

The Dictator and Defense*

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Abstract. This paper analyses Stalin's choices over military power and political repression as instruments for holding political power in the face of foreign and domestic threats. Since the threats were interactive, the policy combination had to be determined simultaneously. One problem was that, while military power was the more efficient instrument for countering a foreign threat, it could be adjusted less rapidly than repression. The chapter shows that the empirical pattern of the 1930s conforms to the predicted result. In some years Stalin responded to an unanticipated increase in perceived foreign threats by imposing a substantial excess burden of repression on Soviet society.

Why did Stalin spend as much as he did on defense? Given their cost, why did he want a big army or large specialized defense industries? At first sight these questions seem too trivial to deserve much thought. There are several obvious answers. The trouble is that the answers that are obvious are not necessarily consistent, and none provides a satisfying explanation of the stylized facts of Soviet military-economic development.

The economic and historical literatures on this subject offer several different explanations of Soviet policies with regard to defense, which I will summarize under three headings:

Soviet Defense Against External Threats? According to informed historians such as Lennart Samuelson (2000), Soviet defense spending responded to perceived external threats. In the hands of an experienced economist such as Paul R. Gregory (1974) this hypothesis comes to down to supply and demand: there was a demand for national security as a public good and the economy supplied the inputs. Their supply price was likely to fall with economic growth, which increased supply, while the demand price varied directly with the number and intensity of external threats.

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This approach suggests that we may look at the motives driving Soviet allocations to defense and the defense industry in much the same way as for any state. But this implication is also the main problem: it seems unsafe to assume anything of the kind. The Soviet state was not like other states, judged by its extreme propensities to secrecy and dictatorship, or at least it lay at one extreme of the spectrum of states. At the most superficial level, we know that dictators like guns and uniforms and rule by force. This makes an explanation that owes nothing to the facts about Stalin unsatisfying to say the least.

Soviet Aggression: The Export of Revolution? According to Viktor Suvorov (1990), Stalin built up his army and defense industry because he planned an aggressive war to conquer western Europe; his plans were frustrated a first time in 1941 because Hitler struck first, and a second time in 1944 when the western Allies opened a Second Front against Germany by landing in France. This view has considerable support among Russian historians, many of whom are generally disposed to believe the worst about Stalin. A few western scholars share this view (Raack 1995; Weeks 2002).

But there are also some problems with the aggressive-war hypothesis. One problem is its historical origins, which lie in the self-serving rationalizations of Hitler's policies offered after the war by former National Socialists in Germany. Another is that it is based largely on memoir and hearsay; the evidence found in the archives does not support it; for these reasons most qualified western scholars now reject it (for example Gorodetsky 1999; Uldricks 1999; Mawdsley 2003). In short, Stalin's generals may have planned for the *contingency* of an offensive war, but Stalin did not seek to create the *opportunity* for one.

A Soviet Military-Industrial Complex? Sooner or later most Russian scholars who have written about Soviet defense industry (Aniskov and Khairov 1996; Savitskii 1996; Simonov 1996; Bystrova 2000) have ended up using the term "military-industrial complex" to describe the simple fact that the Soviet armed forces and defense industry were large and interrelated. In the west, however, this term has often been loaded with a further implication (discussed by Rosen 1973; Aspaturian 1973; Agursky and Adomeit 1978; Holloway 1982): the idea that powerful military leaders might be colluding with the leaders of the defense industry to boost the military budget and so extract vast sums of money and resources from the economy to build their power and prestige. Applied to a Soviet context, this suggested that the Soviet Union ended up spending vast sums on its army and defense industry mainly because they were there.

Historically, there is evidence for and against. On the plus side, the next chapter by Andrei Sokolov will show that the military were already demanding forced industrialization in the mid-1920s as a precondition for developing the defense industry on the scale they claimed was necessary to counter external threats; it may be that Stalin bought their loyalty by subscribing to their program. Once he had made himself dictator, however, the idea loses its fit to the facts; it requires, for example, that Stalin, although dictator, was not a very good one since he could not stop his subordinates from combining to make him spend more than he would have chosen on defense. On the evidence now available this did not happen. He did not leave defense policies or outlays to his underlings and took nothing for granted. Formally the Politburo decided how much would be spent on defense (Davies and Harrison 1997: 385-92) but Stalin's word was decisive on all major issues. Stalin also took a much more active interest in the detail of foreign policy than previous historians would have thought (Davies et al. 2003: 14). Well versed in divide-and-rule, he expertly

prevented military and industrial lobbyists from colluding (Harrison 2003). Possibly a military-industrial complex formed after his death (Bystrova 2000)--although even here traditional western scholarship would often take a skeptical view (Holloway 1983: 159-60).

In this chapter I will set out a view of the uses of Soviet military force in Stalin's hands that is intellectually straightforward and also sits well with the facts that we know. It starts from simple premisses: Stalin had gained power, and wanted to continue to hold it, but to do so he had to ward off multiple threats. These threats were both external and internal. Military force was one of the means at his disposal for holding power, but not the only one. The other instrument of his regime that will share center stage in this chapter is repression.

Stalin's use of repression is puzzling in its own way. The origins of the Great Terror of 1937/38, when 700,000 were executed for "counter-revolutionary crimes," have been much debated. Did Stalin intend it, or was it an unintended consequence of the structure of his regime? Some historians always saw Stalin's hand at work, but its sheer scale and often revolting cruelty made his motivations hard for them to penetrate (for example Conquest 1971; Medvedev 1971). The terror appeared excessive, counter-productive, or just plain irrational. This led other scholars (for example Getty 1985) to try to explain how the terror might have run out of Stalin's control because of bureaucratic rivalries and social tensions. Now that the official documentation of the terror has been made available (Getty and Naumov 1999; Kozlov et al. 2004) the "unintentional" explanation seems less tenable. The terror did not run out of control. Stalin managed it personally; he switched repression on and off and fine-tuned it to a surprising degree. His motivation has also become clearer: he perceived the threat of a fifth column of the embittered and faint hearted who would turn against him in time of war, and he set out to destroy it beforehand (Khlevniuk 1995).¹ In short, the scale and timing of the terror were largely the result of the conscious decisions of a small group of people, and very largely of one man. But why Stalin perceived the problem as he did, and why he regarded the scale of the solution as appropriate and timed it as he did, remain unclear.

To summarize: we would like to understand why Stalin wanted a large army and defense industry. To do this we will set them in the context of his system of rule and his other means of ruling. In this chapter I will pursue the idea of military force and repression as parallel instruments in the joint equilibrium between Stalin and his potential opponents abroad and at home. The most efficient use of military force was to counter external threats. However, I will provide evidence that the balance of military power also had the capacity to influence the level of domestic discontent and opposition. Likewise, repression at home could influence the conduct of foreign adversaries as well as of internal opposition. In other words, Stalin's foreign and

¹ This conclusion contradicts Roberta Manning's (1993) suggestion that the Great Terror was a response to economic difficulties rather than political threats. Davies (2006) has shown that the timing is all wrong: Stalin launched the purge of the economic apparatus in early 1936 at a time when he had little cause to feel anything but satisfaction with the state of the economy, and those charged with economic sabotage in the show trials of 1936 and 1937 were not accused of causing the difficulties that began to materialize later in 1936. In short, the terror took place at a time of economic difficulties but the terror contributed to the difficulties, not the other way round.

domestic policies were intimately related. Stalin himself had no doubt of their connections, and particularly feared the consequences of internal opposition in the context of an external crisis, when foreign enemies might exploit collaborators to challenge his regime from within. Arguably, a coalition of internal and external enemies was his worst nightmare. His changing choices over repression and rearmament can be fully understood only in this context.

