

Following the Munich agreement of September 1938, in which Britain and France sought to appease Hitler by allowing him to occupy the German-settled Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia, the USSR began negotiations with Germany which led to the non-aggression treaty (the Nazi–Soviet pact) of 23 August 1939. Vyacheslav Molotov was at the time both prime minister (he was chairman of Sovnarkom from 1930 to 1941) and foreign minister (1939–49, and 1953–6). The pact threw the communist world into confusion and strained the loyalties of all but the most slavishly pro-Moscow communist parties. In the immediate aftermath of the pact Stalin incorporated eastern Poland into the USSR, provoked a war with Finland, and occupied the Baltic republics and Bessarabia. Stalin ignored all warnings and punctiliously adhered to the terms of the pact, allowing Hitler to absorb much of Eastern Europe and then to defeat the Low Countries and France. All the while, Hitler was preparing for war with his nominal ally, and when he struck on 22 June 1941 the USSR was caught thoroughly unprepared. There are suggestions that Stalin had been preparing for an offensive war against Hitler, possibly to be launched in July 1941, and thus left his defences woefully unprepared and his best forces and equipment lined up on the border, most of which was destroyed in the first days of the German offensive. The war in the East was fought with unprecedented brutality, forging a reconciliation between the Stalinist regime and its own people – but only for the duration of hostilities and even then at the minimum level possible to ensure victory. The war appeared to have been won not because of the system and Stalin but despite them. Too often political concerns were placed over strategic and tactical requirements resulting in the wasteful loss of life. Victory gave the regime a legitimacy that it had hitherto lacked, but hopes for a permanent reconciliation between regime and society were disappointed.

### The Diet of Dictators

After Munich Stalin pursued a dual foreign policy: while still trying to establish an anti-Hitler collective security pact with Britain and France, he prepared the ground for an agreement with Hitler. Following the signing of the Nazi–Soviet pact on 23 August 1939, a war was launched against Finland, ensuring its lasting hatred, the Baltic republics were swallowed up, and up to 2 million Polish men, women and children were deported from eastern Poland ('western Belorussia' and 'western

Ukraine' in Soviet parlance). The trains were full of these hapless victims in the first days of war, jamming the network and preventing the rapid deployment of reserves. Warnings of the imminent German attack were ignored, suggesting that Stalin saw the pact as something more than a temporary expedient. Grain and oil deliveries continued to be made to Germany right up to the invasion itself. The main concentrations of Soviet forces were deployed right on the new border with Germany, leaving them exposed to the devastating German hammer blow in the first days of the war.

### Document 6.1 Stalin Provokes the War

Materials that have become available since 1991 force us to revise some aspects of the old historiography. In particular, Stalin's hitherto unpublished speech to the Politburo of 19 August 1939 revealed a cynical understanding of the possibilities open to him.

If we sign a mutual assistance treaty with France and Great Britain, Germany will forsake Poland and will try to find a 'modus vivendi' with the Western powers. War will be averted, but later events could take a dangerous turn for the USSR. If we accept Germany's proposal and sign a non-aggression pact with her, Germany will attack Poland, and the intervention of France and England in that war will become inevitable. Western Europe will suffer serious uprisings and disturbances. In these conditions we will have a great possibility of remaining on the sidelines in the conflict, and we can reckon on our successful entry into the war.

The experience of the last twenty years demonstrates that in peacetime it is impossible in Europe to have a communist movement strong enough for a Bolshevik party to seize power. The dictatorship of such a party is possible only as a result of a great war. We are making our choice, and it is clear. We must accept the German proposal and politely send back the Anglo-French mission. The first advantage which we will gain will be the destruction of Poland right up to the gates of Warsaw, including Ukrainian Galicia.

Germany is giving us complete freedom of action in the Baltic states and does not object to the return of Bessarabia to the USSR. She is willing to grant us a sphere of influence in Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary. The question of Yugoslavia remains open . . . At the same time, we must consider the consequences arising from either the defeat or the victory of Germany. In the event of its defeat the Sovietisation of Germany will inevitably follow and a communist government will be formed. We must not forget that a Sovietised Germany will be in great danger if this Sovietisation is a result of Germany's defeat in a short war. England and France will be strong enough to seize Berlin and destroy Soviet Germany. And we will not be strong enough to come to the assistance of our Bolshevik comrades in Germany.



Our task, therefore, is to ensure that Germany can fight the war for as long as possible so that an exhausted and debilitated England and France are in no condition to destroy a Sovietised Germany. Maintaining a position of neutrality and waiting for its moment, the USSR will support today's Germany, supplying it with raw materials and foodstuffs . . .

At the same time we must conduct active communist propaganda, especially in the Anglo-French bloc and primarily in France. We must be prepared for the eventuality that during the war the party will have to renounce legal work and go underground. We know that this work will require many victims, but our French comrades will have no doubts. Their primary task will be to disorganise and demoralise the army and the police . . . For the realisation of our plans the war must last as long as possible . . .

Let us now consider the second possibility, i.e., Germany's victory. Some hold the view that this outcome is a great threat to us. There is some truth in this, but it would be a mistake to think that this danger is as close and so great, as some imagine it to be. If Germany is victorious, she will emerge from the war too exhausted to be able to start a military conflict with the USSR, at least for a decade . . .

Comrades! It is in the interests of the USSR, the homeland of workers, that war breaks out between the Reich and the capitalist Anglo-French bloc. We must do everything possible to ensure that this war lasts as long as possible to ensure the exhaustion of both parties.

*Source: Drugaya voina 1939–1945 (Moscow, RGGU, 1996), pp. 73–5.*

Stalin thus accepted that at some point the USSR would enter the war, and he sought the best possible opportunity to do so. Indeed, he understood that war could advance Soviet interests, and thus feared that Germany might make peace (find a 'modus vivendi') with the Western powers. Thus the Nazi–Soviet pact was designed not only to buy the USSR breathing space, but to ensure that the war was not averted.

## Document 6.2 Treaty on Non-Aggression between Germany and the Soviet Union

The day before military negotiations between the USSR, France and Britain due on 12 August, the Politburo decided on a fundamental change in foreign policy priorities, agreeing to establish close links with Nazi Germany. It was for this purpose that the German foreign minister Joachim von Ribbentrop flew to Moscow on 23 August, and the Nazi–Soviet pact was signed by him and Molotov late that evening. Of two documents signed that day, the Non-Aggression Treaty had an open character. The meeting was attended by Stalin and the German ambassador, Count Friedrich Werner von der Schulenburg. It was clear that Stalin wanted his share of the spoils of Nazi aggression.

The government of the USSR and the German government, guided by the desire to strengthen peace between the USSR and Germany and in keeping with the treaty on neutrality between the USSR and Germany of April 1926, have agreed the following:

### Article 1

Both Signatory Parties agree to refrain from any violence, from any aggressive action and any attack on the other, either individually or together with other powers.

### Article 2

In the event of one of the Signatory Parties becoming the object of military activities by a third power, the other Signatory Party will not in any way support this power.

### Article 3

The governments of both Signatory Parties will remain in contact with each other.

### Article 4

Neither of the Signatory Parties will participate in any grouping of powers either directly or indirectly directed against the other side.

### Article 5

In case of conflict between the Signatory Parties over any particular issue both sides will resolve these quarrels or conflicts by exclusively peaceful means in the form of friendly exchanges or when necessary by the creation of commissions to regulate the conflict.

### Article 6

This treaty is signed for ten years with the provision that if neither of the Signatory Parties annuls it within a year of its expiry, the treaty will be considered automatically renewed for another five years.

### Article 7

This treaty is to be ratified as soon as possible. The exchange of ratified documents will take place in Berlin. The treaty comes into force immediately after it is signed. Composed in two original copies in German and Russian in Moscow.

On behalf of the USSR government, V. Molotov  
For the German government, I. Ribbentrop

*Source: Pravda, 24 August 1939.*



### Document 6.3 Secret Supplementary Protocol to the Nazi-Soviet Pact

The key points, however, were in the secret supplementary protocol, which was kept secret for over half a century. The two sides agreed on a division of spheres of influence in neighbouring countries. Almost every single article contradicted principles of international law and damaged Soviet state interests.

23 August 1939

In signing the Non-Aggression Treaty between Germany and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics the signatory plenipotentiaries of both sides held strictly confidential discussions over the demarcation of spheres of interest in Eastern Europe. These discussions led to the following results:

1 In case of the territorial-political restructuring of regions in the Baltic states (Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), the northern border of Lithuania is simultaneously the border between the sphere of interests of Germany and the USSR. At the same time, both sides recognise the Lithuanian claim on the Vilnius region.

2 In case of the territorial-political restructuring of regions in the Polish state, the border between the spheres of interests of Germany and the USSR will approximately follow the line of the Nareva, Vistula and Sana rivers.

The question of whether it is in the interests of both sides to preserve an independent Polish state and what the borders of such a state would be can be definitively clarified only in the course of further political developments.

In any case both governments will decide this question in friendly mutual agreement.

3 Concerning South-east Europe the Soviet side affirms the interest of the USSR in Bessarabia. The German side declares its complete political lack of interest in this region.

4 This protocol is to be preserved by both sides in the strictest secrecy.

On behalf of the USSR government, V. Molotov

For the German government, I. Ribbentrop

*Source: Voprosy istorii, no. 1, 1993, p. 6.*

Molotov and von der Schulenburg on 28 August signed a clarification to the secret supplementary protocol, modifying the line demarcating Soviet and German 'spheres of interest' outlined in the first paragraph of point 2, above. This line later changed several times. In a speech to the Supreme Soviet on 31 August 1939 Molotov insisted that the pact eliminated 'the danger of war between Germany and the Soviet Union'. Two main factors had allowed the conclusion of the pact, he argued: the impasse reached in negotiations with France and Great Britain; and the change in German foreign policy seeking 'good neighbourly relations with the Soviet Union'. He noted that 'Stalin hit the nail on the head when he exposed the

machinations of the Western European politicians who were trying to set Germany and the Soviet Union at loggerheads'. He admitted, however, 'that there were some short-sighted people even in our own country who, carried away by over-simplified fascist propaganda, forgot about this provocative work of our enemies' (Daniels, *Communism and the World*, pp. 118-19).

### Document 6.4 The Soviet Occupation of Eastern Poland

With their hands freed by the Nazi-Soviet pact, Hitler gave the order for the German invasion of Poland to commence at 4.45 a.m. on 1 September 1939. For the first time a country fell victim to the new military tactic of *Blitzkrieg*. The Soviet leadership was taken by surprise by the swift and dramatic collapse of resistance; not that the Polish forces did not fight with enormous valour, but the sides were too unevenly matched. The USSR swiftly sought to take advantage of the new situation and on 17 September Molotov made the following broadcast.

The USSR government this morning handed a note to the Polish ambassador in Moscow which announced that the Soviet government directed the Supreme Command of the Red Army to order their forces to cross the border and to undertake the defence of the life and property of the population of western Ukraine and western Belorussia.

