put up a substantial fight if the need arose.

The year 1934 marked the beginning of the second period, and it began on a note of alarm. To the men in the Kremlin, the rise of Adolf Hitler and the publication of *Mein Kampf* made it crystal clear that Russia was to be the prime target of Nazi expansionism. Hitler's hysterical anticommunism was disturbing enough by itself, but added to this his hatred and contempt for the Slavs and his avowed intent to move eastward in search of *Lebensraum* for the master race made it small wonder that Soviet policy took an abrupt, 180-degree turn.

The self-imposed period of isolation suddenly came to an end, and Moscow burst full blown into the world diplomatic arena, seeking military alliances and political support from any quarter. In a rather amazingly short period of time, the Kremlin sought and won recognition from the United States, concluded an anti-German treaty with France, joined the League of Nations, and sent officers and equipment to fight against Franco in Spain. This was obviously done both to test Soviet equipment and to provide future field commanders with combat experience.

At home, Soviet industry went onto a war footing. Finally, when war came to Europe in 1939, the Kremlin concluded the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact with Nazi Germany, and Soviet troops occupied eastern Poland. All of these actions grew out of a need to gain time to prepare for war, to gain allies in the coming struggle, and to gain room for maneuver.

This last consideration led the Russians to occupy Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and part of Rumania in 1940. In order to secure the approaches to Leningrad, Stalin sent the Red army against

Finland in the terribly costly, but successful, winter war.

That Moscow was able to achieve as much as it did between 1934 and 1940 is almost incredible. It was also in 1934—the year that he realized that war with Germany could not be avoided—that Stalin revealed the full extent of his paranoia by launching the great purges. In rapid succession he purged the Communist Party, the Soviet Government, Soviet society, and even the secret police. And finally, on the very eve of war, he purged the army.

God alone knows how many people perished during the years of this terror, and He alone knows how many were shipped off to the slave labor camps of Siberia. Stalin's victims number well into the millions, and it is an established fact that at least 35,000 officers—the cream of the army—were purged. Among those who fell was Marshal Tukachevsky, the chief of the general staff and one of the most brilliant officers the Russians ever produced, the man who pioneered the development of paratroops and who moved entire divisions by air in the early thirties.

When war finally came to the Soviet Union in June 1941, Stalin took personal command of the entire war effort, gave himself the rank of Marshal of the Soviet Union, and, if Khrushchev is to be believed, did in fact make almost all of the strategic decisions of the war.

For the first 2 years of the fighting, strategy was dictated by circumstances. As it had been in 1917, the Communist regime had to face up to the fact that the survival of the nation was at stake. This was no war for the spread of international communism; it was a fight for the life of Mother Russia.

Stalin never deluded himself or the people on this score. In his first wartime address to the nation, on 3 July 1941, he invoked a policy of scorched earth and guerrilla warfare. On Revolution Day 4 months later, when the Germans were 20 miles from Moscow, he stood

on the Lenin mausoleum in Red Square and called upon the saints and warrior heroes of Imperial Russia. He exhorted the troops to “let the manly images of our great ancestors—Aleksandr Nevsky, Dmitry Donskoy, Kuzma Minin, Dmitry Pozharsky, Aleksandr Suvorov and Mikhail Kutuzov—inspire you in this war.” If there was a grand strategic design to the war in Russia, it was a virtual duplicate of the plan Kutuzov had used against Napoleon—and was thus a Russian, as opposed to a Communist, strategy.

Kutuzov's defense of the homeland has been described as acting like a giant spring. The Russian Army would retreat, fighting constantly but drawing the enemy deep inside Russia. (Kutuzov pictured Moscow as the “sponge which will suck Napoleon in.”) The retreat, however, would be like a spring being compressed, because the army, falling back on its mobilizing reserves, would then stand and hold. The enemy, his supply train terribly overextended and his lines of communication constantly harassed by guerrillas, would then fall victim to winter.

Then the spring would recoil, the massed might of the Russian Army would strike, and the invader would be expelled. It worked against Napoleon and it worked against Hitler, but it was a very near thing indeed. Let us take a look at how far the spring had to be compressed before it could recoil.

By November 1942, when it reached its deepest penetration into Russia, the Nazi army stood on a front extending from Leningrad southeastward to Stalingrad on the Volga and then looping almost to the Caspian Sea and Asia. The industrial and agricultural heartland of Russia had been ripped out.

But the Soviets held at Stalingrad, and in January 1943 the great counter-offensives began. By mid-1944 Russia was free of the German Army. The Soviet Army stood at the gates of Warsaw where, incidentally, Stalin

halted the advance long enough for the Nazis to take care of the Warsaw uprising and wipe out the Polish Home Army—an anti-Communist organization which could be expected to oppose Stalin's designs for Poland.