What Stalin Feared

The Soviet Union Faced Real Foreign Threats

Given the well-known history of the twentieth century it is not difficult to show that the Soviet Union faced real external threats. Russia's separate peace with Germany in January 1918 prompted her former wartime allies to turn on the new Soviet government and make common cause with the anti-Bolshevik forces. Soviet Russia was invaded on all sides. Despite eventually prevailing over the White and Allied armies the Bolshevik regime remained understandably fearful of renewed intervention through the 1920s. Russia was now neighbored by countries such as Finland and Poland, lesser powers it is true, but all more or less hostile; the neighbors' hostility was exacerbated by the memory of actions on the Soviet side such as the failed attempt to export revolution to Poland by force in 1920. Behind the neighbors, it was generally thought, stood the armies of much more powerful countries including Britain, France, the United States, and Japan (see Chapter 2). Only Germany was a friend at this time, motivated chiefly by convenience.

In the 1920s, as a result, Moscow was subject to periodic outbreaks of nerves that were sometimes exaggerated for dramatic effect. In the most famous case, the "war scare" of 1927, we do know that no one was actually planning to attack the Soviet Union. The great powers generally lacked either the popular will for war or the means to wage it. The United Kingdom certainly lacked both will and means; when the UK broke off diplomatic relations with the USSR in May of that year, the rupture was symbolic rather than truly threatening. In the Far East there was a local dispute over the Chinese Eastern Railroad, but the fact is that none of Russia's neighbors had immediate plans for war and Moscow knew it (Simonov 1996; Samuelson 2000: 34-36). The true significance of the war scare was somewhat different and we will return to it.

The long-term danger to the Soviet Union did not lie with the neighbors but with Germany and Japan. In September 1931 Japan invaded Manchuria; this was the first step along her path to World War II. Although strong Soviet defenses eventually deflected Japanese ambitions to easier pickings in the British and Dutch colonies in southeast Asia, there can be no doubt that Japan originally intended to make gains at the expense of Soviet territory. Within a year a "Russian National Union" had been formed in Manchuria with the aim of forming an independent state in Siberia allied to Japan (Davies 1996: 278). Japan continued to eye Soviet territory until the border war of 1939.

As for Germany, on taking power in 1933 Hitler began secretly to prepare the military means to carve out a colonial living space for ethnic Germans in eastern Europe and European Russia. By 1935 the scale of his preparations could no longer be concealed. On March 31 of that year the Red Army commander Tukhachevskii published his article in *Pravda* attacking "The War Plans of Contemporary

Germany”; on December 3, Stalin was warned that one of Hitler’s ministers had told a French banker that Germany intended to divide the Ukraine with Poland (Davies and Harrison 1997: 390). Hitler risked war with Britain and France over Austria in 1936 and Czechoslovakia in March and October 1938, went to war with them over Poland in September 1939, and finally took the opportunity to go to war with the USSR in June 1941.

Foreign Threats Stimulated Domestic Opposition

The capacity of external threats to stimulate internal opposition is a pattern deeply rooted in Russian history. Russia’s military confrontation with Britain, France, and Turkey over the Crimea in 1854 brought simmering peasant discontent to the boil and eventually forced the abolition of serfdom in 1861. What Marxist could forget that the uprising of the Parisian communards in 1871 had been sparked by France’s defeat by Prussia the previous year? And what Russian could forget that it was Russia’s defeats at the hands of Japan and Germany that set the scene for the insurrections of December 1905 and February and October 1917? Oleg Khlevniuk (1995: 174) has noted: “The complex relationship between war and revolution, which had almost seen the tsarist regime toppled in 1905 and which finally brought its demise in 1917, was a relationship of which Stalin was acutely aware. The lessons of history had to be learnt lest history repeat itself.”

Soviet leaders read secret police reports of the volatile mood among the peasants and workers before and during the “war scare” of 1927, therefore, with trepidation. At the beginning of 1927 president of the Soviet Republic Kalinin told the Politburo: “I have talked with many peasants and can say straight out that in the event of a conflict with foreign states a significant stratum of peasants will not defend Soviet power with any enthusiasm, and this is also reported in the army.”² From August 20 of that year an OGPU (security police) report summarizes workers’ reactions to the prospect of war (cited by Simonov 1996: 1358): “Kill all the communists and Komsomols [party youth members] who want a war.” “If there’s a war we’ll kill the administration first, then we’ll fight.” “If you give us war we’ll get weapons and make a second revolution.”

If this was the mood at a time when any prospect of a real war lay far in the future, it was more serious when social tensions deepened further and the threat of war became still more actual. An OGPU summary dated January 19, 1932, from the time of deepening difficulties over grain sowings and procurements from the new collective farms, claimed the threat of war with Japan had “enlivened ‘kulak’ activities. In the Moscow region, for example, the kulaks were alleged to assert that ‘the kolkhozy are a second serfdom . . . , but we must put up with it for a time, soon Japan will attack Soviet power and we shall free ourselves’” (Davies and Wheatcroft 2003: 15-16). Similar summaries of the popular mood in 1936 reported such remarks as: “Soon there will be war and the Soviet regime will collapse”; “Germany and Japan . . . will begin the war, and we will help them” (Fitzpatrick 1999: 205).

The idea that internal and external threats may feed each other is not new. Comparing terror in the French and Russian revolutions, Arno Mayer has described the revolutionaries’ belief in the “interpenetration of internal and external counterrevolution.” In France as in Russia the terror was, in part, a response to

² RGASPI, 17/163/103 (January 3, 1927).

military weakness and external threat. In 1793 Robespierre condemned “the moralists who sought to protect internal enemies ‘from the sword of national justice,’ insisting that by doing so they ‘blunted the bayonets of our soldiers’ who were risking their lives fighting the armies of foreign tyrants” (Mayer 2000: 205, 208). In turn, the rise of counter-revolutionary disaffection in the French provinces was often the consequence of the huge military levies ordered by the revolutionary government to fight off the foreign armies gathering to crush it.

An understanding that domestic opposition may be highly responsive to foreign threats is evident in the earliest historical records. In the Peloponnesian wars among the Greeks, for example, it was not uncommon for the armies or navies of one side to parade past the cities allied to the other in the hope that the demonstration would provoke a rebellion within the walls, causing the city to change sides. When the Athenians attacked Spartolus in Chalcidice in 429BC they counted on assistance from the democratic faction within the city; on this occasion they were frustrated because the ruling oligarchs called up forces from an allied neighbor that defeated them in battle (Thucydides 2: 79). But the tactic worked often enough that both Athenian expeditions to Sicily, the second of which ruined Athenian power, were raised not to occupy the island militarily but in the expectation that they would weaken the influence of Syracuse, a colony of Athens’ enemy Corinth, within the island’s other city states, and bring them over to Athens (Thuc. 3: 86; 6: 17).

What Stalin Feared Most: Collusion Among Enemies

Stalin demonized the former oppositionists partly by presenting them as in the pay of foreign powers.³ Virtually all the victims of the major show trials held in Moscow between 1936 and 1938 were charged with acting in collaboration with or at the direction of foreign governments or intelligence services. The defendants implicated

³ Stalin tended to demonize everyone. Davies (1989: 114) has noted that the public discourse of Stalinism relied heavily on the teaching that “He that is not with me is against me” (Luke, 11:23). For present purposes, what is of more importance is that this was not just a rhetorical pose for public consumption but accurately reflected Stalin’s world-view expressed, for example, in his private correspondence. Once he had overcome those openly opposed to him and had won unchallenged personal authority over the Soviet state and Bolshevik party, he continued to see the hand of enemies at work in all things. Commenting on mistakes made by the architects of the White Sea Canal on August 27, 1932, he called them “bunglers (or covert enemies)” (Davies et al. 2003: 198); on September 24, 1933, he called those disputing a plan for tractor repairs “bunglers or outright enemies” (Davies et al. 2003: 218). In an earlier incident Soviet trade officials in France and Finland were found to be corrupt; in private correspondence dated September 16, 1931, Stalin described this not as venality but as “betrayal” (Davies et al. 2003: 91). Commenting on the circumstances of the famine of 1932/33 he wrote to the novelist Mikhail Sholokhov on May 6, 1933, that the peasants “were carrying out a ‘silent’ war against Soviet power. War by starvation” (Stalin to Sholokhov, cited by Davies 1996: 243; in fact it was predominantly the peasants who were starving). The previous September at a Central Committee plenum, he heard the speaker declare: “People who can look on cold-bloodedly while workers or their families don’t get bread for two or three days are degenerates.” Stalin interrupted: “They are enemies” (cited by Davies 1996: 257).

