The Great World War 1914-45

Volume 2
The peoples' experience

Edited by
Dr Peter Liddle
Dr John Bourne
Dr Ian Whitehead

Chapter 6

The impact of war on Russian Society

Sergei Kudryashov

In both World Wars of the last century Russia was one of the principal combatants, and, moreover, bore the most casualties, with fatalities alone totalling around 45 million. The course of military action and its results had an enormous effect on the fate of the country and its development, and affected every generation growing up in Russia and the USSR in the 20th century. Contemporary society, however, perceives the two wars as being very different from each other. The war with Nazi Germany is known in Russia as the Great Patriotic War. Although Stalin (more by analogy with the First World War than the Patriotic War of 1812) thought up this name[1], most people today do not ascribe any propagandistic meaning to it. The public holiday on 9 May is widely observed each year, throughout the country thousands of memorials have been erected, and war heroes' names are known and respected. The same cannot be said of the First World War, with its Russian heroes being known in the main only to specialists and those with a keen interest in history.[2] For everyone else, this particular war has come to be seen as a dim and distant event, pushed into the background by the October Revolution and the civil war that ensued. Even after the great political changes of the 1990s, when those in power were looking for an appropriate ideology for their regime and threw themselves into the business of reviving the cult of Tsarist Russia[3], the country's participation in this war largely remains an object of academic interest. However, any aberrations in contemporary political awareness can in no way influence or change the significance of the historical events themselves.

In Western and Soviet literature, the history of Russia at the time of the First World War is treated in connection with the events of 1917. Such an approach is simple to explain and is perfectly correct. Of course it is true that in seeking 'objective causes' of what happened, there is a temptation to ascribe a similar level of importance to all the factors involved, treating the war as some kind of background to the other events. But if one is to agree with the many historians who are inclined towards the view that it was precisely the war that helped the Bolsheviks emerge victorious in the Revolution[4], the question 'Why?' nonetheless remains without an adequate answer, especially in light of the fact that the Second World War led to a previously unseen consolidation of the regime, and that perestroika, which was conducted peacefully, led to a

disintegration of the country with consequences that can be compared to those of the 1917 Revolution.

Indeed, any war is an extreme situation in which the ability of the authorities to show their power is clearly put to the test. War can bring a nation together in the face of its enemies or destroy it. From Russia's point of view, the First World War began in far more favourable circumstances than the Soviet-German war, with time available to mobilise and deploy its forces. Tanks and military aircraft had yet to appear. From the very start the war was one of protracted manoeuvring, and this too was to the benefit of the vast Tsarist Army, which was 80 per cent comprised of peasants. The wave of patriotic fervour in the country, at least at the beginning, was extremely strong, and this undoubtedly influenced the spirit of the forces as well as strengthening their belief in the Tsar and their homeland. Another important fact was that the Eastern Front, despite the crucial nature of certain battles, was not the main front; the outcome of the war was decided in the West. Regardless of all this, the course of the war turned out unfavourably for Russia. Characteristic shortcomings in the Army and elsewhere began to make themselves felt: a certain sluggishness, a lack of speed in taking decisions and acting on them, a fear of taking the initiative, poor organisation of supplies to the Army, and a preference for hand-to-hand fighting, which resulted in large numbers of deaths, injuries and soldiers falling into the hands of the enemy. This situation repeated itself on an even more threatening scale in the early part of the Great Patriotic War, when the Germans succeeded in very quickly occupying significant territories that were home to almost a third of the country's population. Why did Stalin, unlike Nicholas II, succeed in turning events around, and did the nature of his regime play a part in this success?