The Soviet government also declared in the note that it is simultaneously resolved to undertake all measures to free the Polish people from the ill-fated war into which it was dragged by its unwise leadership, and to give it the possibility to begin to live a peaceful life.

*Source: Vneshnyaya politika SSSR: sbornik dokumentov, vol. IV (Moscow, Gospolitizdat, 1946), p. 447.*

### Document 6.5 German-Soviet Treaty on Friendship and Borders between the USSR and Germany

Soviet forces entered Poland on 17 September under the guise of 'liberating' the eastern parts that were now joined with the Soviet republics of Ukraine and Belorussia. With the defeat and division of Poland complete, a further agreement with Germany was reached at a meeting in Moscow on 28 September, transforming what might have been justified as a security pact into a barely comprehensible 'friendship' pact. The open part of the pact divided Poland between the two powers, while one confidential and two secret protocols discussed matters that were long kept hidden.

The government of the USSR and the German government after the dissolution of the former Polish state consider their task to be the restoration of peace and order on this territory and to secure for the peoples living there



a peaceful existence, corresponding to their national traits. To this end they have agreed the following:

#### Article 1

The government of the USSR and the German government establish as the border between their respective state interests on the territory of the former Polish state a line drawn on the enclosed map and which will be described in more detail in a supplementary protocol.

#### Article 2

Both sides recognise the border established in article 1 of their respective state interests as final and remove any interference by a third power in this decision.

#### Article 3

The necessary state restructuring on territory to the west of the line established in article 1 will be carried out by the German government, on territories to the east of this line by the USSR government.

#### Article 4

The government of the USSR and the German government consider the above-mentioned restructuring a reliable basis for the further development of friendly relations between their peoples.

Source: Pravda, 29 September 1939.

Over the corpse of Poland Soviet–German friendship was thus built. One of the two secret protocols attached to this document redivided Polish territory: in exchange for including Lithuania in the 'sphere of interest of the USSR', Stalin offered Hitler Lublin and part of the Warsaw region. A map was appended with the changes. The protocol stated that as soon as the USSR 'undertakes on Lithuanian territory special measures to defend its interests', then the current German–Lithuanian border would be 'corrected', with part of south-west Lithuania being ceded to Germany (*Voprosy istorii*, no. 1, 1993, p. 9). The other secret protocol stated: 'Neither side will allow on their territory any Polish agitation originating from the territory of another country. They will liquidate the roots of such agitation on their territory and will inform each other of the necessary measures to be taken for this' (*Voprosy istorii*, no. 1, 1993, p. 10).

### Document 6.6 The Deportation of the Poles: *The Dark Side of the Moon*

In 1946 Zoë Zajdlerowa, who had been associated with General Sikorski, head of the Polish government-in-exile in London, brought out this collection of testimonies of the deportation of Poles from their homes in the eastern part of the country.

Later Alexander Solzhenitsyn would use the same technique of collecting eye-witness accounts and as much documentary evidence as possible to compile his monumental account of the Soviet labour camps in his *The Gulag Archipelago*. The deportations continued right up to the Nazi invasion on 22 June 1941; indeed, the whole western Soviet rail network was jammed with cattle-trucks bearing their dangerous cargo of women and children to Siberia, the Soviet Arctic and Central Asia, regions 'as remote from the Western observer as the dark side of the moon from the stargazer's telescope', as Arthur Koestler put it. The new edition of the work ends with a comparison of Nazi and Soviet 'death camps'. The destruction of the Polish state and the attempted elimination of the active part of the nation in the 'fourth partition' of Poland ranks as one of the greatest tragedies of the twentieth century.

In the present chapter . . . I shall set down . . . as much as I can of the emotions and sensations through which we lived while the events were taking shape.

For this I must begin at midnight on September the 16–17th [1939], when, with my companions, in a small house on the edge of the Pripet Marshes, I listened to the broadcast from Moscow which announced that Soviet divisions, with armour and air cover, had crossed our eastern frontier.

From this night onwards the Moscow radio broadcast almost uninterruptedly that 'the internal bankruptcy of the Polish State had been revealed', that 'the Polish State and its Government have ceased to exist', that 'Warsaw no longer exists as the capital of Poland', and that 'therefore the Agreement concluded between the Soviet Union and Poland had ceased to operate'. It is noteworthy that the first German siege of Warsaw was at this time still going on, and that on September the 19th the capital was still bearing itself in such a way as to receive the broadcast message from 'the people of Britain to the city of Warsaw' which declared: 'All the world is admiring your courage', and that Poland had become 'the standard-bearer of liberty in Europe'.

The stupefaction in Poland was so great that many units were surrounded and taken prisoner before they could fight back. Others fought desperately on, but there was not now the slightest hope for our shattered forces, caught between the two heaviest and most powerful armies in the world. Of the civilian population, very many – the majority – as we know, believed in the first hours that the Russians had come as friends, that they were to fight the Germans and join up with the Polish divisions re-forming in the marshes.

From this time onward, we found ourselves in a night of doubt and confusion. Great mists of grief and horror oppressed our minds. The stream of refugees which had flowed east now began to flow back again towards the west. The millstones moved relentlessly together, and hundreds of thousands of people were caught between them, enduring every kind of progressive wretchedness and horror. As well as the tens of thousands of refugees on



Poles. Interviews with survivors of deportation place the perpetrators of death and terror in some sort of hierarchy with the Nazis at the top and the Soviets further down. These survivors are not prepared to accept that there is any distinction, from the viewpoint of the sufferers, between the destroyers of a national group and the eliminators of a social and political category. They cannot accept that there was any qualitative difference between camps in Germany and in the Soviet Union. All were death camps, and though life was prolonged in the Soviet Union, death's progress was inexorable, as Solzhenitsyn, who should know, has argued:

The main thing is: avoid *general-assignment work*. Avoid it from the day you arrive. If you land in *general-assignment work* that first day, then you are lost, and this time for keeps . . . that is the main and basic work performed in any given camp. Eighty per cent of the prisoners work at it, and they all die off. All . . . The only ones who *survive* in camps are those who try at any price not to be put on general-assignment work. From the first day.

Similarly there was no hope of release in either system. The Poles believed fervently that they would get out, but they were in an exceptional position. The Russian prisoners had no expectations at all of release or survival, and were amazed when Poles were let out after the amnesty. If, by some chance, you survived your eight years, the NKVD would slap a repeat sentence on you. Death came fast or lingeringly, but it assuredly came. To assert, as [Primo] Levi does [in his *If This is a Man*, 1957] that death was not expressly sought in the Soviet camp system is a partial truth. Re-education and labour were other aims, but it was self-deception or misunderstanding on the prisoners' part not to accept that an eight-year sentence was tantamount to a sentence of execution. It is widely accepted that the camps were an ugly stain on Soviet socialism. But while socialism and camps were not generally regarded as indivisible, the same cannot be said about Nazism and camps. Neither can it be said about Stalinism and camps. [Jan] Gross has used the term 'spoiler state' [in her *Revolution from Abroad* (Princeton, 1988)] to describe the Soviet Union, and quotes Stalin's maxim that 'the State under communism wages war on society', commenting that the Stalinist system 'predicated a massive extermination of its subjects', comparable to 'wars between sovereign states'.

Hence, while the Nazis eliminated or enslaved enemies of the Aryan race and those who obstructed the achievement of Nazi strategic objectives, the Soviets liquidated or enslaved enemies of the people or party and those who stood in the way of *their* strategic goals.

Source: Zoë Zajdlerowa, *The Dark Side of the Moon*, first published 1946, this edition edited by John Coutouvidis and Thomas Lane (London, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), pp. 47–8, 54, 55, 67, 137, 171–2.

## Document 6.7 Churchill's Radio Broadcast of 1 October 1939

The spectacle of the two former enemies coming together left the Western powers bewildered. Churchill tried to make sense of events by arguing that 'the key is Russian national interest'. Churchill was never known to have used the terms 'Soviet Union' or 'USSR'; as far as he was concerned, Russia was synonymous with the larger USSR, a confusion that caused (and continued to cause) considerable distress among the non-Russian peoples making up the Soviet Union. Churchill implicitly supported the later Stalin line that the pact had bought time to prepare for war, although inadequate preparations were in fact made.

Poland has again been overrun by two of the Powers which held her in bondage for a hundred and fifty years but were unable to quench the spirit of the Polish nation. The heroic defence of Warsaw shows the soul of Poland is indestructible, and that she will rise again like a rock, which may for a time be submerged by a tidal wave, but which remains a rock.

Russia has pursued a policy of cold self-interest. We could have wished that the Russian armies should be standing on their present line as the friends and allies of Poland instead of as invaders. But that the Russian armies should be standing on this line was clearly necessary for the safety of Russia against the Nazi menace. At any rate, the line is there, and an Eastern front has been created which Nazi Germany does not dare assail . . .

I cannot forecast to you the action of Russia. It is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma. But perhaps there is a key. That key is Russian national interest. It cannot be in accordance with the interest or safety of Russia that Germany should plant herself upon the shores of the Black Sea, or that she should overrun the Balkan States and subjugate the Slavonic peoples of South-eastern Europe. That would be contrary to the historic life-interests of Russia.

Source: Winston Churchill, *The Second World War: The Gathering Storm* (London, Cassell/The Reprint Society, 1948), p. 363.

## Document 6.8 The Winter War

Its appetite whetted, the Soviet government on 26 November staged a provocation on the Finnish border. That evening Molotov handed a protest note to the Finnish ambassador in Moscow demanding that Finland remove its troops 20–5 kilometres from the Karelian isthmus. The Finnish government on 27 November responded by stating that the shellfire mentioned in the Soviet note had in fact come from the Soviet side of the border, but that it was willing to enter negotiations for the mutual withdrawal of forces from the border. Khrushchev later commented on these events in the following way.



The general opinion was that Finland would be delivered an ultimatum of a territorial nature that she had already rejected in the negotiations, and if she did not agree then military action would begin. Stalin held this view and I, obviously, did not object. I also thought that this was right. It was enough to state loudly our demands, and if they did not listen, then we would shoot and the Finns would put up their hands and agree to our demands . . . Then Stalin said: 'Today the business will begin'.

We stayed up rather late because the hour had already been set. Stalin was sure, and we believed it too, that there would be no war, that the Finns would accept our proposals and that we would attain our goals without war. The goal was our security in the North.

A telephone call suddenly came through stating that we had started shooting. The Finns responded with an artillery salvo. War in effect had begun. I am saying this because there is another version: that the Finns shot first, and therefore we had to respond. Did we have the juridical and moral right for such an action? We had no juridical right, of course. From the moral point of view the desire to ensure one's security, to come to terms with our neighbour justified our actions to ourselves.