A year later the Russians and Americans met at the Elbe, and it was all over. The Soviet Army had come a long way, and Russian troops stood in Western Europe for the first time since 1815. In their advance they had gained a sizable amount of real estate to add to the Russian Empire.

Just to give you an idea of the area involved, the distance from Leningrad along the furthest line of German advance is roughly equal to that from the northern border of Maine to the Florida Keys. The distance from there to the borders of West Europe is about the same as that from the east coast to the Rocky Mountains. In 2½ years, fighting every inch of the way, the Soviet Army captured an area roughly equivalent to three-fourths of the entire United States.

If this seems to have been a rather short treatment of the cataclysmic events of World War II, it is because other aspects of the war and its aftermath are much more pertinent to the development of Soviet strategic thinking.

It is enough to remember that World War II was a war of national survival for the Soviet Union and that the overall strategy was defensive until 1944, when the country was cleared of the invaders. From then until the end, it was a war of national expansion, both in Europe and in the Far East, where the Soviets conducted a rather desultory campaign against the Japanese for the final 14 days of World War II. Throughout, Russian national interests were invariably placed far ahead of the revolutionary ideals of international communism. Once the war was over and an empire gained, however, Stalin reverted to proclaiming his old clichés about the

inevitability of conflict between communism and capitalism and that time is on the Communist side.

Some scholars have suggested that the victorious Soviet Army, which had defeated the second-best army in the world, was ready, willing, and able to gobble up as much of Europe and the Middle East as possible and that only force or the threat of force prevented it from doing so. Other writers have further postulated that with victory won, Soviet strategic thought was consigned to limbo, while Communist historians glorified Stalin as the world's only real strategist. He had, after all, developed the "five permanently operating factors of victory," to which all Soviet strategic writings had to conform. In the light of what we now know, however, a somewhat different appraisal appears reasonable.

Within a year after the war's end, the Iron Curtain had come clanging down over Europe, and the cold war was with us. At that time the United States was flush with victory, and was demobilizing at full speed in response to domestic political pressures. We did not understand the true significance of the Iron Curtain. It was clearly designed to facilitate the incorporation of Eastern Europe into the Soviet orbit. That much was inescapable; but we could not perceive that the real purpose of the Iron Curtain was to set the conditions for the third phase in the development of Soviet Strategy.

Again it is necessary to see things through the other fellow's eyes. As they looked out on the world in 1945 and 1946, Stalin and his marshals could take immense pride and satisfaction in what had been accomplished. Germany, which had come very close to defeating Russia twice in Stalin's lifetime, lay wrecked and divided. A *cordon sanitaire*, this time separating Mother Russia from Western Europe, had been established at the point of Soviet bayonets. In the Far East, the acquisition of North

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Korea, southern Sakhalin and the Kuriles provided the desired buffer zone between Japan and the Maritime Provinces. True to form, the Americans were sending their combat troops back home across the Atlantic.

But what of the future? According to accepted Marxist-Leninist precepts, conflict between capitalism and communism is inevitable, and after 1945 there was only one real source of possible imperialist aggression—the United States of America. Even to a man who firmly believed that communism is bound to triumph, this must have been a horrifying prospect indeed, because Stalin knew a great deal that we did not fully realize until many years later. We did not know the full extent of Soviet wartime losses, and the Iron Curtain was a chief means of keeping us from finding out.

The victorious Red army was backed by an empty shell. The war had literally disemboweled the Soviet Union, and the country was in an even more precarious state than it had been in 1917. The nation and its people were bled white and exhausted. True, they had acquired an empire in East Europe, but it too lay in ruins.

To give you a very basic idea of the enormity of what Russia had suffered, remember that the Nazis had occupied and systematically looted and destroyed an area which embraced 75 percent of the nation's industrial and agricultural capacity. Add to this the fact that an estimated 20 million people—almost 1 out of every 10 Soviet citizens—had been killed, and the Lord only knows how many millions were maimed, incapacitated either for fighting or for productive labor. Add to this the fact that the Soviet logistics train was never really able to keep pace and that the Soviet Union's warmaking potential depended in great measure on help from the West—to such an extent that Khrushchev claims that only American trucks carried the army from Stalingrad to

Berlin and that American food fed the army. The dire situation the U.S.S.R. found itself in after the war was tragically illustrated by those instances of cannibalism which took place during the first dread winter after the war.

Stalin and his cohorts were faced with the same compelling needs that had faced the Bolsheviks in 1917—the need for peace and for time. So, in the same way Trotsky had done, Stalin held off the West with words alone. His propaganda machinery inundated the world with accounts of Stalin's strategic genius and the invincibility of Soviet arms. However, we must credit Stalin and his successors with realism. As the old man looked out on the world, how must it have appeared to him in terms of his own five principles for winning a war?