In comparing the two situations, the most obvious difference is the flimsy ideological basis for the war in 1914. Regardless of the general understanding that they were fighting the Germans 'for the Faith, the Tsar and the Fatherland', the soldiers, who were overwhelmingly illiterate or semi-literate, had very little understanding of the causes of the war. General A. A. Brusilov wrote bitterly in his memoirs that in the Army they knew nothing of their brother Slavs, or of Serbia, which, for some reason, had caused the Germans to take it into their heads to wage a war. The less than comforting conclusion was that 'they were sending people off to slaughter for reasons unknown, that is, at the Tsar's whim.'[5] It is therefore unsurprising that, for the majority of those who took part, the war was largely something incomprehensible and 'alien'. The longer the war went on, the more indifferent the soldiers became, and consequently the more attractive became the idea of putting a stop to it.[6]

In the summer months of 1941 the illusion that 'German workers' would not fight against their 'class brothers' survived only a short time among the ranks. Reality made itself felt very quickly. The ideology of the war, its causes and its aims were clear to every soldier in the Red Army. At least, no documentary evidence has yet emerged to suggest that Red Army soldiers did not know against whom they were fighting or why. Political commissars (the main instrument of Party influence in the Army) played an undoubted role in achieving such a situation. It is no coincidence that the Reich had prepared ahead of time for their annihilation, and

harsh Nazi terror campaigns were aimed precisely at them and the Jews. The Germans also treated the latter as 'Jewish-Bolsheviks'[7]. Using their experience of the First World War, the Soviet leadership also took preventative measures, removing all Germans and those bearing German surnames from the Army. Only a few were permitted to serve, and they found themselves under constant observation. The Tsarist Government, on the other hand, had ascribed little significance to this question, and as a result Russian society and the Army had been shot through with perpetual talk of treachery and sabotage, and it was a simple matter to put failures at the front down to the machinations of German agents. Such feelings gradually grew into opposition to the regime as a whole. After the February revolution in 1917, soldiers openly dealt with the 'traitors' (officers with 'German' surnames) in their own way. Several generals were required to publicly explain their Orthodox, 'non-German' provenance.[8]

The fight against anti-war agitation, defeatism and panic-rumouring was also regarded as being of prime importance. One can now say with certainty that the Tsarist administration lost this particular battle amazingly quickly, possibly even before it had time to organise itself for the task. The worst of all possible methods was conceived; the 'guilty parties' were recruited into the Army, and consequently demoralised it still further. These circumstances were exploited with no small success by the Social Democrats.[9] The rapidity with which the Romanov dynasty was discredited during the war is astonishing. Bawdy jokes at the Tsar's expense (invariably featuring Rasputin) were doing the rounds, and the Empress was said to be involved in plots and to be behaving in a depraved manner. Nicholas II was even despised by those in his immediate circle. The feeling that the authorities were incapable of dealing with matters was all-pervasive, and it was a feeling that was shared by people who held the most diverse political views.[10]

With regard to this issue, the Stalinist leadership applied itself with an unusual sharpness. Knowing how it had all ended in 1914-17, they came down hard on any anti-Government actions and strove to destroy any form of opposition at birth. A large number of personnel and special military detachments were set to work with this end in mind.[11] Moreover, not only direct action was punishable, but also relatively innocent or private acts, such as criticism of the local leadership, or simply the telling of a political anecdote. Nothing resembling anti-state activity was to be seen within the Army or on the home front. Agents of the NKVD and the Party apparatus kept a watchful eye on people's attitudes, and were especially on the lookout for any open expression of dissatisfaction. Reports of such cases may be found in the former archive of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in Moscow, though the main thing these materials have in common is the absence in the protests recorded of any kind of activity directed at the central authorities or Stalin in person, who held very great authority.

A striking quality, which is characteristic of Russian society throughout the 20th century, was making itself felt. In the understanding of the people, the 'Great Sovereign' (before the Revolution) and Soviet leaders (after 1917) have, strangely, been seen as having the country's best interests at heart, but having to struggle with an administrative class that often abuses its position. Either they 'don't know' what is going on in certain places, or they 'aren't being properly

informed'. It is as if they are always somewhat remote from events, their lives shrouded in mystery.[12] Consequently there has always been the belief among the common people that one only has to let things be known 'at the highest level', and everything will change for the better. Stalin consciously used his understanding of this characteristic in his policies. During the war, even extremely experienced Western diplomats fell for it, the majority of them believing that a personal meeting with the General Secretary would solve any problem.