*Source: Ogonek, no. 30, 1989, p. 11.*

Soviet forces invaded Finland on 30 November and established what they hoped would become the new government of Finland, the People's Government of the Finnish Democratic Republic headed by Otto Kuusinen and made up of representatives of various leftist groups, above all the Finnish Communist Party. A 'treaty of mutual assistance and friendship' signed between the 'Finnish Democratic Republic' and the USSR envisaged the transfer of 70,000 square kilometres in northern Karelia, populated mainly by Karelians, in return for the cession of 3,970 square kilometres to the north-west of Leningrad, thus pushing back the border along the Karelian isthmus away from the city. After early Soviet advances the Finns fought back and inflicted incommensurate losses on Soviet forces. The USSR suffered 87,506 men killed compared to Finland's 48,243, with another 39,369 Soviet soldiers disappearing without trace compared to Finland's 3,273, while 5,000 Soviet soldiers were taken prisoner, compared to 1,100 Finns. What became known as the 'Winter War' revealed the loss of the Red Army's fighting potential inflicted by Stalin's purge of the officer corps in 1937–8 and its poor equipment. The sheer weight of numbers, however, led to Finland agreeing to peace on 12 March 1940 whereby the whole of the Karelian isthmus, including the town of Vyborg, was transferred to the USSR. In the wake of the war the Soviet Ministry of Defence revealed the parlous state of its forces (*Izvestiya TsK KPSS*, no. 1, 1990, pp. 193–208). It was the Winter War rather than the German threat that provoked the reorganisation of Soviet armed forces. At the same time, the working day was lengthened, labour discipline tightened, the unauthorised change of jobs forbidden and modern arms production stepped up.

## Document 6.9 Stalin's Attitude to Alliance with Hitler

Why did Stalin sign the Nazi–Soviet pact and stick to its terms so pedantically right up to the end? The usual reason was that Stalin sought to gain time to prepare his own defences, yet there is little evidence of these preparations actually taking place. Indeed, with the advance of the Soviet borders into Poland the old defences were dismantled but new ones were not constructed so as not to alarm Hitler. In Leningrad, where Andrei Zhdanov had taken over as party boss after Kirov's assassination, any sign of preparing for war was regarded as treasonable activity. The curators of the palace at Pushkin (formerly Tsarskoe Selo) could only clandestinely, and at great personal risk, begin packing and preparing the most valuable items for safekeeping. Stalin's constant interference in the choice of equipment and design had lamentable consequences in the early days of the war. It was only in the first half of 1941 that the modern T-34 and KV tanks and Yak-1 and MiG-3 fighters entered mass production. The real basis for the pact was probably psychological: Hitler was possibly the only man Stalin ever trusted. Kravchenko details some of the consequences of the pact.

In the light of future events, one thing should be made clear. Stalin entered into his compact with Hitler in earnest. Had the Kremlin played with the idea that we must ultimately fight Germany anyhow, some part of the existing hatred of the Nazis would have been preserved; our antifascist propaganda would not have been so completely abandoned in favor of 'anti-imperialist' (meaning anti-British and anti-American) propaganda. At least the more trusted Party officials in the Kremlin itself, many of whom I knew intimately, would have been apprised of the continuing Nazi danger.

Nothing of the sort happened. On the contrary, any whisper against Germany, any word of sympathy for Hitler's victims, was treated as a new species of counter-revolution. The French, British, Norwegian 'warmongers' were getting their deserts.

The theory that Stalin was merely 'playing for time' while feverishly arming against the Nazis was invented much later, to cover up the Kremlin's tragic blunder in trusting Germany. It was such a transparent invention that little was said about it inside Russia during the Russo-German war; only after I emerged into the free world did I hear it seriously advanced and believed. It was a theory that ignored the most significant aspect of the Stalin–Hitler arrangement: the large-scale economic undertakings which drained the USSR of the very products and materials and productive capacity necessary for its own defense preparations.

The simple fact is that the Soviet regime did not use the interval to arm itself effectively. I was close enough to the defense industries to know that there was a slackening of military effort after the pact. The general feeling, reflecting the mood in the highest official circles, was that we could afford to



feel safe thanks to the statesmanship of Stalin. Not until the fall of France did doubts arise on this score; only then was the tempo of military effort stepped up again.

Source: *Kravchenko, I Chose Freedom*, p. 355.

## Document 6.10 The Incorporation of the Baltic Republics

By June 1940 Stalin was ready to cash in his stake in the Baltic republics granted him by the treaties with Germany. On 14 June 1940 he issued an ultimatum to Lithuania for its government to disband, and the next day Soviet forces attacked and soon occupied all of Lithuania. Rigged elections on 14 July gave a figleaf of constitutionality to Lithuania's incorporation into the USSR. For Estonia, 14 June is a day of mourning. On that day in 1941 more than 10,000 Estonian citizens – men, women and children – were deported to slave labour and subsequent death in the Soviet Union. The day also commemorates the further 20,000 who suffered a similar fate in 1949. At Christmas 1941 the Estonian poet Marie Under, who witnessed the first deportation, wrote a poem in memory of the event – the poem is sometimes printed in Estonian newspapers on 14 June. The late Russian poet Joseph Brodsky, who supported the aspirations of the Baltic peoples for freedom, used to say that 'in art there are no sides', a truth reflected in Under's poem.

I walk the silent, Christmas-snowy path,  
that goes across the homeland in its suffering.  
At each doorstep I would like to bend my knee:  
there is no house without mourning.  
The spark of anger flickers in sorrow's ashes,  
the mind is hard with anger, with pain tender:  
there is no way of being pure as Christmas  
on this white, pure-as-Christmas path.  
Alas, to have to live such stony instants,  
to carry on one's heart a coffin lid!  
Not even tears will come any more –  
that gift of mercy has run out as well.  
I'm like someone rowing backwards:  
eyes permanently set on past –  
backwards, yes – yet reaching home at last . . .  
my kinsmen, though, are left without a home . . .  
I always think of those who were torn from here . . .  
The heavens echo with the cries of their distress.  
I think that we are all to blame  
for what they lack – for we have food and bed!  
Shyly, almost as in figurative language,

I ask without believing it can come to pass:  
Can we, I wonder, ever use our minds again  
for the sake of joy and happiness?

1941

Source: *Mimeo*, translation by Leopoldo J. Nilus and David McDuff.

## Document 6.11 Katyn

After occupying half of Poland following its intervention on 17 September 1939, several thousand Polish officers were interned, the great majority of whom came from intelligentsia families – teachers, doctors and officials. They were mobilised at the beginning of the war largely from the eastern region, and had barely fought before Poland capitulated. By March 1940, as Lavrentii Beria (head of the NKVD) states in his note to Stalin, 14,736 were held in Soviet camps. In addition, another 10,685 Poles were held in camps in western Belorussia and Ukraine. The largest camps holding the Polish officers were at Kozielsk, Starobielsk and Ostaszkov. In the spring of 1940 rumours circulated that these camps had closed, with their inmates transferred to an unknown destination. Three years later mass graves were found on territory occupied by the Germans in the Katyn forest near Smolensk. An inquiry set up by them found that several thousand Polish officers, mainly from the Kozielsk camp, had been shot by the NKVD. The Soviet government vigorously denied its involvement in the killings, accusing the occupying forces of perpetrating the atrocity. To add insult to injury, they accused the Polish government-in-exile in London of having staged a provocation, and broke off diplomatic relations with it.

### *Beria's Memorandum to Stalin*

Top Secret  
5.III.1940

Comrade Stalin,  
In the prisoner-of-war camps of the USSR NKVD and in the prisons of the western regions of Ukraine and Belorussia at the present time there are a great number of former Polish Army officers, former workers of the Polish police and secret service bodies, members of Polish nationalistic c[ounter]-r[evolutionary] parties, members of secret c-r rebel organisations, deserters and others. They are all accursed enemies of Soviet power, filled with hate for the Soviet order.

The officer prisoners of war and policemen in the camps try to continue their c-r work, conducting anti-Soviet agitation. Every one of them is only waiting for his release to be able to enter actively in the struggle against Soviet power.

The NKVD organs in the western regions of the Ukraine and Belorussia have exposed a number of c-r rebel organisations. In all these c-r activities an



active leading role was played by the former officers of the former Polish army, former policemen and gendarmes.

Among the detained deserters and those who have crossed the border illegally there have also been caught a significant number of people who are members of c-r espionage and rebel organisations.

In the prisoner-of-war camps there are a total (excluding soldiers and non-commissioned officers) of 14,736 former officers, civil servants, landlords, policemen, gendarmes, prison officers, intelligence officers – by nationality over 97 per cent Polish . . .

Since they are all inveterate, incorrigible enemies of Soviet power, the USSR NKVD considers necessary:

#### I To direct the USSR NKVD:

1 The cases of the 14,700 former Polish officers, civil servants, landlords, policemen, intelligence officers, gendarmes and prison officers held in prisoner-of-war camps,

2 And also the cases of those arrested and held in camps in the western regions of the Ukraine and Belorussia numbering 11,000 people, members of various espionage and diversionary organisations, former landlords, factory owners, former Polish officers, civil servants and deserters –

– to examine them as a matter of urgency, with the application of the highest measure of punishment – shooting.

II To examine the cases without summoning those arrested and without presenting charges, stating the ending of the investigation and summing up – in the following way:

1 for those in prisoner-of-war camps – according to documents presented by the Board for Prisoner-of-war Affairs of the USSR NKVD,

2 for the arrested – from documents from the files presented by the UkSSR and BSSR NKVD.

III The examined cases and decisions to be presented to a troika consisting of Comrades Merkulov, Kobulov and Bashtakov (the head of the First Special Department of the USSR NKVD).

The People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of the USSR (L. Beria)

*Source: Voprosy istorii, no. 1, 1993, pp. 17–18.*

The Politburo on 5 March 1940 agreed to all of Beria's proposals: the cases were to be resolved in the absence of the accused, without any charges to be laid and with the sentences agreed beforehand – shooting. Without further ceremony the Politburo ordered NKVD troikas to examine the cases of 25,700 imprisoned Poles, Belorussians and west Ukrainians and to shoot them. From notes on the first page of the report we know that Stalin, Molotov, Voroshilov and Mikoyan were directly involved in the decision, and from marginal notes that Kalinin and Kaganovich agreed to the action. Why the Soviet authorities needed to murder these people,

already imprisoned in camps or prisons, remains unclear, although the language used by Beria suggested that the undying hatred felt by the Poles for the Soviet atrocities was part of the reason.

On 3 March 1959 the head of the KGB, A. Shelepin, sent Khrushchev a handwritten note (he did not even trust the typist) giving more details of the victims' fate at the hands of the special NKVD troika in 1940. A total of 21,857 were executed: 4,421 in the Katyn forest in Smolensk region; 3,820 in Starobielsk camp near Kharkov; 6,311 in Ostaszkov camp in Kalinin region; and 7,305 were shot in other camps and prisons of western Ukraine and western Belorussia (*Voennye Arkhivy Rossii*, no. 1, 1993, pp. 124–8). All the files had been kept in a sealed form. Shelepin argued that the documents were of no historical or material interest for the Soviet authorities and, on the contrary, 'some unforeseen eventuality could lead to the operation becoming known with all of the unpleasant consequences for our state. Moreover, there is an official version in regard to those shot in the Katyn forest, confirmed by the commission set up by the Soviet organs of power in 1944' that had found the 'German-fascist occupiers' guilty. This version, Shelepin argued, had been well publicised in the Soviet and foreign press and had become part of international public opinion and nothing should allow this view to be challenged. He therefore recommended that all the materials associated with the 1940 operation, except those of the troika and the death sentences, be destroyed (*Voprosy istorii*, no. 1, 1993, pp. 20–1).