1. Stability of the rear area
2. Morale
3. Numbers and training
4. Supplies
5. Quality of leadership

We have just seen that the Soviet rear area was in a shambles—the country lay in ruins; morale both at home and in the forces was more a matter of relief than of spirit. It was impossible for the homefront to supply the army. All Stalin had going for himself were factors 3 and 5, a huge army experienced in combat and well led.

Now apply his five principles to the United States.

The rear area was not only stable, it had gone totally unscathed by war. Morale was at its zenith, and some people were even advocating that we keep right on going to Moscow. We had fought a two-front war—that war the Soviets fear most—our army, almost equal in size to the Red army, was only beginning to withdraw from Europe, and the Navy and Marines had turned the Pacific Ocean into an American lake. We had not only supplied and equipped our own forces, but had provided the Soviets vast quantities of the

logistic wherewithal to win their war and were embarking on a fantastic scheme to rebuild Western Europe through the Marshall plan.

At night Stalin undoubtedly sought some inspiration from Karl Marx, but during the day he put all his energies to reconstruction, and he put his strategists to the task of considering how to defend Russia against the Americans. The task was enormously complicated by the factors we have just discussed, but it was made virtually impossible because the United States had the atomic bomb and the means to deliver it.

In essence, then, Stalin's strategists could only wrestle with theory—concentrating meanwhile on the development of antiaircraft defenses until such time as Moscow also had the bomb.

In practice, the Soviets had no choice but to back down whenever we Americans proved willing to use the power at our disposal. And back down they did—in Greece, in Turkey, and in Iran, in the Berlin airlift, and in Korea—after the Chinese Armies had taken over a million casualties to keep the Americans and their U.N. allies from occupying all of North Korea, whose northeastern border is only 60 miles from Vladivostok.

By 1949 the Soviets had developed an atomic weapon. We need not rehearse the frantic efforts Stalin employed to get it—kidnapping German and East European scientists in wholesale lots to augment the work of his own physicists, while people like the Rosenbergs, Klaus Fuchs, and Alan Nunn May were seeking to gain the secrets of atomic fission through espionage against us.

By 1953, when Moscow exploded its first thermonuclear device, the third phase of Soviet strategic thought really got off the ground. The immediate problem facing the strategists in these years was very simple. It was how to deliver nuclear weapons and in what

kind of war. Their gropings for the answer to these questions thrust us into the arms race which has run to this day.

As the arms race began, time finally ran out for Josef Stalin, and Khrushchev came to the helm in the Soviet Union. He came to power at a time when the delivery of nuclear bombs was of overwhelming importance to his military thinkers. They knew that SAC and carrier-based air gave the United States the capability of striking the U.S.S.R. but that they would have trouble striking the continental United States.

The launching of Sputnik in October of 1957 was the harbinger of things to come. The ICBM was to be the great strategic answer for both sides, and it would lead us into a kind of Mexican standoff as we entered the era of deterrence. Nevertheless, until he had an assured strike capability, Khrushchev had no alternative to the course he adopted. He ran a colossal bluff, loudly proclaiming a strategic superiority he did not have. Like Trotsky and Stalin before him, he held off the West with words alone, using his bombastic, saber-rattling oratory to create the phony "missile gap" we all remember so well.

The crunch finally came with the Cuban missile crisis in 1962. The United States again demonstrated its willingness to use the power at its disposal, despite the risk of nuclear war. His bluff was called, and Khrushchev backed down.

But after Cuba things really began to change. The Soviets entered the fourth and current phase in the development of their strategic thought. Without examining it in depth, I will only note what seems to me to be its chief characteristics.

First, the men in the Kremlin learned from Cuba that they had to have a blue-water navy. The success they have enjoyed thus far in rapidly developing this capability is only too well known. Second, and even more important, the Soviets finally caught up with the West in the vital area of ICBM capability.

These two developments raise a host of strategic problems for us.

For *both* sides, the key question is always whether and under what circumstances we will resort to nuclear war. The answer depends in part on the answer to other questions we must ask ourselves.

Is Soviet strategy, for the first time in history, offensive rather than defensive?

Now that they are our equals in destructive capability and delivery systems, will the Soviets be tempted to adopt a doctrine of preemptive strike?

What are the possibilities of conventional, nonnuclear war?

Is the confusion in Soviet strategic writings, which continue to harp about

conventional wars and the need for massed armies, due to a growing fear of China?

Is the Soviet Navy Moscow's "first line of defense"?

In the world arena, is the Soviet Union now in the same position that we occupied in 1945?

These are only a very few of the strategic questions which must trouble our leaders in Washington as they daily confront the task of trying to develop a new role for the United States in the world, within the context of changing economic and political realities. The impact of Soviet strategic thinking is not solely a concern for national leaders alone, however, its meaning must be felt and appreciated by us all.



Success in war is obtained by anticipating the plans of the enemy, and by diverting his attention from our own designs.

Francesco Guicciardini, 1483-1540