During the war years Stalin created the impression among many foreign officials that his power was severely limited in that he was dependent to a large extent on the Supreme Soviet, the Politburo and even the military. For example, the British Ambassador in Moscow, Stafford Cripps, seriously believed, in July 1941, that there was a serious struggle going on between the Party and the military for power in the Soviet Union[13], and a British delegation visiting the Soviet Union in August 1942 was not able to determine who actually held the reins of power in the country. Some suggested that Stalin was merely a tool of the Politburo, and Churchill attributed changes in Stalin's behaviour to pressure from the Soviet of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom). He told Anthony Eden, 'There are two Stalins. There is the true Stalin, who is well disposed toward Churchill, and there is Stalin and his circle, which both he and I have to take into account.'[14]

American historians make the observation that in discussions with the Americans, Stalin often talked about the Supreme Soviet as if it were a body with real power, and that everything depended on it. For example, Roosevelt asked Stalin to delay recognition of the Provisional Government of Poland, and Stalin mockingly answered:

> 'Of course, I understand what you are saying entirely, but there's something here that means I am powerless to help you. The fact is that the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet told the Poles on the 27th of December that they intend to recognise the Provisional Government of Poland as soon as it is formed. This means that I am powerless to carry out your request.'[15]

In March 1945, when Stalin needed to demonstrate his dissatisfaction with American policy, he once again made reference to the powers of the Supreme Soviet. A conference concerned with the setting up of the UN was scheduled for the end of April in San Francisco. Stalin decided not to send Molotov, and in a letter to Roosevelt gave the following reason:

> 'Things have worked out in such a way that Molotov, in actual fact, cannot take part in the conference. Both Molotov and myself regret this, but the deputies of the Supreme Soviet have called for a session in April, which Molotov absolutely must attend, and so he will be unable to take part in the first sitting of the conference.'[16]

The American diplomat Charles Bohlen calls these references to the Supreme Soviet 'Stalin's gambit'. The strange thing is that during the war, Bohlen himself believed that Stalin had to deal with opposition in the Politburo. When he wrote

his memoirs, Bohlen went back over the reports he had made at the time, and was extremely surprised that he could have said anything of the sort.[17]

It is interesting to follow the development of relations towards the enemy in both wars. In the first war soldiers at the front had on several occasions refused to shoot at each other, and there had been large-scale fraternisation with the enemy. Feelings of enmity and hatred towards the Germans and Austrians were hardly universal, and, apart from certain excesses, tolerance was shown with regard to the enemy, and prisoners of war were treated with respect.[18] A quarter of a century later it was quite a different story. Creating the image of the enemy and kindling feelings of hatred and the desire for revenge was at the very core of propaganda and political activity in the Red Army. Formally, a distinction was made between 'Germans' and 'fascists', the essential point being that not all Germans were fascists, though the soldiers immersed in day-to-day life at the front hardly gave this a lot of thought. Nazi terror played a particular role here, with the cynical and systematic slaughter of civilians (in many places for racial reasons), the barbaric treatment of prisoners of war, plundering, and the senseless destruction of cultural objects all conspiring to turn the general mood against the Germans far more effectively than any propaganda leaflet.

The Army responded willingly to the well-known slogan 'Kill a German!' and the idea took hold in real life. This was to have repercussions for the Germans themselves when the Red Army pushed into German territory; the Soviet command was forced to take special measures to curb violent acts of revenge against prisoners of war and the civilian population. Declassified documents from Russian military archives give cause to believe that the mass organised killing of German civilians, which Nazi propaganda claimed to be taking place, did not actually occur. The majority of crimes were committed as the result of drunkenness and were of a sexual nature, and one can say with certainty that the Army command, including Stalin, made a stand against such acts.[19] Nonetheless, many of those who had been at the front retained their hostility toward Germans for many years. The author has met veterans who continued to avoid contact with Germans (including those from the German Democratic Republic) even in the 1970s and 1980s.