In the post-war years the whole Katyn incident was a taboo subject for the communist authorities, although for Poles both at home and in emigration it remained a live issue. One of the more tragic aspects of the case is the willingness of Western authorities to go along with Soviet lies for so long, refusing even to allow Polish émigrés to put up a monument to the victims with the date '1940'. Only under Gorbachev did the truth emerge and during the visit by the Polish president, Wojciech Jaruzelski, to Moscow in April 1990 the Soviet Union formally acknowledged responsibility for the murders and apologised to Poland. Soviet policy in this period was later defended by Gorbachev (Document 10.8).

## The Titans Go To War

While Stalin was murdering Poles, attacking Finland and occupying the Baltic republics and Bessarabia, Hitler was preparing for war against the USSR. It appears that in July 1940 he effectively abandoned plans to invade Britain (Operation Sealion) and turned his attention to the East. On 18 December 1940 he insisted that 'German armed forces must be ready to smash Soviet Russia in a short campaign even before the war against England is over (the "Barbarossa variant")' (*Rossiia, kotoruyu my ne znali*, p. 37).

### 6.12 Hitler's War Aims

At a meeting on 30 March 1941 Hitler defined Germany's tasks in relation to Russia as:



[T]he utter defeat of its armed forces and the destruction of the state . . . This is a struggle between two ideologies: the death sentence on Bolshevism is not a social crime . . . This war will be very different from war in the West. In the East brutality itself is of benefit for the future. Commanders must sacrifice much to overcome their doubts.

Source: Rossiya, kotoruyu my ne znali, pp. 38–9.

### 6.13 'None so Deaf as Will Not Hear'

From the summer of 1940 to 22 June 1941 the NKVD received a mass of information about Germany's preparations for the invasion of the USSR. German reconnaissance planes flew deep over Soviet territory over 200 times, always over military and defence objects, and one of these planes when forced to land was found to be carrying aerial photographic equipment (*Izvestiya TsK KPSS*, no. 4, 1990, pp. 216–18). Despite warnings from General G. Zhukov, the Soviet spy Richard Sorge in the German embassy in Tokyo, Winston Churchill and others about the concentration of German forces on the Soviet border, the Soviet information agency TASS issued the following disclaimer.

1 Germany has made no demands on the USSR and is not proposing any new, closer, agreement and thus negotiations on this subject could not have taken place.

2 According to Soviet information, Germany is undeviatingly fulfilling the conditions of the Soviet–German non-aggression pact, as is the Soviet Union; in view of this, in Soviet opinion, rumours that Germany plans to tear up the pact and attack the USSR lack any substance, and the recent transfer of German forces, freed from operations in the Balkans, to eastern and north-eastern regions of Germany is linked, one must suppose, with motives having nothing to do with Soviet–German relations.

3 Arising out of its peaceful policy, the USSR has observed and will observe the conditions of the Soviet–German non-aggression pact, thus rumours that the USSR is preparing for war with Germany are lies and provocations.

Source: Pravda, 14 June 1941.

The very strength of the disclaimer is in itself suspicious. Was Stalin preparing to launch an offensive war against Germany? We noted above (Document 6.1) that even in signing the Nazi–Soviet pact in August 1939 Stalin had in mind only a temporary truce to buy time before war with Germany, and thus (contrary to the old version) Stalin had no absolute faith in the pact. While Germany might have been preparing for war against the USSR from July 1940, Stalin had been preparing for war against Germany from October 1939; and from November 1940 their relations entered into a new phase when both sides prepared for war while formally maintaining the terms of their non-aggression pact. Stalin's speech of 5 May 1941 to

military graduates gave a signal to the Soviet agitprop apparatus to prepare the army psychologically for war. However, the bulk of evidence suggests that there could have been no thought of a Soviet offensive in 1941. Although between 1 January 1939 and 22 June 1941 Soviet forces increased from 1.9 to 5.7 million, rising from 136 to 303 divisions, from 18,400 to 23,300 tanks, and from 17,500 to 22,400 warplanes (*Drugaya voina 1939–1945*, p. 98), most of its equipment was outdated and its officer corp unprepared after the purges. Even after the attack, according to Dmitrii Volkogonov on the basis of super-secret documents, Stalin used Bulgarian intermediaries to offer Hitler huge territories in return for a cessation of the attack (Lev Gintsberg, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 21 June 1996, p. 5).

### Document 6.14 'Secret Number One'

Shortly before the invasion the Soviet ambassador to Berlin, V. G. Dekanozov, returned to Moscow for a visit and was invited to dine with von Schulenburg. Schulenburg made the following statement.

Mr ambassador, perhaps this has never yet taken place in the history of diplomacy, but I intend to reveal to you state secret number one: pass this on to Mr Molotov, and I hope he will inform Mr Stalin; Hitler has decided on 22 June to start a war against the USSR. You ask, why am I doing this? I was brought up in the spirit of Bismarck, and he was always against war with Russia.

Source: Pravda, 22 June 1989.

Dekanozov hurried to tell Molotov, and that very day Stalin called the Politburo together to discuss Schulenburg's information. Stalin declared: 'We consider that disinformation has now reached up to the level of ambassadors.'

### 6.15 More Disclaimers

In a note to Stalin on 21 June 1941 Lavrentii Beria, still the head of the Soviet secret police (the NKVD), fawned:

I once again insist on the recall and punishment of our ambassador in Berlin, Dekanozov, who as before is bombarding me with 'disinformation' that Hitler is allegedly preparing to attack the USSR. He stated that this 'attack' will begin tomorrow . . . But I and my people, Joseph Vissarionovich, firmly remember your wise prognosis: Hitler will not attack us in 1941!

Source: Argumenty i fakty, no. 4, 1989.



### Document 6.16 Molotov's Radio Broadcast of 22 June 1941

The German blow, when it came on 22 June, was total and devastating. The best Soviet forces were captured, the air force largely destroyed on the ground, masses of military equipment captured, and a large proportion of Soviet industrial plant lost. Stalin disappeared from view (although he was far from inactive – in the days following the invasion he held to a gruelling regime of meetings and decision-taking), leaving it to Molotov to rally the people.

Citizens of the Soviet Union!

The Soviet government and its head, Comrade Stalin, have commissioned me to make the following announcement:

Today at four in the morning, without any ultimatum against the Soviet Union, without a declaration of war, German forces invaded our country, attacked our borders in many places and their planes bombed our towns – Zhitomir, Kiev, Sevastopol, Kaunas and some others, with some 200 people being killed. Enemy flights and artillery bombardments also took place from Romanian and Finnish territory . . .

Now that the attack on the Soviet Union has taken place, the Soviet government has ordered our forces to repulse the wretched attack and expel the German forces from the territory of our Motherland . . .

This is not the first time that our people has had to deal with an attacking enemy. Our people responded to Napoleon's campaign in Russia with the Patriotic War, and Napoleon was defeated and ultimately destroyed. And the same will happen to the arrogant Hitler, declaring a new campaign against our country. The Red Army and our whole people will once again conduct a victorious Patriotic War for the Motherland, for honour, for freedom . . .

The government calls on you, citizens of the Soviet Union, to unite even closer around our glorious Bolshevik party, around our Soviet government, around our great leader Comrade Stalin.

Our cause is just! The enemy will be defeated! Victory will be ours!

*Sources: Pravda, 23 June 1941; Izvestiya, 24 June 1941.*

### Document 6.17 Stalin's Radio Broadcast of 3 July 1941

From the first the struggle was conducted under patriotic rather than communist slogans. The very term of address to the people as 'citizens' rather than comrades symbolised the way that the war would be fought. Stalin himself disappeared for some ten days, apparently suffering some sort of nervous attack (but, as noted, he remained active), leaving the call to the Soviet people in Molotov's hands. Only on 3 July did Stalin address the Soviet people.

Comrades, citizens, brothers and sisters, men of our Army and Navy!

My words are addressed to you, dear friends!

The perfidious military attack by Hitlerite Germany on our Fatherland, begun on 22 June, is continuing. In spite of the heroic resistance of the Red Army, and although the enemy's finest divisions and finest air force units have already been smashed and have met their doom on the field of battle, the enemy continues to push forward, hurling fresh forces to the front . . .

How could it have happened that our glorious Red Army surrendered a number of our cities and districts to the fascist armies? Is it really true that the German-fascist forces are invincible, as the braggart fascist propagandists are ceaselessly blaring forth?

Of course not! History shows that there are no invincible armies and never have been . . . The same must be said of Hitler's German-fascist army of today. This army has not yet met with serious resistance on the continent of Europe. Only on our territory did it meet with serious resistance . . .

As to part of our territory having nevertheless been seized by the German-fascist troops, this is chiefly due to the fact that the war of fascist Germany against the USSR began in conditions that were favourable for the German forces and unfavourable for the Soviet forces. The fact of the matter is that the troops of Germany, a country at war, were already fully mobilized . . . Of no little importance in this respect was the fact that fascist Germany suddenly and treacherously violated the non-aggression pact which she had concluded in 1939 with the USSR . . . It may be asked, how could the Soviet government have consented to conclude a non-aggression pact with such perfidious people, such fiends as Hitler and Ribbentrop? Was this not an error on the part of the Soviet government? Of course not! Non-aggression pacts are pacts of peace between two states. It was such a pact that Germany proposed to us in 1939. Could the Soviet government have refused such a proposal? I think that not a single peace-loving state could decline a peace treaty with a neighbouring state even though the latter were headed by such monsters and cannibals as Hitler and Ribbentrop . . .

What did we gain by concluding the non-aggression pact with Germany? We secured our country peace for a year and a half and the opportunity of preparing our forces to repulse fascist Germany should she risk an attack on our country despite the pact.

*Sources: Pravda, 3 July 1941; Generalissimo Stalin, War Speeches (London, Hutchinson, n.d.), pp. 7, 8.*

### Document 6.18 Stalin's Conduct of the War

Stalin was clearly being disingenuous and covering his tracks in his broadcast, since as we have seen little was done to prepare Soviet forces in the nearly two years of peace. Yet as a war leader Stalin showed himself, as did the Soviet system as a



whole, at his and its best. The war, as Stalin argued in the same broadcast, would be fought as a national endeavour allied with Western powers. He even hinted that democracy would be restored in the case of victory.

In areas occupied by the enemy, guerilla units, mounted and on foot, must be formed; sabotage groups must be organized to combat enemy units, to foment guerilla warfare everywhere, blow up bridges and roads, damage telephone and telegraph lines, set fire to forests, stores and transports. In occupied regions conditions must be made unbearable for the enemy and all his accomplices. They must be hounded and annihilated at every step, and all their measures frustrated.

