

military-economic planning*

In the world wars of the twentieth century it proved as important to mobilize the economy to supply soldiers' rations and equipment as it was to enlist the population as soldiers. Military-economic planning took root in the Soviet Union as elsewhere after World War I. The scope of the plans that prepared the Soviet economy for war is still debated for the following reason: some argue that war preparation was a fundamental objective that influenced every aspect of Soviet peacetime economic policy, and so there were no purely civilian plans, but all were militarized to some degree; others see military-economic planning more narrowly as the specialized activity of planning and budgeting for rearmament, which had to share priority with civilian economic goals.

The framework for military-economic planning was fixed by a succession of high-level government committees: the Council for Labor and Defense (STO), the Defense Committee, and in the postwar period the Military-Industrial Commission (VPK). The armed forces' general staff carried on military-economic planning in coordination with the defense sector of the State Planning Commission (Gosplan). Gosplan's defense sector was established on the initiative of the Red Army commander, later Marshal Mikhail Tukhachevsky. The latter pioneered the study of "future war" and offensive operations associated with the concept of "deep battle". To support this he advocated ambitious plans for the production of combat aircraft and motorized armour in large quantities. He crossed swords at various times with Josef Stalin, Viacheslav Molotov, and Kliment Voroshilov. The military-economic plans were less ambitious than he hoped, and also less coherent: industry's production plans were not reconciled beforehand with the procurement plan of the army and their interests often diverged over the terms of plans and contracts to supply equipment. To overcome this Tukhachevsky pressed to bring the management of defense production under military control, but he was frustrated in this too. His efforts ended with his arrest and execution in 1937.

Military-economic plans required every ministry and workplace to adopt a mobilization plan to be implemented in the event of war. How effective this was is hard to evaluate, and the mobilization plans adopted before World War II appear to have been highly unrealistic by comparison with wartime outcomes. Despite this the Soviet transition to a war economy was successful; the fact that contingency planning and trial mobilizations were practised at each level of the prewar command system may have contributed more to this than their detailed faults might suggest.

During World War II the task was no longer to prepare for war but to fight it, and so the distinction between military-economic planning and economic planning in general disappeared for a time. It re-emerged after the war while Stalin sought to bring his generals back into line and the security organs, not the military, took the leading role

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in organising the acquisition of new atomic and aerospace technologies. Stalin's death and the demotion of the "organs" allowed a new equilibrium to emerge under Dmitry Ustinov, minister of the armament industry since June 1941; Ustinov went on to coordinate the armed forces and industry from a unique position of influence and privilege under successive Soviet leaders until his own death in 1984. It symbolized his coordinating role that he assumed the military rank of Marshal in 1976.

RELATED TOPICS

Council for Labor and Defense (STO)
 Gosplan
 Military-Industrial Commission (VPK)
 Molotov
 Red Army
 Tukhachevsky
 Ustinov
 Voroshilov
 war economy
 World War II

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