The nature of relations between ordinary soldiers and officers was another important aspect that affected the state of the Army as a whole to an extraordinary degree. We do find accounts of officers in the First World War treating their soldiers well, showing an interest in their general well-being or simply being able to relate to them on a common, human level, but more often than not these examples stick in the mind by virtue of their rarity.[20] There is far more evidence showing that the ordinary ranks and the officers found themselves separated from each other by a gulf of incomprehension and estrangement. It was not only such 'small details' as lifestyle, pay and mobility through the ranks that influenced these feelings, but also long-established tradition with which few officers showed any inclination to break. Their habit was to regard their soldiers as a silent, sullen, faceless mass, and of course the 'mass' responded to them in precisely that way. After the February Revolution, this mutual mistrust spilled over into terrifying bloody reprisals against the officers.[21]

The existence of officers as a distinct group was also a feature of the Great Patriotic War, but such enormous divisions between the ranks were not felt. Of course, Communist Party policy, focusing on social egalitarianism and internationalism, had a clear influence on this. One must not, however, reject the paradoxical role of Stalinist repression, which was aimed directly at the commanding officers, and severely undermined the ability of the Army to fight effectively, but, at the same time, in turning yesterday's Red Army soldiers themselves into commanding officers served to change the make-up of the Army, and in so doing served to level out the differences between those who did the ordering and those who received the orders. On the very eve of the war, the Red Army faced a catastrophic shortage of commanding officers, with ground forces alone requiring (in total) 66,900.[22] But even those who were already in place were to a large extent put out of action in the early days of the war, and a situation developed across the board in which new officers were effectively 'taught' and 'looked after' by their soldiers (this applied especially with the younger ones).

The nationality question deserves attention in its own right. In both 1914 and 1941 Russia was a country comprised of many nationalities and in both wars her adversaries tried to exploit this fact. In 1914 the Austrians and Germans financed the 'Union for a Free Ukraine' (Sojuz Vizvoleniya Ukrainy), whose aim was to see the Ukraine leave the Tsarist empire. In 1916, a little later than it might have, Germany set up the so-called 'League of Peoples in Russia' (Liga Narodov Rossii), which called for the defeat of Russia.[23] These organisations had little real political influence, though they did on many occasions manage to cause problems for Russian counter-intelligence.

Far more 'successful' in stimulating nationalist confrontation had been the Tsarist Government itself, which was responsible for a large-scale uprising in Turkestan (now Central Asia and Kazakhstan). Trying to have as many Russian soldiers at the front, the authorities decided to call up men of other nationalities (who had previously been exempt from conscription) to be deployed in the rear. A mixture of poor preparation, the lack of convincing propaganda, the introduction of the right to buy oneself out of the Army (which meant that for the most part recruitment was confined to the poor) and contemptuous relations between local officials and the indigenous population very quickly led to an uprising. Despite the fact that this uprising was brutally suppressed, the empire had, nonetheless, suffered a heavy blow, and some areas remained hotbeds of unrest even after the Tsar had abdicated from the throne.[24]

Twenty-five years later, in the very same place, the Soviet leadership succeeded in mobilisation on an even greater scale without bringing about any serious protest. Why was this? It would appear that the new administration had learned from the lessons of its predecessor. In the first place, the status of the indigenous peoples had been changed; they had been given equal rights, lived in their own republics and had their own administration. The campaign to eradicate illiteracy had also borne fruit, and had raised the cultural level of the local population. Second, the call-up was universal, and was conducted under a single system through the regional military commissariats. All potential conscripts were on a register. This had certainly not been the case in Tsarist Russia, where lists simply

did not exist, and had to be compiled after the call-up had been announced. This is why during the uprising of 1916 it was precisely these lists that had been destroyed, thus depriving the authorities of information with regard to potential recruits. Also, in 1941 there was no legal possibility of buying oneself out of the Army. Finally, Moscow carried out a far more effective propaganda campaign, which depicted the war as a threat to all and sundry, which could only be won by the mobilisation of the whole country.

With the information available today, we can reasonably say that on the home front there were no substantial nationalist actions, with all known incidents of opposition towards the Soviet authorities (the nationalist underground in the Baltic states, the armed struggle of Ukrainian and Byelorussian nationalists) occurring either as a result of German occupation or its aftermath. In comparison with the Kaiser's Germany, the Nazis were more capable of exploiting the factor of nationality, and had trained foreign nationals and emigrants for work in the Army, in intelligence and occupying administration long before the attack on the Soviet Union. From the very moment that 'Operation Barbarossa' was put into action, prisoners of war and citizens were drawn into collaborating, and in all the occupied territories German propaganda presented this as fighting in the struggle against Bolshevism, fighting for freedom and independence. Later, former collaborators who had settled in the West would use a similar rhetoric when seeking to justify their links with the Nazis, the one difference being their assertion that they had been fighting not only against Stalin, but against Hitler as well. Some authors accept this propaganda as the truth.[25]