The war with fascist Germany cannot be considered an ordinary war. It is not only a war between two armies, it is also a great war of the entire Soviet people against the German-fascist armies. The aim of this national patriotic war in defence of our country against the fascist oppressors is not only to eliminate the danger hanging over our country, but also to aid all the European peoples groaning under the yoke of German fascism. In this war of liberation we shall not be alone. In this great war we shall have true allies in the peoples of Europe and America, including the German people which is enslaved by the Hitlerite misrulers. Our war for the freedom of our country will merge with the struggle of the peoples of Europe and America for their independence, for democratic liberties. It will be a united front of the peoples standing for freedom against enslavement and threats of enslavement by Hitler's fascist armies. In this connection the historic utterance of the British Prime Minister, Mr Churchill, regarding aid to the Soviet Union and the declaration of the United States government signifying readiness to render aid to our country, which can only evoke a feeling of gratitude in the hearts of the peoples of the Soviet Union, are fully comprehensible and symptomatic . . .

In order to ensure the rapid mobilization of all the forces of the peoples of the USSR, and to repulse the enemy who has treacherously attacked our country, a State Committee of Defence [GKO] has been formed and the entire state authority has been vested in it . . .

All the forces of the people for the destruction of the enemy!  
Forward to victory!

Source: *Stalin, War Speeches*, pp. 11, 12.

The resolution of 18 July 1941, 'On the Organisation of Fighting in the Rear of German Troops', called on the occupied population to form partisan units to harry the enemy in the rear: to destroy communications, transport and even armed units. The partisan war did indeed take on a mass character, but by the same token provoked mass reprisals against the civilian population.

## Document 6.19 The Unexpected War

Stalin's speech at last admitted what those at the front already knew: that the Germans had seized vast Soviet territories in the first week of the war. The 'suddenness' of the attack was obviously made up by Stalin, having been warned according to a recent account by no fewer than seventy-six different sources (Lev Gintsberg, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 21 June 1996, p. 5), although the idea remains current in the literature. The speech nevertheless proved inspirational. Stalin was able to take advantage of the offers of assistance from the Western powers, while internally the GKO effectively began to mobilise resources for the war effort. This included the mass evacuation of industry and personnel to the East. In keeping with the national rather than communist tone of the war effort the slogan 'Proletarians of the world, unite' was removed from the mastheads of newspapers and other literature and replaced by 'Death to the German occupier' on the grounds that the old slogan 'could disorient some of the soldiery' (*Rodina*, nos. 6–7, 1991, p. 73). Kravchenko, however, took a sober view of Soviet efforts in the early days of the war.

A lot of to-do would subsequently be made in the Soviet propaganda about the factories evacuated to Siberia from White Russia and the Ukraine. In truth only a minor part was removed. Nothing would be said of the hundreds of plants left as a present to Hitler. Virtually every factory I had worked in or been connected with – in Dniepropetrovsk, Krivoi Rog, Zaparozhe, Taganrog – fell to the enemy almost intact. The same was more or less true of Kiev, Odessa, Kharkov, Mariupol, Stalino, Lugansk. Stalin's mistake in trusting Hitler was responsible for the fact that we abandoned to the enemy industry with a capacity of about ten million tons of steel a year, plus about two million tons in finished steel. It was all returned to us in time in the form of death-dealing tanks, guns, shells and bombs. The story was no less tragic for other industries.

During the period of the pact, Stalin helped Hitler conquer Europe by providing him with metal, ores, oil, grain, meat, butter, and every conceivable type of material, in accordance with their economic pact. After the invasion, Stalin helped him by leaving him immense riches in military goods and productive capacity and – most shameful of all – tens of millions of people.

Failure to prepare will be held against the Stalin regime by history despite the ultimate victory. It was to blame for millions of unnecessary casualties, for human wretchedness beyond calculation. Why was not the population of Leningrad evacuated? This 'oversight' is ignored by the hallelujah-shouters, though up to May 1, 1943, more than 1,300,000 died of hunger and cold, and the rest will carry the marks of their suffering to the grave, in three successive winters of terrifying siege. It was an exposed city. The preparations for saving its inhabitants should have been made long in advance, but



they were not undertaken even after the war started. Responsibility for the gruesome sufferings of Leningrad rests directly on two members of the Politburo – Voroshilov, as the then commander of the Leningrad front, and Zhdanov, the supreme master of the Leningrad region.

Source: *Kravchenko, I Chose Freedom*, pp. 364–5.

### Document 6.20 Hitler's Conduct of the War

Hitler's assault on the USSR was indeed a war of a new type. At a secret meeting on 16 July 1941 Hitler stressed that to the world at large German war aims in Soviet Russia should be presented as no different from those in occupied Norway, Denmark, Holland and Belgium, namely:

[T]o restore order and and impose security . . . The main thing is that we ourselves know what we want . . . it should not be made known that the heart of the matter is the final solution . . . but nevertheless we must apply all necessary measures, shootings, deportations, and so on . . .

In Hitler's view the order to start a partisan war in the rear:

[H]as its advantages: it gives us the opportunity to exterminate all those who rise up against us.

The Crimea was to be cleansed of all 'aliens' and settled with Germans, while Galicia was to become a region of the German empire.

Source: *From notes taken by Martin Borman, in Rossiya, kotoruyu my ne znali*, pp. 62–2.

Others talked not just of the destruction of the Russian state but of the total extermination of the Russian people, with the possible exception of 'those with clear signs of the Nordic race' (from a memorandum on the 'Ost' plan to the SS Reichsführer from Doctor Wetzel 'On Future Relations with the Russian Population', Berlin, 27 April 1942, in V. I. Dashichev, *Bankrotstvo strategii germanskogo fashizma*, vol. 2 (Moscow, 1973), pp. 36–8). In a secret letter to the Nazi ideologue Alfred Rosenberg, Martin Borman, head of Hitler's chancellery, insisted that it would be 'enough to teach the local population . . . only to read and write', and he was particularly concerned to keep the population to manageable levels by encouraging abortions and not offering German medical services to non-Germans (letter of 23 July 1942, in *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal*, no. 1, 1965, pp. 82–3). While older people, in the German view, 'expressed hatred of the old Bolshevik system', those between 17 and 21 were considered 'the most dangerous age group. They are 99 per cent infected and are to be struck from the list of the living.' Occupied areas were to be Germanised and settled with Germans, in particular Belorussia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Crimea and Ingermanland (north-west Russia). Thus 83 million Germans sought to dominate 200 million Russians and other Soviet peoples.

### Document 6.21 The 'Final Solution' in the USSR

The inhumanity of the Germans to the Soviet Slav population was reminiscent of the attitudes of Europeans to the native peoples of America, but the scale and thoroughness of the attempt to impose the 'final solution' on the Jewish population was something new in history. From the first, Jews were forced to wear a yellow Star of David, forbidden to walk on pavements, enter parks or public spaces, and so on. In occupied areas of the USSR 'special action' troops systematically murdered the Jewish population. In a ravine on the outskirts of Kiev known as Babii Yar over a quarter of a million people were killed, a large proportion of them Jews. In the mid-1960s Anatoly Kuznetsov, an adolescent eyewitness of the 778 days that Kiev was occupied, published his account of the German occupation (*Babi Yar: A Documentary Novel*, London Sphere Books, 1969), but the most famous and powerful commemoration of the events was Yevgeny Yevtushenko's poem 'Babii Yar'.

No monument stands over Babii Yar.  
A drop sheer as a crude gravestone.  
I am afraid.

Today I am as old in years  
as all the Jewish people.  
Now I seem to be  
a Jew.

Here I plod through ancient Egypt.  
Here I perish crucified, on the cross,  
and to this day I bear the scars of nails.  
I seem to be

Dreyfus.  
The Philistine  
is both informer and judge.  
I am behind bars.

Beset on every side.  
Hounded,  
spat on,  
slandered.  
Squealing, dainty ladies in flounced Brussels lace  
stick their parasols into my face.  
I seem to be then

a young boy in Byelostok.  
Blood runs, spilling over the floors.  
The bar-room rabble-rousers  
give off a stench of vodka and onion.  
A boot kicks me aside, helpless.  
In vain I plead with these pogrom bullies.



While they jeer and shout,  
                                ‘Beat the Yids. Save Russia!’  
some grain-marketeer beats up my mother.  
O my Russian people!  
                                I know  
  you  
are international to the core.  
But those with unclean hands  
have often made a jingle of your purest name.  
I know the goodness of my land.  
How vile these anti-Semites –  
  without a qualm  
they pompously called themselves  
‘The Union of the Russian People!’  
I seem to be  
                                Anne Frank  
transparent  
                                as a branch in April.  
And I love  
                                And have no need of phrases.  
My need  
                                is that we gaze into each other.  
How little we can see  
  or smell!  
We are denied the leaves,  
  we are denied the sky.  
Yet we can do so much –  
  tenderly  
embrace each other in a dark room.  
They’re coming here?  
                                Be not afraid. Those are the booming  
sounds of spring:  
                                spring is coming here.  
Come then to me.  
                                Quick, give me your lips.  
Are they smashing down the door?  
  No, it’s the ice breaking . . .  
The wild grasses rustle over Babii Yar.  
The trees look ominous,  
  like judges.  
Here all things scream silently,  
  and, baring my head,  
slowly I feel myself  
                                turning gray.

And I myself  
am one massive, soundless scream  
above the thousand thousand buried here.  
I am  
each old man  
here shot dead.  
I am  
every child  
here shot dead.  
Nothing in me  
shall ever forget!  
The 'Internationale', let it  
thunder  
when the last anti-Semite on earth  
is buried forever.  
In my blood there is no Jewish blood.  
In their callous rage, all anti-Semites  
must hate me now as a Jew.  
For that reason  
I am a true Russian!

*Source: 'Babii Yar', 19 September 1961, in Yevgeny Yevtushenko: Early Poems, translated by George Reavey (London, Marion Boyars, 1989).*

## The Soviet War

There were in effect two wars being fought simultaneously: the war against the Nazi aggressor; and the continuing war of the Stalinist regime to stay in power. The second war was tempered at moments of threat, but never ceased. Fearing that the German settlements on the Volga would act as a diversionary fifth column, the order was issued in August 1941 for the deportation of the entire population to Kazakhstan and to the eastern regions of the USSR. With victory in sight it intensified, taking the form of mass deportation of minority ethnic groups, the punishment of former prisoners of war, and yet more persecution of those who had had the misfortune to find themselves in occupied territory. The Soviet losses were quite staggering, totalling some 27 million in all. The USSR did not sign the Geneva Convention on prisoners of war, so captured troops were given no protection from Nazi brutality and received no food parcels.

Document 6.22 From the Supreme Command of the Red Army, 16 August 1941

In the first days of the war whole units surrendered *en masse*. The Germans at first shot all those who surrendered, even those who were wounded, but in early July



Hitler changed the policy to encourage further desertions. In all a total of some 5,263,566 Soviet soldiers were taken prisoner between 22 June 1941 and 1 May 1944, of whom some 816,230 were freed and another 1,155,055 remained alive: some 3,292,281 were shot or died in some other way, nearly two-thirds of all those captured (*Rodina*, nos. 6–7, 1991, p. 100). Stalin's refusal to sign the Geneva Convention on the treatment of prisoners of war was paid for in the lives of millions. In the early days of the war draconian discipline was imposed on the army where the concept of surrender was identified with betrayal.