in the “Trotskyite-Zinovievite Terrorist Center” at the Kamenev-Zinov’ev trial (August 19 to 24, 1936) were alleged to have had contacts with the German Gestapo. The former oppositionists accused of involvement in the “Parallel Center” at the Piatakov trial (January 23 to 30, 1937) were accused of espionage and of trying to provoke a war in which Germany and Japan would defeat the Soviet Union. The Red Army commanders tried in June 1937 were charged specifically with treasonous dealing with Germany, as were many of their subordinates in subsequent processes. Finally, the defendants of the “Right-Trotskyist Center” at the Bukharin trial (March 2 to 13, 1938) were accused of spying for Britain since 1921 and planning to give away Soviet territory to the British Empire.⁴

These were the public charges. Typically, the only evidence for them was the confessions of the accused, which had been beaten out of them. But Stalin did not instruct anyone to lie themselves or to extract a lie from others. Rather, he taught them how to construct evidence for the deeper “truth” that lay concealed beneath appearances, that he was the first to see clearly. Stalin’s belief in hidden enemies expressed the “dictator’s dilemma” described by Ronald Wintrobe (1998: 335-37): the more powerful the dictator, the less he can trust those around him when they claim to be loyal. The version of reality that he built on this belief would eventually appear in public court proceedings and in the columns of *Pravda*, but the first drafts of it are often found in the records of private conversations within the leadership (Fitzpatrick 1999: 21; Getty and Naumov 1999: 15-24; Davies et al. 2003: 12). In a private letter dated August 22, 1936, for example, Stalin explained to his Politburo colleagues how to respond to the foreign critics of the Kamenev-Zinov’ev trial, calling them “defenders of the gang of assassins and Gestapo agents” (Davies et al. 2003: 335). Reacting on August 23 to testimony that Kamenev had sounded out the French

⁴ Conquest 1971: 148-76, 230-58, 497-573; Medvedev 1971: 152-239. Alleged links with foreign influences in these years were not confined to political troublemakers. Foreign connections were strongly featured in the Shakhty affair of 1928 (Carr and Davies, 1969: 621-27), which inaugurated a new relationship between the Bolsheviks and professional workers. In a trial that lasted from May 19 to July 5, 1928, 55 mining engineers from the Shakhty district of the Donets coalfield, including three Germans, were accused of economic sabotage in the interests of former shareholders now in France; links were also alleged with German industrial interests and Polish intelligence. Four were acquitted including two of the Germans but the other German was imprisoned along with most of the rest; five were executed. In a speech of May 16, 1928, i.e. on the eve of the trial, Stalin (1954, vol. 11: 74) described the Shakhty affair as “the expression of a joint attack on the Soviet regime launched by international capital and the bourgeoisie in our country.” Similarly the leaders of the “Industrial Party,” on trial from November 25 to December 6, 1930, were accused of wrecking of the economy so as to create a context for French military intervention to establish a counter-revolutionary government (Davies 1989: 409 and 410n). An undercover reporter for an emigrant journal reported opinion in the Moscow streets as holding that the accused “sold themselves to the capitalists” and deserved execution. Trotskii, in exile abroad, at first believed that the accused were indeed “a gang of agents of international imperialism.” At the Metro-Vickers trial of April 12 to 19, 1933, six British and twelve Soviet engineers were convicted of wrecking activities at power stations and spying for British intelligence (Davies 1996, 337).

ambassador concerning the French attitude to a future Soviet government of the opposition leaders Stalin wrote to the Politburo: “I think Kamenev also sounded out the British, German, and American ambassadors. This means that Kamenev must have disclosed to those foreigners the plans for the conspiracy and assassinations of the [communist party] leaders . . . This is an attempt by Kamenev and his friends to form an outright bloc with the bourgeois governments against the Soviet government” (Davies et al. 2003: 338).⁵

Perceptions like this were based on principles that Stalin followed consistently for many years. It is a hallmark of these principles that he adhered to them in private as well as in public. On June 4, 1932, for example, he wrote concerning rebellion in Mongolia to his deputy Lazar Kaganovich, that the Mongolian government “should declare that the rebel chiefs are agents of the Chinese and especially the Japanese imperialists, who are seeking to strip Mongolia of its freedom and independence” (Davies et al. 2003: 116, emphasis omitted). On July 2, he addressed the OGPU agents in Manchuria who, he believed, had overstepped the mark in organizing against the Japanese occupation, and ordered Kaganovich to “take Draconian measures against the criminals at the OGPU and the Intelligence Bureau (it is quite possible that these gentlemen are agents of our enemies in our midst)” (Davies et al. 2003: 151). On August 7, 1932 Stalin mused on how to deal tactically with foreign specialists: “All foreign bourgeois specialists are or may be intelligence agents” (Davies et al. 2003: 177; emphasis in original). In the midst of these matters Stalin was also dealing with the political crisis in the Ukraine resulting from the poor 1932 harvest and the excessive plan of procurements from it; on August 11 he warned Kaganovich to “Keep in mind, too, that the Ukrainian Communist Party (500,000 members, ha-ha) has quite a lot (yes, quite a lot!) of rotten elements, conscious and unconscious Petliura adherents [nationalists], and, finally, direct agents of [the Polish leader] Pilsudski” (Davies et al. 2003: 180).⁶

⁵ In September 1935, during the preparation for the trial, Ezhov told a conference of regional party secretaries: “Foreign intelligence officers, saboteurs, know that there is no better cover for their espionage and subversive operations than a party card . . . We can assert firmly that Poles, Finns, Czechs, and Germans have been openly gambling on this . . . They send people here and tell them: ‘Go and get yourself a party card’” (cited by Naumov and Getty 1999: 201).

⁶ An interesting case, secret until recently, followed in the summer of 1934, when a depressed gunnery officer was arrested for bringing a detachment of unarmed recruits to Moscow and exhorting them to overthrow the government. On August 8, 1934, Stalin wrote that the culprit, Nakhaev, “is, of course (of course!), not alone. He must be put up against the wall and forced to talk – to tell the whole truth and then severely punished. He must be a Polish-German (or Japanese) agent. The Chekists become laughable when they discuss his ‘political’ views with him (this is called an *interrogation*!). A venal mutt doesn’t have political views – otherwise he would not be an agent for an outside force” (Davies et al. 2003: 248). At first Nakhaev did not cooperate, so Kaganovich reported to Stalin on August 12: “He is not showing his real roots yet. All of his behavior is confirmation that he is a foreign agent” (Davies et al. 2003: 249). Some days later Nakhaev fell in with his allotted role, and on August 28 Kaganovich was able to tell Stalin: “As was to be expected Nakhaev confessed his connections with General Bykov, who . . . is an intelligence agent, according to what

Stalin's reference to "unconscious" nationalists expresses another dimension of his anxiety. He did not only fear *hidden* enemies, who had not revealed themselves yet; he also feared *unconscious* enemies--those did not even know themselves yet, who believed themselves to be loyal. Sheila Fitzpatrick (1999: 194) conveys the consequences in the private thought of a diarist of the time: "It was possible, evidently, to be a wrecker without meaning to be one or even knowing it. It was possible to wear a mask that deceived even oneself."

Stalin's fears were heightened by the experience of the Spanish Civil War. In October 1936 the Spanish Nationalist general Emilio Mola Vidal, asked which of his four army columns would take Madrid, declared that Madrid would be taken by the uprising of a "fifth column" of sympathizers within the city. Although this turned out to be more propaganda than fact, the idea of a fifth column hiding patiently at home until the opportunity presented itself to deliver the country to its external enemies exacerbated Stalin's fears. It was his fear of a fifth column that sparked off the Great Terror of 1937 and 1938, when 1.6 million people from a working-age population of just under 100 million were arrested for counter-revolutionary violations; nearly half were executed (Kozlov et al. 2004, vol. 1: 609). Khlevniuk (1995: 167-68) concludes that the purges of those years aimed to achieve "the removal of all strata of the population, which in the opinion of the country's leaders were *hostile or potentially hostile*" (my emphasis). Stalin's anxiety pivoted on the expectation of war: the "potential" or "unconscious" enemies that he aimed to root out were those who appeared or believed themselves to be loyal in the normal, peaceful conditions of the time, whom he expected to betray their country at the first signs of foreign intervention.