Recently some disgraceful cases of surrender to the enemy have taken place. Some generals have given a bad example to soldiers . . .

It is ordered:

1 Commanders and political workers who during a battle hide their identity tags, desert to the rear or surrender to the enemy are to be considered malicious deserters. Their families are to be arrested as the relatives of deserters who have broken their oaths of service and betrayed their motherland. All commanders and commissars are to shoot deserters in leadership positions on the spot.

2 Units and sub-units that are surrounded by the enemy are to fight selflessly to the last man, look after *matériel* as their most precious possession, and try to get back through to the rear of enemy forces to inflict blows upon the fascist dogs.

*Source:* Sovetskii soyuz v gody Velikoi otechestvennoi voiny, 1941–1945: tyl, okkupatsiya, soprotivlenie (*Moscow, Politizdat, 1993*), p. 63.

By October 1941 the Germans were approaching Moscow and foreign missions, government offices and the military command were evacuated to Kuibyshev (Samara). On 15 October the GKO gave the order for the government to be evacuated, noting 'Comrade Stalin will be evacuated tomorrow or later, depending on circumstances' (*Izvestiya TsK KPSS*, no. 12, 1990, p. 217). In the event the German army was halted and the Battle of Moscow began.

### Document 6.23 Stalin's Speech, 6 November 1941

Facing an unprecedented crisis, the regime was forced to reach out for support in ways that had hitherto been unacceptable. On the occasion of the twenty-fourth anniversary of the Russian revolution, with the Nazis some 40 miles from Moscow, Stalin appealed to Russian national pride rather than Marxism-Leninism as the inspiration for resistance. He characterised the war as a just war of liberation, vowed that the Germans would be defeated just as the Teutonic Knights, Tatars, Poles and Napoleon had been, and praised the positive features of his British and other allies. The utter savagery of the German army in Russia remains difficult to comprehend.

In our country the German invaders, i.e., the Hitlerites, are usually called fascists. The Hitlerites, it appears, consider this wrong and obstinately continue to call themselves 'National-Socialists' . . . Can the Hitlerites be regarded as *socialist*? No, they cannot. Actually, the Hitlerites are the sworn enemies of socialism, arrant reactionaries and Black Hundreds, who have robbed the working class and the peoples of Europe of the most elementary democratic liberties. In order to cover up their reactionary, Black Hundred essence, the Hitlerites denounce the internal regime of Britain and America as plutocratic regimes. But in Britain and the United States there are elementary liberties, there exist trade unions of workers and employees, there exist workers' parties, there exist parliaments; whereas in Germany, under the Hitler regime, all these institutions have been destroyed. One only needs to compare these two sets of facts to perceive the reactionary nature of the Hitler regime and the utter hypocrisy of the German-fascist pratings about a plutocratic regime in Britain and in America. In point of fact the Hitler regime is a copy of that reactionary regime which existed in Russia under tsardom . . .

'I emancipate man', says Hitler, 'from the humiliating chimera which is called conscience. Conscience, like education, mutilates man. I have the advantage of not being restrained by any considerations of a theoretical or moral nature' . . . In one of the declarations of the German command to the soldiers, found on the dead body of Lieutenant Gustav Ziegel, a native of Frankfurt-on-Main, it is stated: 'You have no heart or nerves; they are not needed in war. Eradicate every trace of pity and sympathy from your heart – kill every Russian, every Soviet person. Do not stop even if before you stands an old man or woman, girl or boy, kill! By this you will save yourselves from destruction, ensure the future of your family and win eternal glory.' There you have the programme and instructions of the leaders of the Hitlerite party and of the Hitlerite command, the programme and instructions of men who have lost all semblance of human beings and have sunk to the level of wild beasts . . . The German invaders want a war of extermination with the peoples of the USSR. Well, if the Germans want to have a war of extermination, they will get it. (*Loud and prolonged applause.*) . . .

Lenin distinguished between two kinds of war – predatory, and therefore unjust wars, and wars of liberation – just wars. The Germans are now waging a predatory war, an unjust war, aimed at seizing foreign territory and subjugating foreign peoples. That is why all honest people must rise against the German invaders as their enemies. Unlike Hitlerite Germany, the Soviet Union and its allies are waging a war of liberation, a just war, for the purpose of liberating the enslaved peoples of Europe and the USSR from Hitler's tyranny. That is why all honest people must support the armies of the USSR, Great Britain and the other allies, as armies of liberation.

We have not, and cannot have, such war aims as the seizure of foreign territories and the subjugation of foreign peoples – whether it be the peoples



and territories of Europe or the peoples and territories of Asia, including Iran. Our first aim is to liberate our territories and our peoples from the German-fascist yoke. We have not, and cannot have, any such war aims as that of imposing our will and our regime upon the Slavonic or other enslaved nations of Europe, who are expecting our help. Our aim is to help these nations in the struggle for liberation they are waging against Hitler's tyranny and then to leave it to them quite freely to organize their life on their lands as they think fit. No interference in the internal affairs of other nations!

*Sources: Pravda, 7 November 1941; Stalin, War Speeches, 18-19, 19-20, 22-3.*

One of the coldest winters of the twentieth century took a heavy toll on German forces unprepared for the rigours of a Russian winter. Soviet forces destroyed all habitable buildings to deprive the enemy of shelter. In December the German advance on Moscow was turned and in early 1942 pushed back from the city. German forces had raced towards Leningrad in August 1941 but there, too, Soviet forces refused to surrender. The siege of Leningrad began on 8 September 1941 and lasted until January 1944 – known as 'the 1,000-day siege'. Vital supplies came in along the 'Road of Life', the only link with the outside world cut across the frozen Lake Ladoga. The choice facing the authorities was whether to provide food for the starving population or materials for the arms factories.

## Document 6.24 The People's War

Kravchenko provides a vivid picture of how the war was fought by the Soviet people. He presents the important argument that the Germans might have been welcomed as liberators if they had not proved themselves even more vile than the Soviet regime. For example, instead of returning the land to the peasants, they proceeded to use the collective farm system and fulfilled its potential as one of the most efficient instruments of peasant exploitation known to humanity. At the same time, Kravchenko acknowledged that there was little desire for the restoration of the pre-revolutionary order of 'landlords and capitalists'.

It took months of direct experience with German brutality to overcome the moral disarmament of the Russian people. They had to learn again to detest the Nazis, after two years in which Hitler had been played up as a friend of Russia and a friend of peace. Let it not be forgotten that in the early weeks entire Red Army divisions fell prisoners to the enemy almost without a struggle.

Had the invaders proved to be human beings and displayed good political sense they would have avoided a lot of the fierce guerilla resistance that plagued them day and night. Instead the Germans, in their fantastic racial obsessions, proceeded to kill, torture, burn, rape and enslave. Upon the collectivization which most peasants abhorred the conquerors now imposed

an insufferable German efficiency. In place of the dreaded NKVD, the Germans brought their dreadful Gestapo. Thus the Germans did a magnificent job for Stalin. They turned the overwhelming majority of the people, whether in captured territory or in the rear, and all of the armed forces against themselves. They gave the Kremlin the materials for arousing a burning national hatred against the invaders.

Refugees and escaped prisoners disseminated the bloody tidings of German atrocities and high-handed stupidity. The Nazi barbarians, we learned, treated all Slavs as a sub-human species. I know from my own emotions that indignation against the Germans drove out resentments against our own regime. Hitler's hordes succeeded in inflaming Russian patriotism more effectively than all the new war cries of race and nation launched from the Kremlin.

Had we been at war with a democratic country, humane and enlightened, bringing us a gift of freedom and sovereign independence within a family of free nations, the whole story would have been different. But the Russians were merely given a choice between their familiar tyranny and an imported brand. The fact that they preferred the native chains is scarcely an item in which the Soviet dictators should take excessive pride.

In its propaganda to the armed forces and the population at large the Kremlin insisted that the invaders were intent on restoring landlords and capitalists. This was an effective morale builder and, indeed, offered the most solid common ground on which the regime and the people could meet. Except for a negligible minority, it should be understood, the Russians categorically did not desire such a restoration, under any disguise, no matter how sincerely they might detest the political and economic despotism of the Soviet system. Anti-capitalist education and indoctrination during a quarter of a century had sunk deep roots in the Russian mind.

But millions who fought courageously against the Nazis, on battlefronts and in guerilla actions, did dream that a new Russia, freed from a dictatorship of one party or one person, blessed with democratic freedoms, would rise from the ashes of the holocaust. The government nurtured this illusion, especially in the territories overrun by the enemy, as long as the war was going against us. The texts of the Atlantic Charter and Mr Roosevelt's Four Freedoms were published in our press, quietly and without comment; even that thrilled us with new hope. In the propaganda beamed to the conquered areas, these documents were exploited to the limit, to give the partisans an implied assurance that they were fighting for a new Russia, not for the one that had betrayed them by its terror and one-party tyranny. In their suffering and despair people were eager to accept the smoke of agitation for the incense of freedom.

The regime and the people both strove to save the country – but their hopes and purposes were as far apart as the poles. The dominant purpose of the regime was to save itself and its system for the further development of



its Communist adventures at home and abroad; the people were moved by unadulterated love of their fatherland and the hope of achieving elementary political and economic freedoms.

The guerilla movement and the 'scorched earth' tactics have been depicted by some romantic writers as spontaneous phenomena. Actually they were carefully planned and at all times controlled from Moscow. In his radio speech of July 3 [see Document 6.18] Stalin . . . also proclaimed that in the retreat all valuable property which could not be taken along must be 'unconditionally destroyed.' By this time it is no secret that many peasants and city dwellers resisted this policy, fiercely and sometimes bloodily. The scorching was done, in the main, not by civilians but by the military forces.

Source: *Kravchenko, I Chose Freedom*, pp. 365-7.

### Document 6.25 From the Head of the Gulag of the USSR NKVD

The labour camp system was turned to the war effort. A report in August 1944 described the changes.

At the beginning of the war the total number of prisoners in corrective-labour camps and colonies was 2,300,000. On 1 July 1944 the number of prisoners had fallen to 1,200,000.

In three years of war 2,900,000 prisoners left the camps and 1,800,000 entered.

At the same time the composition of the prisoners changed by the type of crime. If in 1941 the proportion sentenced for counter-revolutionary and other especially dangerous crimes was only 27 per cent of the total number of those imprisoned in camps and colonies, then by July 1944 the number imprisoned in this category had risen to 43 per cent . . . The proportion of men has decreased while that of women has increased. In 1941 men represented 93 per cent, whereas now there are 74 per cent men, 26 per cent women . . .

In the three years of war the general output of all types of ammunition by the NKVD's Gulag was 70,700,000 units, or 104 per cent of the plan.