The framework for "mass operations" was set out in the NKVD operational order no. 00447, sent to the Politburo on July 30, 1937 (Getty and Naumov 1999: 473-80). Previous repressions had created wide swathes of the population that either remained under active suspicion or were seen as likely to have become embittered toward the regime. While various small acts of reconciliation had been attempted, "the Stalinist leadership always considered terror as its main method of struggle with a potential 'fifth column'" (Khlevniuk 1995: 169). Specifically designated for execution or imprisonment were those involved in the non-Bolshevik political parties, those who had fought for the losers in the Civil War, the party oppositionists of left and right,

has been determined so far, for Estonia. We have to assume of course that it is not just Estonia" (Davies et al. 2003: 264). From Stalin's example, those around him learned to see the hand of foreign powers in quite minor matters. Thus on August 22, 1935, Kaganovich informed Stalin of the arrest of the Russian editor of a French-language newspaper published in Moscow: "The newspaper was conducted incorrectly and evidently Change of Landmarks [an emigrant group advocating reconciliation between the intelligentsia and the regime] elements, and perhaps spy elements as well, clustered around it" (Davies et al. 2003: 298). Writing to Stalin about disruption on the railroads in Krasnoïarsk on January 26, 1936, Kaganovich noted: "The [repair] depot and the shop are contaminated with wrecker elements who are connected with the Japanese and Poles" (Davies et al. 2003: 322). Reporting to a Central Committee plenum on December 4, 1936, concerning the newly uncovered "backup center" of the defendants in the Kamenev-Zinov'ev trial of the previous summer, Ezhov mentioned that it had improved its links with the country's border regions. Beria interjected: "And also in terms of its connections abroad" (Naumov and Getty 1999: 304).

those involved in religious activity, former kulaks, and those previously convicted of wrecking, spying, or other counter-revolutionary crimes; all qualified as actual or potential, conscious or unconscious enemies of the people. From the summer of 1937 the mass operations acquired a national tinge, with special actions were directed against ethnic Germans (under an instruction of July 20, 1937), Poles (August 9), and Chinese (September 19); these were accompanied by orders to expel minorities from border regions, for example Koreans from the Far East (August 21) (Khlevniuk 1995, 162-63).

At the beginning of 1938 the transition to wholesale “national operations” began with a Politburo instruction of January 31 to the NKVD to complete, by April 15, the destruction of the “counterrevolutionary nationalist contingent – Poles, Letts, Germans, Estonians, Finns, Greeks, Iranians, Harbintsy [former employees of the Chinese Eastern Railroad evacuated from Harbin, Manchuria], Chinese, and Romanians” and also Bulgarians and Macedonians (cited by Khlevniuk 1995: 164).⁷

The fact is that Stalin was already personally secure in 1937 and his regime faced no immediate threat of any magnitude at home. This fact is sometimes used to criticize the idea that Stalin had a logically consistent rationale for the Great Terror. But the non-existence of any serious domestic opposition at the time is beside the point. Stalin’s calculations were based primarily on his growing sense of the threat of a future war, and they were forward-looking; he was acting pre-emptively, not reacting. In this future war, Stalin feared, the elements in the domestic population that were presently no more than “potential” or “unconscious” enemies would reveal their true identities and rise up against him in concert with the foreign enemy. He had no reason to want to punish them, since they were doing nothing to merit punishment. He did not even want to warn or deter them; for deterrence, it would have been enough to select a few of them for heavily publicized show trials. He wanted simply to eliminate them beforehand, and this was best done without warning and in secret on a massive scale.⁸

Authority for this interpretation is provided by Stalin’s prime minister Viacheslav Molotov. Looking back on these events after many years, Molotov observed that Stalin’s actions punished not just real enemies but also “many who vacillated, those who did not firmly follow the line and in whom there was no confidence that at a critical moment they would not desert and become, so to speak, part of the ‘fifth column’.” Molotov accepted this, but he did not regret it: “Stalin in my opinion, pursued an absolutely correct line: so what if one or two extra heads were chopped off, there would be no vacillation in the time of war and after the war” (cited by Khlevniuk 1995: 173). The “extra heads” that Stalin destroyed were innocent of any crime in the present. In Molotov’s eyes, Stalin had rightly decided to destroy them in

⁷ Russians with contacts abroad were generally a target in the terror (Conquest 1971: 385; Solzhenitsyn 1974: 84), as was the contingent of foreign revolutionaries who had taken refuge from fascism in Moscow (Conquest 1971: 574-88; Medvedev 1971: 218-23).

⁸ Paul R. Gregory reaches the same conclusion, that the terror followed a strategy of elimination, in a new book, *Terror by Quota: Planning State Security Under Stalin*, currently in preparation for publication by Yale University Press. I thank him for allowing me to read and cite this work.

advance--not to wait until they had had the opportunity to be guilty of something, when it might be too late.

Repression is Flexible, Military Power is Sticky

To simplify, Stalin faced two threats with two instruments. The threats were his adversaries at home and abroad. His instruments were military force and repression. Military force was naturally adapted to meet the foreign threat, while repression could neutralize the threat at home.

It is notable that Stalin did not try to use his armies to put down domestic enemies. OGPU decree no. 44/21 of February 2, 1930, for example, set out procedures for the "liquidation of the kulaks as a class" by arresting and imprisoning or deporting hundreds of thousands of people from the countryside. It warned the local secret police organizations "in no circumstances to involve units of the Red Army in the operation. To permit their employment only in extreme cases of the emergence of uprisings; by agreement with the local organizations, the Revolutionary Military Council, and the plenipotentiary OGPU representatives, where units of the OGPU troops are insufficient, covertly to organize military groups from reliable Red Army units that have been filtered by the special OGPU organs" (Kozlov 2004: 96). The reason for this is clear: the Red Army's rank and file consisted of conscripts representing all sections of society, not previously selected for loyalty, and could not be trusted if it came to a conflict with their own people.

Military force and repression differed not only by the threats that they could be used to counter. They differed also in the speed at which they could be adapted to the threats as they changed. In brief, repression was relatively flexible and could be adjusted quickly. Military power, in contrast, was "sticky"; it required considerable time to scale up and down.

<Figure 1.1 and Table 1.1 here.>

The main shifts in Soviet military spending and war preparations that we see over the 1930s correspond in a rough way to the shifting external threats. To see this we must have measures, and quality effects make real military power and real outlays on it notoriously difficult to evaluate. Figure 1.1 shows three alternative measures: the numbers of men and women in uniform, the volume of weapons purchased, and the burden of defense outlays relative to imputed wage incomes. The pattern they all show is one of rapid rearmament in the early 1930s followed by a hesitation, then acceleration in 1936 becoming more marked in 1938 and 1939. The rearmament of the early 1930s is often ascribed, reasonably, to fears over Japan while the much greater rearmament at the end of the decade was clearly designed to counter the menace of the combined Axis powers (Davies 1996; Davies and Harrison 1997).

In short, it appears that there was a general long-term intention to make the Soviet Union more secure externally. There were also fluctuations in the intensity with which the Stalinist leadership pursued this goal, and the fluctuations bear some relation to the intensity of external threats.

The fluctuations were smoothed over time by long adjustments lags. These lags were forced by the time and effort required to build up military power. In the twentieth century it did not take much time to recruit soldiers, especially when the motherland was in danger. To train and equip them took longer, however, even when the equipment was ready. To build up the combat stocks of a mechanized army

required specialized large-scale defense industries that took years to lay down. These war industries could not be maintained without comprehensive industrialization. Experience of the two world wars shows that industrial mobilization could be speeded up to a surprising degree when war broke out (Harrison 1998; Broadberry and Harrison 2005); in other words, the peacetime constraints on mobilization were not absolute and could be broken in time of national emergency. It follows that a dictator like Stalin, who did not respect social conventions even in peacetime, could probably have hurried things along a bit more during the 1930s. But the same experience also tells us that hurrying things along was ruinously expensive, so it is not really surprising if Stalin chose not to do more. Even as it was, a comparative view of European rearmament tells us that the Soviet military build-up shown in Figure 1.1 was more abrupt and determined than most.