Source: *Rossiia, kotoruyu my ne znali*, p. 127.

### Document 6.26 'Plans for Imprisonment'

Kravchenko once again provides a vivid commentary on the way that the Gulag provided an essential source of labour for the Soviet economy.

In pressing commissariats for speedy output, I was continually balked by manpower shortages at critical points. People's Commissars knew the situation

better than I did; they frequently asked Pamfilov for additional manpower from the NKVD reserves and he in turn made demands on the NKVD for working hands to supply this or that key factory; sometimes he put the problems up directly to Vosnessensky, Molotov, Beria. The Central Administration of forced labor camps - known as GULAG - was headed by the NKVD General Nedosekin, one of Beria's assistants. Nedosekin received orders for slave contingents from the State Defense Committee over the signatures of Molotov, Stalin, Beria and other members and acted accordingly.

I recall vividly an interview which I arranged on Utkin's orders with one of the top administrators of GULAG. He was to supply a certain commissariat some hundreds of prisoners for a rush assignment. We were under terrific pressure from Pamfilov, who was, in turn, of course, being pushed from higher up, and I had summoned the GULAG official for a showdown on this manpower.

'But Comrade Kravchenko, be reasonable,' he interrupted my speech. 'After all, your Sovnarkom is not the only one howling for workers. The State Defense Committee needs them, Comrade Mikoyan makes life miserable for us. Malenkov and Vosnessensky need workers, Voroshilov is calling for road builders. Naturally everyone thinks his own job is the most important. What are we to do? The fact is *we haven't as yet fulfilled our plans for imprisonments*. Demand is greater than supply.'

Plans for imprisonments! The fantastic, cold-blooded cynicism of the phrase still makes me shudder. What made it more uncanny was the fact that this official was entirely unconscious of the frightfulness of his remark. The seizure and enslavement of human beings had become a routine affair in his life. Of course, he did not mean that arrests were actually planned to meet labor demands. He was merely complaining, in Soviet lingo, about the fact that the multi-million armies of forced labor were not enough to meet all requests.

Source: *Kravchenko, I Chose Freedom*, pp. 405-6.

### Document 6.27 Dissolution of the Comintern

The war was not to be revolutionary but patriotic. To confirm this, in May 1943 the Comintern was dissolved on the grounds that conditions in each country were so different that a single revolutionary centre was no longer required. The resolution below avoided stating the real reason for the dissolution of the Comintern, and its dissolution in practice did not weaken Stalin's control over national communist parties.

The historic role of the Communist International, which was founded in 1919 as a result of the political union of the great majority of the old, pre-war working-class parties, consisted in upholding the principles of Marxism from vulgarization and distortion by the opportunist elements in the working-class



movement, in helping to promote the consolidation in a number of countries of the vanguard of the foremost workers in real working-class parties, and in helping them to mobilize the workers for the defence of their economic and political interests and for the struggle against fascism and the war the latter was preparing and for support of the Soviet Union as the chief bulwark against fascism . . .

But long before the war it became more and more clear that, with the increasing complications in the internal and international relations of the various countries, any sort of international centre would encounter insuperable obstacles in solving the problems facing the movement in each separate country. The deep differences of the historic paths of development of various countries, the differences in their character and even contradictions in their social orders, the differences in the level and tempo of their economic and political development, the differences, finally, in the degree of consciousness and organization of the workers, conditioned the different problems facing the working class of the various countries.

The whole development of events in the last quarter of a century, and the experience accumulated by the Communist International, convincingly showed that the organizational form of uniting the workers chosen by the first congress of the Communist International answered the conditions of the first stages of the working-class movement but has been outgrown by the growth of this movement and by the complication of its problems in separate countries, and has even become a drag on the further strengthening of the national working-class parties.

The World War that the Hitlerites have let loose has still further sharpened the differences in the situation of the separate countries, and has placed a sharp dividing line between those countries which fell under the Hitlerite tyranny and those freedom-loving peoples who have united in the powerful anti-Hitlerite coalition . . .

Guided by the judgement of the founders of Marxism-Leninism, communists have ever been supporters of the conservation of organizational forms that have outlived themselves . . .

In consideration of the above, taking into account the growth and political maturity of the communist parties and their leading cadres in the separate countries, and also having in view the fact that during the present war some sections have raised the question of the dissolution of the Communist International as the directing centre of the international working-class movement . . .

The Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Communist International . . . puts forward the following proposal for ratification by the sections of the Communist International.

The Communist International . . . is to be dissolved, thus freeing the sections . . . from their obligations arising from the statutes and resolutions of the congresses of the Communist International.

*Source: 'Resolution of the ECCI Presidium Recommending the Dissolution of the Communist International', 15 May 1943, in McDermott and Agnew, The Comintern, pp. 248–9.*

## Document 6.28 The War and the Orthodox Church

As for the patriotic side, in September 1943 an unofficial concordat was reached between the Soviet state and the Russian Orthodox Church in an attempt to broaden traditionalist support for the regime in the war. The office of Patriarch was revived and the organisational life of the Church was allowed as long as there were no aspirations to independence.

On 8 September in Moscow there was held the Council of Bishops of the Orthodox Church, convened to elect a Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and to form a Holy Synod under the Patriarch.

The Council of Bishops unanimously elected Metropolitan Sergei as Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

The Council furthermore adopted unanimously the statement addressed by Metropolitan Sergei to the Government of the USSR expressing thanks for its attention to the needs of the Russian Orthodox Church. Archbishop Grigory of Saratov read a statement to the Christians of the whole world. This document, containing an appeal for the unification of all forces in the struggle against Hitlerism, was also adopted unanimously by the Council . . .

*Statement of the Council of the Most Reverend Hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church to the Soviet Government (September 8, 1943)*

Deeply moved by the sympathetic attitude of our national Leader and Head of the Soviet Government, J. V. STALIN, toward the needs of the Russian Orthodox Church and toward our modest works, we, his humble servants, express to the Government our council's sincere gratitude and joyful conviction that, encouraged by this sympathy, we will redouble our share of work in the nationwide struggle for the salvation of the motherland.

Let the Heavenly Head of the Church bless the works of the Government with the Creator's blessing and let him crown our struggle in a just cause with the victory we long for and the liberation of suffering humanity from the dark bondage of fascism.

(Signed by Sergei, Metropolitan of Moscow and Kolomna, and eighteen other metropolitans, archbishops and bishops.)

*Source: Daniels, Communism in Russia, pp. 289–90.*



Culture and Education Section. Mahomed and the mountain will go to meet each other.

'The abolition of the camps will be a triumph of humanitarianism, but this will in no way mean the resurgence of the chaotic, primeval, cave-man principle of personal freedom. On the contrary, that will have become completely redundant.'

After a long silence he added that after hundreds of years this system might do away with itself too, and, in doing so, give birth to democracy and personal freedom.

'There is nothing eternal under the moon,' he said, 'but I'd rather not be alive then myself.'

'You're mad,' said Krymov. 'That's not the heart of the Revolution. That's not its soul. People say that if you work for a long time in a psychiatric clinic you finally go mad yourself. Forgive me for saying this, but it's not for nothing you've been put inside. You, comrade Katsenelenbogen, ascribe to the security organs all the attributes of the deity. It really was time you were replaced.'

Katsenelenbogen nodded good-humouredly.

'Yes, I believe in God. I'm an ignorant, credulous old man. Every age creates the deity in its own image. The security organs are wise and powerful; they are what holds sway over twentieth-century man. Once this power was held by earthquakes, forest-fires, thunder and lightning – and they too were worshipped. And if I've been put inside – well, so have you. It was time to replace you too. Only the future will show which of us is right.'

*Source: Vasily Grossman, Life and Fate (London, The Harvill Press, 1995), pp. 187, 274–5, 664–5, 842, 843, 845–6.*

### Document 6.30 The Fruits of Industrialisation and Assistance from the West

Victory at Stalingrad was followed by the great Soviet offensive, including the world's largest tank battle around Kursk in July 1943 in which 1.3 million Soviet soldiers with 3,444 tanks, 2,900 aircraft and 19,000 guns faced 900,000 Germans with 2,700 tanks, 2,000 aircraft and 10,000 guns. Victory at Kursk led to the liberation of Orel, Belgorod, and opened the path to the Ukraine and the West. Yegor Ligachev, and with him the generation that had sacrificed themselves to achieve liberation, later defended these achievements. A leading 'conservative' under Gorbachev, Ligachev upheld the wartime Soviet achievement against the detractors who were given free rein during *glasnost*. His arguments reflected the views of many in the last years of the Soviet Union as they saw their sacrifices and lives dissolve before them.

So much untruth and slander has been splashed on our great victory. Some say we did not fight properly and that the country's leadership panicked.

Politicians remind me of a critical fly on the wall of a beautiful building that sees only the unevenness of the wall's brick and so naturally is unable to appreciate the beauty of the building as a whole. Our ill-wishers do not want to recognize the greatness of our victory or the superiority of the Soviet order over Hitler's tyranny; they see rotten twigs and fail to notice the healthy tree. They disown their own people, the victor, their own Fatherland, with all its joys and misfortunes . . .

It is for good reason that our Communist Party was called a fighting party. Three million Communists perished on the fronts of World War II in the fighting between the Soviet people and the German aggressors. The Communists took the lead in both battle and labor . . .

In 1941, in a matter of a mere six months, the country was moved east – to the Urals, to Siberia. More than a thousand enterprises were moved 4,000 kilometers; in early 1942 they started turning out airplanes, tanks, artillery, and ammunition for the front. This was a great achievement for the people and the Party!

*Source: Yegor Ligachev, Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin (Boulder, Westview Press, 1996), pp. 354–5.*

Although the Soviet industrialisation drive had provided the basis for defence industries, and in the event the Soviet T-34 was superior to the American Sherman tank, the American Lend-Lease programme was essential for the Soviet war effort, amounting to \$11.3 billion by the end of the war (a staggering \$90 billion in 1998 dollars). The material was transported in British convoys to the northern ports of Arkhangel and Murmansk; attacked by German U-boats and from the air, they suffered enormous losses. Allied deliveries supplied 58 per cent of the aviation fuel, 53 per cent of all explosives, and almost half of the entire wartime supply of copper, aluminium and tyres. More crucially, Lend-Lease provided some 20,000 military aircraft, 10,000 tanks, 57 per cent of the rails, 1,900 locomotives, 11,075 rail wagons and 425,000 trucks, representing well over half of the Soviet fleet of light trucks and jeeps, as well as radios and radio tubes. Enough food was supplied to provide every single Soviet soldier with half a pound of solid nourishment for every day of the war (see Overy, 1998). According to Khrushchev, the debt was acknowledged by Stalin: 'If we had to deal with Germany one-to-one we would not have been able to cope because we lost so much of our industry' (*The Khrushchev Tapes*).