<Figure 1.2 and Table 1.2 here.>

By contrast, Soviet experience shows that political repression could be turned on and off almost at the flick of a switch. Figure 1.2 charts annual series for sentences for political offenses by tribunals, courts, the OGPU collegium, and NKVD special assemblies and troiki from the end of the Civil War to Stalin's death. From the point of view of establishing the cumulative total of victims of Stalinist repression Michael Ellman (2002) has pointed out that these figures are incomplete. They interpret repression narrowly; they omit millions of victims imprisoned or forced into internal exile at various times for resisting specific policies such as the collectivization of agriculture, or violating specific laws on, for example, labor discipline or the protection of state property. But a narrow focus is what we need here. The outstanding feature of the series is the sharp peak of repression in 1937 and 1938 which came about through the confluence of two processes. One was a public purge of Stalinist officialdom which carried away tens of thousands of victims between early 1936 and the end of 1938. The other was the mass operations secretly initiated at the end of July 1937, the victims of which are measured in hundreds of thousands. On a monthly or weekly breakdown, the series would probably show still greater volatility. Through the mass operations Stalin was able to ratchet up the rate of executions by several orders of magnitude in a few days; his brief instruction was sufficient to put an end to the mass operations in mid-November 1938.

It is clear that repression was not *perfectly* flexible. The documents themselves show that preparation was required both to launch and terminate the mass operations. It took a few weeks to develop the rationale for the mass operations, gather the necessary information from the localities to fix their scope and scale, and disseminate the procedures for implementing them through NKVD order no. 00447. To scale them down took somewhat longer, ten months from the first signals in mid-January 1938 to their conclusion in mid-November. One factor in this delay was the need to conclude operations already in progress, but another was pressure from the NKVD in the localities to extend their scope (Khlevniuk 1995: 159-65). Eventually, however, the mass operations were abruptly closed down (Getty and Naumov 1999: 531-37).

If repression was not perfectly flexible in the short term, longer-term rigidities also cannot be ruled out. The many smaller fluctuations in the level of repression before 1937 can be interpreted in two ways. One explanation is that they show the scope for flexibility and fine-tuning. Another is that there was high-level resistance. The resistance hypothesis implies that over many years Stalin developed a long-term plan to execute hundreds of thousands of people, but he was unable to implement it

before 1937 because he first had to overcome resistance among his Politburo colleagues and at lower levels in the party. If this were right, it would follow that repression was not such a flexible instrument.

Taken at face value, the resistance hypothesis is no longer particularly credible. Getty and Naumov (1999: 576-83) rule it out on two grounds: the archives of the years before 1937 have not produced any evidence that Stalin had a long-term plan of repression; on a surprising number of occasions other leaders in the Politburo and the regions were not an obstacle and were more eager for executions than Stalin himself. They conclude that Stalin did not have a long-term design, was often uncertain about how to optimize repression in the short run, and managed it from day to day in the light of results.

On a narrow interpretation the resistance hypothesis may now seem unconvincing; could it still have force in a broader sense? In a much earlier year such as 1932, Stalin was already a real dictator; for example, he had enough power that he could make decisions that precipitated a regional famine and killed millions of people unintentionally (Davies and Wheatcroft 2003), and survive without serious challenge. But he might not have gathered enough power yet to choose to kill hundreds of thousands of people deliberately, including some leaders who were not already marginalized or suspect but quite close to him. But my argument does not require that Stalin had unfettered *arbitrary* power. It requires only that he had the power to take the decisions he wanted when his perception of the present and future threats demanded it. In effect, I will argue that in 1932 the context did not make the execution of hundreds of thousands his best choice. If there would have been resistance to a Great Terror in 1932, it was because the context did not demand it of Stalin, as much as because Stalin did not demand it.

To conclude, I do not maintain that repression was literally frictionless; however, the significant lags in scaling repression up and down were measured in days and weeks. These are momentary in comparison with the years required to build up spending on military equipment and defense supplies. Thus military spending was sticky; in contrast Stalin adjusted repression almost at will.

Military Force and Repression in Theory

A ruler must retain power in the face of real internal and external threats. Stalin's problem began from the fact that the threat from each depends on the threat from the other. Intuitively, domestic opposition rises with the external threat because the latter raises the return to the dictator's potential opponents from cutting a deal with the foreign enemy; by the same token, the danger of an external attack rises with discontent at home because the foreign enemy can expect to find more willing collaborators. Stalin's own behavior and private attitudes show that he feared this synergy of domestic and foreign threats greatly and did everything he could to deter his own subjects from contemplating collusion with an external enemy.

It follows from this that any instrument that opposes the foreign threat will also mitigate the threat from domestic agents. For example, discontented Soviet citizens sometimes expressed the private hope that an attack by foreign enemies would bring down the Soviet regime, and claimed that they would be ready to help. By rearming against Japan and Germany, Stalin lowered the expectations of his internal enemies that help might come from outside. Similarly, an instrument that represses domestic discontent will also lessen the threat from abroad. Stalin may have thought that if he could visibly root out potential opposition on the home front, his enemies abroad

would no longer expect Soviet traitors to help them in the event of war, and would have second thoughts about attacking Stalin in the first place.

If rearmament and repression could both be used for the same objectives, how should a ruler combine them? This class of problem is well known in the economics of public policy; it was described and solved long ago by Jan Tinbergen (1952) and Robert A. Mundell (1962). It is normal for governments to have multiple objectives and multiple instruments of policy. It is also normal for each instrument to affect several objectives at the same time, making some easier and some harder to achieve. When this is the case, governments should match instruments against objectives in conformity with two rules.

Tinbergen's Rule requires that the government should have as many independent instruments as it has objectives, and in this case Stalin satisfied the rule by having two instruments, rearmament and repression, to neutralize two enemies, abroad and at home.

Mundell's Rule requires the government to assign each instrument to the objective for which it has a comparative advantage. In Stalin's case, if a given increase in military force could diminish the external threat by more than it affected domestic opposition, and conversely for repression, then the ruler should mete out repression to his enemies at home and build military power against his adversaries outside the country.

<Figure 1.3 here.>

In short, suppose that the dictator wants to keep both domestic and foreign threats below some threshold level that will secure him from insurrection or military attack. Internally, he faces a "revolution constraint"; looking abroad, he faces an "invasion constraint." To stay in power, he must set the levels of military power and repression in such a way as exactly to neutralize his external and internal enemies at the same time and satisfy both constraints at once. Figure 1.3 shows some implications. The level of repression is measured along the horizontal axis, and military power is measured along the vertical axis. The steeper curve is the Revolution Constraint (RC): at all points along it, the domestic threat is neutralized. It is steep because a small reduction in repression must be compensated by a large increase in military power to neutralize a given domestic threat. The shallower curve is the Invasion Constraint (IC); at all points along it, the foreign enemy is held off. It is flatter because a small reduction in military power must be offset by a large increase in repression to keep the dictator safe from attack. Thus, repression and military power each contribute to both internal and external security; however, repression produces internal security directly and external security only indirectly, while the converse is true of military power; as a result, repression is comparatively more efficient in the production of internal security, while military power has a comparative advantage in producing external security.

In this model repression and rearmament are inputs into the dictator's power. I assume that the dictator has some other uses of power that he values and would like to maximize, and so it is in his private interest to hold power efficiently.⁹ The

⁹ It is not necessary to the model to know what the value of power is to the ruler, but there is a wide literature that deals with such questions, for example Olson (1993), Wintrobe (1998), Gregory (2004), and Açemoğlu and Robinson (2006).

intersection of the two constraints shows the efficient combination where the dictator sets military power equal to M_0 and repression equal to R_0 . To the southwest of this point, the ruler is insecure both internally and externally. To the northwest he is safe from foreign enemies but his domestic enemies will overthrow him; to the southeast his domestic enemies are repressed but the foreign enemy will attack. In the shaded area to the northeast he has a safety margin on both fronts, but he must sacrifice other objectives unnecessarily to achieve this, unless he values safety for its own sake.

<Figure 1.4 here.>

This framework yields some simple comparative statics. For example, in the absence of any frictions, an increase in either threat should be matched by a proportional increase in the level of the instrument that is matched to it. Figure 1.4 shows the consequences of an increase in the external threat. The increase in the threat is shown by the upward shift of the invasion constraint to IC' : at any given level of repression, more military force is needed now to keep the dictator in power. However, the increase in the external threat will also raise the hopes of internal opposition and provoke more domestic discontent. RC , the revolution constraint, will move too, but by less. Taking both together, the dictator's efficient choice is to maintain repression at R_0 and increase military power from M_0 to M_1 .

In this case there is a vital complication: the time required for adjustment. We have seen evidence that military power was less speedily adaptable than repression. This means that the dictator's choices over military power must be forward-looking. Since he cannot respond instantly, he must forecast foreign threats. What happened when Stalin made a mistake? On several occasions foreign enemies took Stalin by surprise. When faced with a sudden increase in external dangers Stalin would have liked to shift the country smoothly from M_0 to M_1 , but rearmament would take time. In the meantime, his regime would be in peril because, if the external threat were not immediately countered, his internal enemies might be encouraged to rise up against him. What he should do in the long term is clear from Figure 1.4: he should rearm. But what should he do *now*? The solution is shown in Figure 1.5.

<Figure 1.5 here.>

In Figure 1.5 the dictator finds that the foreign danger level has risen, pushing the invasion constraint upward to IC' and the revolution constraint outward to RC' . He would like to rearm, but he cannot do this right away; he must buy time. In the figure, he buys time to rearm by raising repression to R'' ; this is the only option that will keep him inside his safety zone. In the short term, in other words, the dictator must rely on repression alone to counter both internal and external threats.

The problem is that repression is the less efficient instrument for countering an external threat; the dictator must increase it, therefore, by a relatively large amount. Once the dictator has rearmed, he can scale repression back down so as to approach the efficient combination from the southeast, trading back along the invasion constraint IC' to M_1 and R_0 on the line shown by the arrows. During the rearmament period, however, there is a temporary burden of *excess repression*, shown in the figure by the horizontal gap between R'' and R' . The excess is required because the dictator cannot adjust the efficient instrument, military power, quickly enough, so in the interim he must use the inefficient instrument instead. R'' is necessary to prevent invasion; it is not strictly necessary to prevent insurrection. R' would be enough on its

own to prevent his domestic opponents from collaborating with each other to overthrow him. But in the circumstances repression does not just have to prevent insurrection; it also has to prevent internal enemies from colluding with likely external aggressors and ensure that the latter will get no help from any potential fifth column inside the gates.

To summarize, a dictator who makes mistakes in forecasting external threats will be forced away from the balance that is efficient in the long term. The consequences of mistakes are not symmetrical, however. If he underestimates the required level of military power he must compensate with disproportionate repression. If he overestimates, however, society does not benefit by a disproportionate liberalization while he scales down military power; this is because although he can go outside the revolution constraint, he must not go inside it.

This model yields two predictions. First, a ruler who correctly anticipates an increase in international tension should match it with a proportionate increase in military power. Second, however, faced with a rise in international tension that is sudden and unanticipated, the same ruler should respond with an increase in political repression. The repression will be disproportionate to any internal threat, but transitory; it should be followed by a military buildup and a concurrent relaxation of the internal pressure on society.

Evidence on Military Power Versus Repression

In the early 1930s Stalin's dictatorship impoverished and embittered millions of his subjects. Society and politics were gagged and straitjacketed. Markets were suppressed and economic choices were greatly restricted. Heavy taxation enabled a huge diversion of resources into public projects. Peasant farmers were expropriated and suffered years of intense deprivation.

<Figure 1.6 here.>

Beyond the country's borders, enemies gathered. The external dangers grew most markedly, early and late in the decade. Stalin responded with both repression and rearmament. Figure 1.6 charts the Soviet trade-off between military power and repression during the 1930s. Repression is measured by annual sentences by the security organs in proportion to the population of working age; this indicator, while crude, captures well the large swings in Stalin's propensity to victimize his less reliable subjects. Military power is indicated by the burden of defense outlays on imputed worker incomes; this measure is also imperfect, but has the merit of capturing the changing degree of consumer sacrifice that Stalin was willing to impose to realize his military policies.

The vertical movement in the figure shows the progress of Soviet rearmament. Comparing the finishing point with the starting point, Soviet military power had multiplied several times while the level of political repression was roughly unchanged. This shows Stalin's long term adjustment to the growing external danger. While Soviet military power increased in the long term, the figure also shows several sharp increases in repression; these were often transitory, and were followed by substitution back toward rearmament.

The general movement, and especially the repression "spike" of 1937, are readily interpreted in terms of Figure 1.5. In the first years of Stalin's dictatorship his policies of forced industrialization, grain procurement, and collectivization evoked discontent

and resistance; he easily increased repression in response. At this time the world was becoming noticeably more dangerous, particularly in the Far East, and at first this too demanded more repression; when he could, however, Stalin traded back to greater military power combined with less repression. But he could not do so at will, since it took time to increase the Soviet Union's military capabilities.

Given the inefficiency with which repression could address an unanticipated foreign threat, one might also expect heightened attention at such times to non-military instruments for influencing an adversary, for example diplomacy. It is notable that Stalin gave special attention to diplomatic instruments at times of particularly rapid rearmament. For example, while the decisions were being taken that led to the first rearmament surge of 1931 to 1934, the Soviet government was taking an active part in the World Disarmament Conference at Geneva; to support these efforts the Politburo ordered the true increase in Soviet military outlays to be hidden for several years (Davies 1993).

Later in the decade, when the military threat from the Axis became imminent, Stalin could not increase real defense outlays fast enough to protect his regime and re-stabilize society by using the military instrument on its own. To cover himself during the transition, he resorted to a temporary repression that was hugely in excess of that required just to pacify domestic discontent. Then, having readjusted Soviet military power, as he thought, to the new threat, he could wind repression back down to its equilibrium level.

Further illustration comes from the opening period of World War II. The German invasion of June 1941 marked the collapse of Stalin's hopes to deter Hitler, and the external threat to his regime became unexpectedly acute. The first six months of the war saw extraordinary efforts to recruit to the Red Army and reequip it, but these efforts were largely offset by early losses and the disruption of the economy. It was not until the second half of 1942 that the Red Army and war production were successfully stabilized at a much higher level (Harrison 1996).

In the interim, the Soviet political society and its army were swept by "doubt and hesitation, dismay and fear" (Tochenov 2004: 42). In the countryside defeatism stimulated speculative talk about sharing out state grain stocks and collective livestock; in 1941 and 1942 there were widespread reports of collective farmers secretly agreeing the redivision of the kolkhoz fields into private property in anticipation of the arrival of German troops (Barber and Harrison 1991: 104). Tochenov (2004) has vividly described unrest among the textile workers of Ivanovo: with production and pay collapsing and evacuation under way some debated "where better to live – under Hitler or under Soviet power? Who will win the war?" Others concluded that "It's all the same to us to work for Hitler or Stalin." One exclaimed to a party member: "God save us from the victory of Soviet power, they'll hang all you communists." A crowd shouted: "Down with Soviet power, long live little father Hitler." An NKVD report blamed the unrest, characteristically, on "previously disguised spies and provocateurs – straightforward agents of German fascism and hostile people who have infiltrated the enterprises." But the regional party committee noted that many party members had joined them.

During this period Soviet society was held together by a wave of repressive measures (described by Barber and Harrison 1991: 63-67). Exceptional military mobilization was combined with a new wave of arrests for counter-revolutionary crimes; as Table 1.2 shows, 1942 also saw the highest number of political executions in any year outside the Great Terror.