### Document 6.31 The Deportations

No sooner was the end of the war in sight than Stalin turned his wrath once again against his own people. In 1944 the Crimean Tatars, Kalmyks and various north Caucasian peoples – the Cherkess, Karachai, Balkars and Kabardins, Ingush and Chechens – in formerly occupied territory were targeted for expulsion from their homelands to Central Asia. They were accused by Beria of collaboration with the



German occupiers and deported. On 8 March 1944, for example, the entire Balkar population was rounded up and loaded into trains and sent to Central Asia. Of the 40,000 deported, 14,000 died during the journey or in the harsh early days of exile, transported into empty steppe and told to build their own shelter. As thousands more Balkars returned from fighting in the Soviet army to their former homes they were picked up and transported. The sheer scale and clinical bureaucratised horror of the operation is revealed by the following strictly secret telegram from Beria to Stalin on 29 February 1944.

This is to report the results of the resettlement operation of the Chechens and Ingush. The resettlement began on 23 February in the majority of districts, with the exception of high mountain areas.

By 29 February 478,479 people, including 91,250 Ingush, had been evicted and loaded on to special trains. One hundred and seventy-seven special trains had been loaded, of which 159 have already been sent to the new place of settlement.

Today special trains departed carrying former leaders and religious authorities of Chechen-Ingushetia, who were used in carrying out the operation . . .

Party leaders and Soviet organs of north Ossetia, Dagestan and Georgia have already started work on the assimilation of the new districts that have gone to them.

*Source:* Rossiya, kotoruyu my ne znali, pp. 156–7.

### Document 6.32 Beria on the Crimean Tatars

On the pretext of alleged collaboration with the Nazis during the German occupation of the peninsula between 1941 and 1944, the mass relocation of the Crimean Tatars was conducted with extreme brutality resulting in a high death toll. It is estimated that nearly half of the 240,000 Crimean Tatars selected for expulsion died in the process or soon after. On 10 May 1944 Stalin received the following telegram from Beria.

Taking into account the treacherous activity of the Crimean Tatars against the Soviet people and the undesirability of the further habitation of the Crimean Tatars in border zones of the USSR, the USSR NKVD presents for your consideration a draft resolution of the State Committee of Defence on the resettlement of all Tatars from the Crimea.

We consider it expedient to resettle the Crimean Tatars as special settlers in regions of the Uzbek S[oviet] S[ocialist] R[epublic] to be used for agricultural work, kolkhozes and sovkhozes, and also in industry and transport . . .

According to preliminary data the population of the Crimea at present is

140,00–160,000. The resettlement operation will begin on 20–1 May and be completed by 1 July . . .

USSR People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, L. Beria

*Source:* Rossiya, kotoruyu my ne znali, p. 152.

### Towards the Post-war Order

Even before the war was over the Allies began to prepare for the post-war order. A series of conferences sought to avoid conflict between the Allies, culminating in the Yalta conference of February 1945. Stalin expertly exploited differences between Roosevelt and Churchill; whereas the Americans wished to see a world opened up to trade after the war, Churchill tried to salvage as much as possible for the British Empire.

### Document 6.33 Declaration of the Three Powers of 1 December 1943

Meeting in Teheran in November 1943 Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin agreed that the second front would be opened in the West as soon as possible. The conference declared that the wartime spirit of collaboration would be maintained in peacetime.

We, the president of the United States, the prime minister of Great Britain and the premier of the Soviet Union, have met over the last four days in the capital of our ally, Iran, and formulated and confirmed our common policy. We express our determination that our countries will work together both in war and in the following period of peace.

*Source:* Izvestiya, 7 December 1943.

### Document 6.34 The Percentages Agreement, 9 October 1944

In April 1944 the last of Soviet territory was liberated and Soviet forces entered Romania, signalling the start of a new offensive phase in the USSR's war as it pursued the enemy across neighbouring countries. Although Stalin continued to express hopes that the wartime alliance would continue, it soon became clear that in the wake of the Red Army Stalin sought to install local communists in power to ensure 'friendly' and 'democratic' regimes, ably assisted by the NKVD. Following the D-Day landings in Normandy on 6 June 1944 the Allies from East and West advanced towards each other. The race was on not only to reach Berlin first but to ensure a modicum of agreement for the post-war settlement. Churchill flew to Moscow in early October 1944 to discuss various problems with Stalin, in particular the division of spheres of influence in South-eastern Europe. Churchill describes the meeting as follows.



The Committee for the Liberation of the Peoples of Russia has as its aim:

- (a) The overthrow of the tyranny created by Stalin, the liberation of the peoples of Russia from the Bolshevik system, and the restitution to the peoples of Russia of those rights which they won in the national revolution of 1917;
- (b) An end to the war and the conclusion of an honourable peace with Germany;
- (c) The creation of a new free popular state system without Bolsheviks and exploiters.

Source: 'Manifesto of the Committee for the Liberation of the Peoples of Russia', 14 November 1944, in Catherine Andreyev, Vlasov and the Russian Liberation Movement: Soviet Reality and Emigré Theories (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 216, 217, 218, 219.

### Document 6.38 Denikin on the Anniversary of the Volunteer Army

The alliance between patriotism and the Soviet system that was forged during the war now took on specifically Russian nationalist features. This was reflected in a speech by Denikin, one of the leaders of the White armies during the Russian Civil War of 1918–20. For some in the emigration, Stalin's victory proved the viability of the Soviet regime and appeared to justify the arguments of the National Bolsheviks earlier that the communist regime was in a perverse way fulfilling Russian national tasks. Denikin, however, reminds these people that the Soviet Union remained outside the international system and that its people remained in thrall to an inhuman power system.

15 November 1917–1944

We are remembering the twenty-seventh anniversary of the foundation of the Volunteer Army in very different conditions from those that have prevailed over the last four years. But these conditions are no less complicated, evoking a whole range of contradictory feelings and forcing the Russian emigration once again into new divisions. And its dregs, yesterday's obscurantists, defeatists, Hitlerite apologists, are already changing their faces and praise without measure, without a twinge of conscience, the new masters of the situation . . .

The international situation has fundamentally changed. The enemy has been thrown beyond the borders of the motherland. We – and herein lies the unavoidable pathos of our situation – are only witnesses and not participants of events that have shaken our motherland in the last years. We could only follow with the deepest sadness the sufferings of our people and with pride its great feats. We suffered in the days of the army's defeat, even though it is

called 'Red' and not Russian, and happiness in the days of its victory. And now, when the world war is still not over, with all our hearts we wish it a victorious conclusion to free our country from encroachments from beyond.

But the situation within Russia has not changed. At a time when the whole world is restructuring its life on to new principles of international cooperation, social fairness, freeing people's labour and activity from the exploitation of capital and the state, the peoples of Russia cannot remain in a serf-like condition. They cannot live and work without the most basic requirements for human existence:

- 1 basic freedoms;
- 2 the emancipation of labour;
- 3 the abolition of the bloodthirsty arbitrariness of the NKVD;
- 4 independent courts, equal for all, based on justice and the law, freed from the Party's partiality and administrative influence.

As long as there is none of this we will pursue our previous path, promised to the founders of the Volunteer Army, whatever clouds might darken our path. The fate of Russia is more important than the fate of the emigration.

Source: Rodina, nos. 6–7, 1991, p. 105.

Hopes that victory in war would lead to an end of oppression at home were disappointed. The Allies did all they could to appease Stalin in this period, including the forced repatriation not only of Vlasovites, Cossacks and released Soviet prisoners of war, but also many who had gone into emigration a generation earlier (for a discussion of these 'victims of Yalta', see Bethell, 1974; Tolstoy, 1979; Elliot, 1982). The Cold War in international relations was accompanied by a cold peace in domestic affairs.

### Document 6.39 Stalin's Victory Toast

On 24 May 1945 at a reception in the Kremlin for Red Army commanders Stalin acknowledged the primacy of the 'Great Russians' in the Soviet order and their part in the victory. The sufferings of all the other peoples and their contribution to victory was not recognised. In this, as in so many other ways, Stalin set the clock ticking for the disintegration of the Soviet Union forty-six years later.

Comrades, permit me to propose one more, last toast.

I should like to propose a toast to the health of our Soviet people, and in the first place, the Russian people. (*Stormy and prolonged applause and shouts of 'hurrah!'.*)

I drink in the first place to the health of the Russian people because it is the most outstanding nation of all the nations forming the Soviet Union.

I propose a toast to the health of the Russian people because it has won in this war universal recognition as the leading force of the Soviet Union among all the peoples of our country.



I drink to the health of the Russian people not only because it is the leading people, but also because it possesses a clear mind, a staunch character, and patience.

Our government made not a few errors, we experienced at moments a desperate situation in 1941–1942, when our Army was retreating, abandoning our own villages and towns in the Ukraine, Belorussia, Moldavia, the Leningrad region, the Baltic area and the Karelian-Finnish republic, abandoning them because there was no other way out. A different people might have said to the government: ‘you have not lived up to our expectations, get out, we shall establish another government which will make peace with Germany and secure us a quiet life’. But the Russian people did not take this path because it trusted the correctness of the policy of its government and was prepared to make sacrifices to ensure Germany’s defeat. And this confidence by the Russian people in the Soviet government proved to be that decisive force which ensured the historic victory over the enemy of humanity, over fascism.

Thanks to you, the Russian people, for this trust!

To the health of the Russian people! (*Stormy and extended applause.*)

*Sources: Speech at the Reception in the Kremlin in Honour of the Commanders of the Red Army Troops, 24 May 1945, Pravda, 25 May 1945; Stalin, War Speeches, pp. 138–9.*

## The cold peace, 1945–1953

Like the victory of Alexander I against Napoleon in 1812, the Soviet triumph in 1945 legitimated and reinforced the system that had delivered victory in war but fostered illusions about its viability and durability in peace. Victory gave rise to expectations that the peacetime Soviet system of government would change. These hopes, however real or imaginary, were crushed by the Stalinist counter-attack against the nascent pluralism led by Andrei Zhdanov.

### The Onset of the Cold War

The Stalinist system was able to win the war but was increasingly unable to manage the peace. In practice, the need for an enemy was so essential to the Soviet system that the defeat of one enemy, Germany, appeared to give rise to an array of new ones.

#### Document 7.1 Djilas on Stalin

Milovan Djilas was a leading Yugoslav communist, joining the Politburo of the Yugoslav Communist Party in 1940 and fighting with the partisans led by Tito following the German invasion in 1941. He led a military mission to Moscow in 1944 and later reported on his conversation with Stalin.

Stalin presented his views on the distinctive nature of the war that was being waged: ‘This war is not as in the past; whoever occupies a territory also imposes on it his own social system. Everyone imposes his own system as far as his army has power to do so. It cannot be otherwise.’

He also pointed out, without going into long explanations, the meaning of his Pan-Slavic policy. ‘If the Slavs keep united and maintain solidarity, no one in the future will be able to move a finger. Not even a finger!’ he repeated, emphasising his thought by cleaving the air with his forefinger.

Someone expressed doubt that the Germans would be able to recuperate within fifty years. But Stalin was of a different opinion. ‘No, they will recover, and very quickly. It is a highly developed industrial country with an extremely skilled and numerous working class and technical intelligentsia. Give them twelve to fifteen years and they’ll be on their feet again. And this is why the