If it is right, this view of Stalin's behavior can be tested. It is based on reasoning that should be valid for any ruler that has freedom of action under very general assumptions. According to this reasoning, when faced with an increase in some external threat, the ruler's best response is to rearm--which is not surprising. The twist in the story comes when the change in the external threat is sudden and unanticipated, and for some reason military power cannot be adjusted quickly. In that case the ruler still rearms but, while he is doing so, he first kills those he fears, even though they have done nothing to deserve it. If this reasoning is right, then there should be evidence for it in other historical contexts. Although not plentiful, this evidence does exist.

German historians (Gerlach 1999; Jersak 2003) have recently turned attention to the foreign-policy background of the Holocaust. They show another dictator responding to the sudden mounting of external threats, not by unifying the nation, but by seeking to eliminate a potential "enemy within." Hitler's worst fear was of an international Jewish conspiracy. What did this mean to him, specifically? Christian Gerlach (1999) suggests that Hitler viewed the Jews as coordinating a coalition of foreign enemies with their own potential to act on the territory of the Third Reich as "opponents, revolutionaries, saboteurs, spies, 'partisans' in his own backyard."

In this light, the steps that led to the Holocaust can be seen to follow a consistent pattern. In August 1941, although not yet at war, the United States administration made its first public commitment to the "final destruction of the Nazi tyranny," when secretary of state Cordell Hull joined Churchill in signing the Atlantic Charter. Hitler responded by secretly ordering the first deportations of Jews from Berlin (Jersak 2003). Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor at the beginning of December brought the United States into the war in Europe; at almost the same time, an unexpected Soviet counter-offensive began to drive German forces back from the gates of Moscow. Within days, Gerlach argues, Hitler had issued the secret orders that were intended to bring about the extermination of all the Jews in Europe.

Another parallel is found in communist China. In 1962 the Soviet and Chinese communist parties came into open conflict over their interpretations of the Cuban missile crisis and relations with the United States. The former allies then took opposite sides when India and China clashed over a frontier dispute. In November 1964 Moscow rejected China's terms for reconciliation. Meanwhile, the war in Vietnam was building up; in the spring of 1965 the United States launched an intense air campaign against one of China's few remaining allies. In the Cultural Revolution, which Mao Zedong launched in 1966, we see again how a dictator responded to international isolation and weakness not by rallying the nation, but by polarising it in a campaign of far-reaching repression against potential--not actual--sources of domestic opposition.

The short fifth century of civil war among the Greeks provides other parallels. Thucydides (4: 80) describes how, in 424BC, Sparta was threatened unexpectedly by Athenian attacks on its territory. Its leaders, fearing that the slave population of helots would be inspired to revolt, selected two thousand of those who showed "most spirit" and slaughtered them in secret. Later in the war, in 405BC, a Spartan fleet appeared unexpectedly off the island of Samos, which was ruled by a democratic faction loyal to Athens. Faced with immediate blockade the Samian democrats responded by executing their aristocratic opponents, who would have favored installing an oligarchy and going over to Sparta (Kagan 2004: 478).

It must be said that clear parallels to the Great Terror are historically rare. Those that can be found tend to have arisen against a background of civil conflict. Perhaps there were unseen moral barriers that normally prevented a ruler from exploiting

power so brutally; only the bitter experience of civil war could have broken moral inhibitions down so as to give Stalin the license to behave in the way that he did.

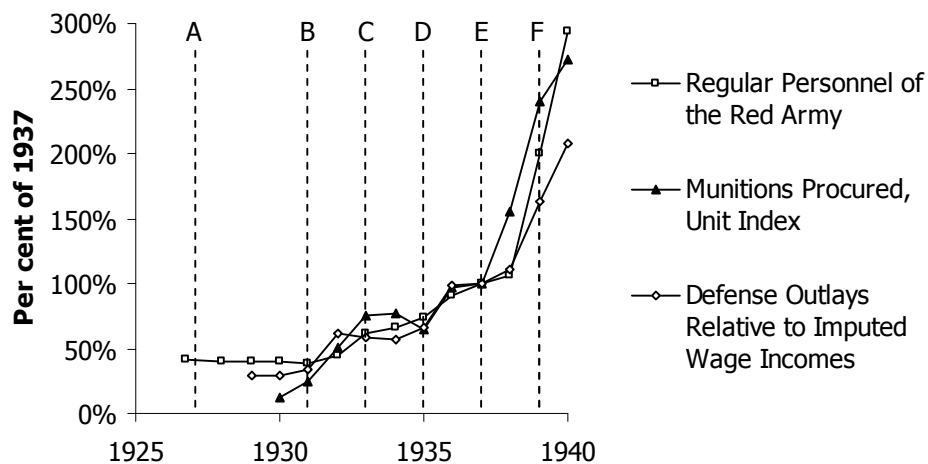
We have asked why Stalin wanted a large army and defense industry. The short answer is that he had many enemies. He used Soviet military power to counter foreign threats. However, he also had enemies at home. Stalin's decisions on military power and political repression were not independent. The interaction between foreign and domestic threats ensured that Stalin could not fix his response to one without considering its implications for the other.

It follows that rearmament and repression are best seen as two elements of a package. Given time, military power could be efficiently adjusted to counter a foreign threat, while repression could efficiently neutralize domestic enemies. The two instruments differed, however, in that repression could be adjusted flexibly whereas rearmament plans took a considerable time to mature. As a result, it was difficult to respond quickly enough to foreign dangers that materialized unexpectedly.

During the 1930s domestic tensions and foreign threats to the Soviet Union both accumulated. Successive actions by Japan and Germany ratcheted upward the fear of war. Stalin's responses closely match those predicted by reasoning from first principles. There was a sequence of abrupt increases in repression followed by adjustments that raised military spending in a more sustained way while reducing repression.

The underlying problem was that, when foreign threats increased suddenly, the more efficient response was not immediately available. In the interim Stalin used repression to protect himself, although it was the less efficient response. The result was that he imposed a very large excess burden of repression on the Soviet society in some years.

Figure 1.1. Soviet Defense Outlays, 1926/27 to 1940: Selected Measures, per cent of 1937

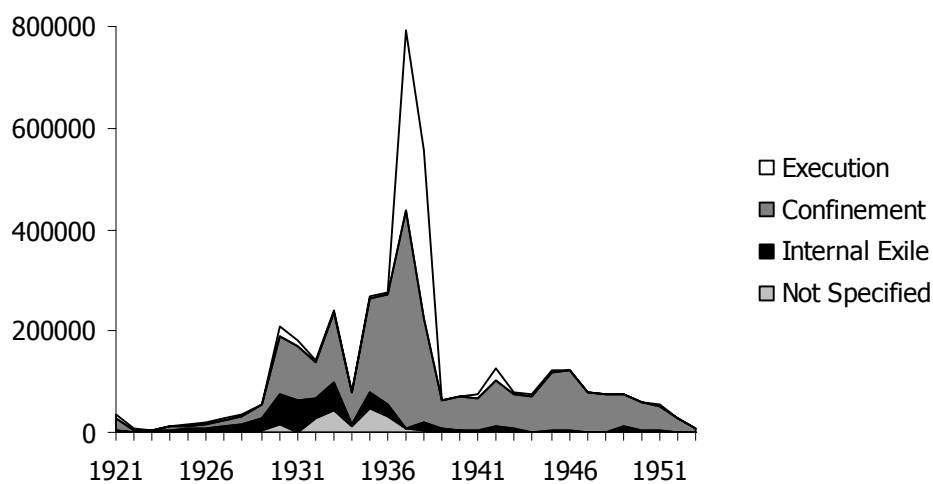


Source: Table 1.1; all series are normalized on 1937.

Key:

- A. The 1927 “war scare”.
- B. Japan invades Manchuria.
- C. Hitler takes power in Germany.
- D. Stalin recognizes Hitler as a threat.
- E. Japan invades China: World War II begins in the Far East.
- F. Germany invades Poland: World War II spreads to Europe.

Figure 1.2. Numbers Sentenced by the Security Agencies, 1921 to 1953



Source: Table 1.2.

Figure 1.3. The Revolution and Invasion Constraints

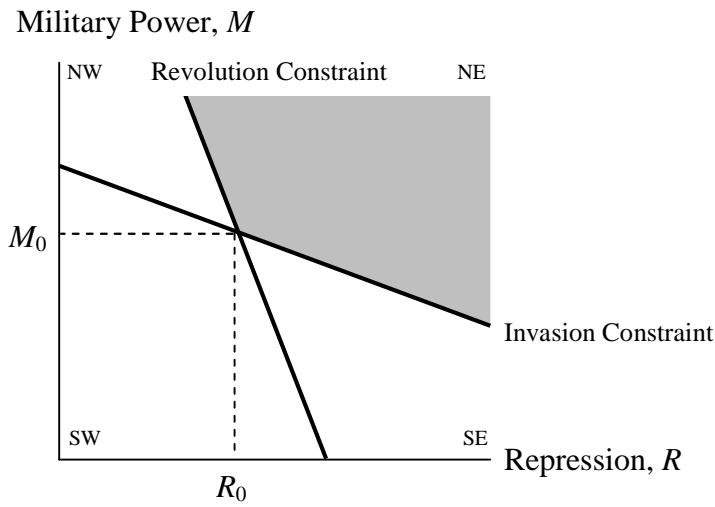


Figure 1.4. An Increase in External Danger

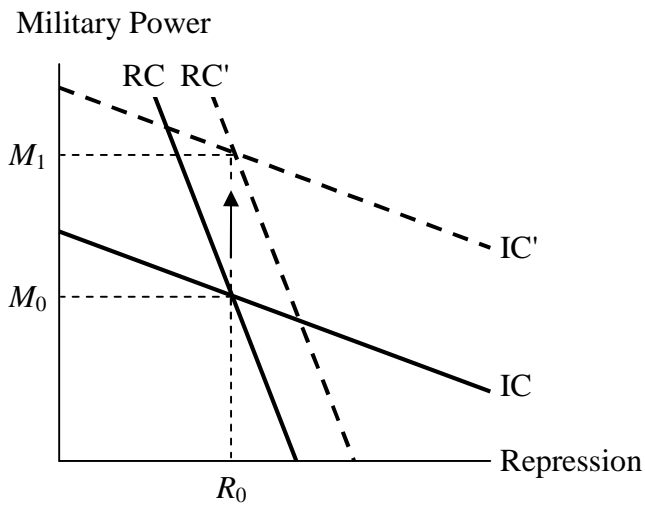


Figure 1.5. When Rearmament Takes Time

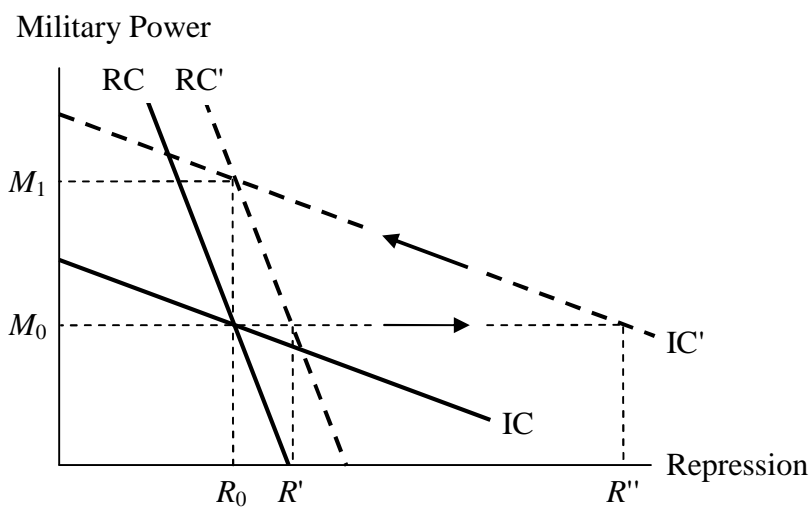
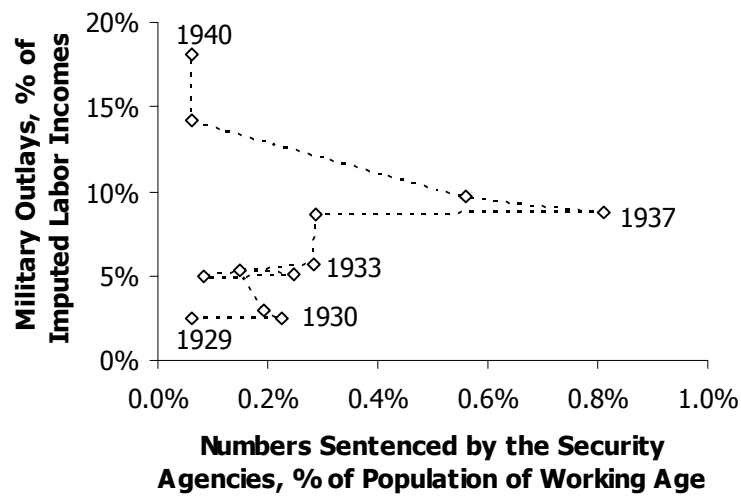


Figure 1.6. *Military Power Versus Repression, 1929 to 1940*



Notes and sources: Military outlays in each year, expressed as percent of imputed wage incomes of the working population are from Table 1.1; missing 1939 is imputed from data in the source. Numbers sentenced each year by the OGPU and NKVD special assemblies and troiki (as Figure 1.2), are calculated as percent of the population aged 15 to 64 within contemporary Soviet frontiers on 1 January each year from Andreev, Darskii, and Khar'kova (1990, pp. 44-46).

Table 1.1. Soviet Defense Activity, 1926/27 and 1929 to 1940: Selected Measures

	Regular Personnel of the Red Army, thousands	Munitions Procured, Unit Index, percent of 1937	Defense Outlays, percent of imputed wage incomes
1926/27	586
1929	2.5
1930	...	12	2.5
1931	562	24	3.0
1932	638	51	5.3
1933	885	76	5.1
1934	940	77	5.0
1935	1067	65	5.7
1936	1300	97	8.6
1937	1433	100	8.7
1938	1513	156	9.7
1939	...	240	...
1940	4207	272	18.1

Source: Davies and Harrison (1997, pp. 373, 375, and 395).

Table 1.2. Numbers Sentenced by the Security Agencies, 1921 to 1953

	Execution	Confinement in Prisons and Camps	Internal Exile	Not Specified	Total
1921	9 701	21 724	1 817	2 587	35 829
1922	1 962	2 656	166	1 219	6 003
1923	414	2 336	2 044	0	4 794
1924	2 550	4 151	5 724	0	12 425
1925	2 433	6 851	6 274	437	15 995
1926	990	7 547	8 571	696	17 804
1927	2 363	12 267	11 235	171	26 036
1928	869	16 211	15 640	1 037	33 757
1929	2 109	25 853	24 517	3 741	56 220
1930	20 201	114 443	58 816	14 607	208 069
1931	10 651	105 683	63 269	1 093	180 696
1932	2 728	73 946	36 017	29 228	141 919
1933	2 154	138 903	54 262	44 345	239 664
1934	2 056	59 451	5 994	11 498	78 999
1935	1 229	185 846	33 601	46 400	267 076
1936	1 118	219 418	23 719	30 415	274 670
1937	353 074	429 311	1 366	6 914	790 665
1938	328 618	205 509	16 842	3 289	554 258
1939	2 552	54 666	3 783	2 888	63 889
1940	1 649	65 727	2 142	2 288	71 806
1941	8 001	65 000	1 200	1 210	75 411
1942	23 278	88 809	7 070	5 249	124 406
1943	3 579	68 887	4 787	1 188	78 441
1944	3 029	70 610	649	821	75 109
1945	4 252	116 681	1 647	668	123 248
1946	2 896	117 983	1 498	957	123 294
1947	1 105	76 581	666	458	78 810
1948	0	72 552	419	298	73 269
1949	0	64 501	10 316	300	75 125
1950	475	54 466	5 225	475	60 641
1951	1 609	49 142	3 425	599	54 775
1952	1 612	25 824	773	591	28 800
1953 ^a	198	7 894	38	273	8 403

Source: Popov (1992, p. 22); Kozlov (2004, vol. 1, pp. 608-9).

Note:

^a First six months.

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