In fact, during the war years the Germans did not succeed in stirring up national conflicts within the USSR. 'The colossus with legs of clay' did not collapse, though the negative consequences of Nazi rule continued to be felt for a considerable time, and it would be wrong to disregard their influence even today. It is essential to point out that the German command deliberately stirred up antagonism between nationalities. For example, in Poland, Ukrainian and Russian mercenaries were used in punitive operations. In Belarus, Lithuanians, Latvians and Ukrainians were used, in Serbia, Cossacks and Russians, and so on. In all captured territories, anti-Semitic and anti-communist agitation was very visibly carried out, which nurtured all kinds of rumours and prejudices and stimulated ethnic mistrust among the local population. Millions of people lived under such conditions for several years, and there is no way that this could not have left its mark on society's consciousness. It is no coincidence that the Soviet authorities identified widespread anti-Semitism in the liberated regions of the Baltic States, Ukraine and Moldavia, as well as in Russia itself. The degree of ideological bitterness and open anti-Soviet propaganda served to turn citizens who had lived in the occupied territories into objects of particular interest as far as state security bodies and the Party were concerned. Although the authorities were well aware that one could not groundlessly accuse everyone of collaboration, it was nonetheless the case that being branded as having lived 'under the Germans' ruined the lives of many people. 'And what were you doing during the occupation?' became a standard question put to those who were seeking work or who wished to travel abroad in the post-war years.

Of course, the first to be subjected to persecution were those who had actively collaborated with the occupying forces. It is very difficult to determine precisely how many were punished for this, since partisans and the advanced divisions of the Red Army killed many collaborators. According to existing figures, between July 1941 and 1953 around 450,000-500,000 people were convicted by military tribunals, and in the courts, of treason or of working with the Germans. Sentences varied from a few years incarceration to death. The Soviet Union continued its pursuit and prosecution of war criminals until the early years of Gorbachev's *perestroika*. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union this was brought to a halt, and unbelievable things began to happen.

The new states (Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia), in search of an heroic past and a national idea, turned to the history of the war. Very soon, former members of the SS and the police, and Wehrmacht soldiers from the local population, as well as elderly nationalists who had fought against the Red Army, began to emerge as 'new heroes' and 'ardent fighters against totalitarianism'. The mass media gave them a platform, widely publishing their dubious views, and the Government treated them sympathetically, regarding them much as they regarded those who had fought against Nazism. Even the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, which has still not resolved the question on the payment of compensation to war victims and former inmates of concentration camps, did not hesitate in starting to pay pensions to some veterans from the Baltic countries.

An astonishing turnaround had taken place. Now it was not the millions of murdered Byelorussians, Jews, Russians or gypsies, nor the tortured prisoners of war or the resistance fighters who were being presented as the tragic victims of the war, but those who had served the Germans and had been rewarded with rations, money and decorations. In the Baltic States and the Ukraine their activity is now called 'fighting against Bolshevism', which sounds suspiciously like the language of wartime propaganda with which we are familiar. At various international fora the leaders of these countries have on several occasions expressed their regrets, and have even gone so far as to apologise, but this has done nothing to alter the situation. By way of justification they tell one story or another of how most of those involved were forcibly called up into the German Army, where they were compelled to carry out orders. But if it really were that way, if they really were forcibly driven into the ranks of the SS, then why do they have their annual festivals and their parades, and why do society and local authorities treat them so sympathetically? After all, these are not former inmates of Dachau or Auschwitz getting together for festive dinners and parades to 'celebrate' their own imprisonment.[26]

Comparing the ways in which the Tsarist and Stalinist regimes conducted themselves during wartime one has to admit the success of the latter. In spite of monstrous miscalculations and mistakes, which cost the lives of millions of people, the Stalinist leadership was able to stabilise an almost hopeless situation and mobilise the people to achieve victory. In addition to this, it is obvious that the Soviet Government took past experience into account, and the benefits of this are obvious in many of the measures taken – the destruction of food warehouses and industrial installations before retreating, preventative measures with regard to the

'fifth column', the centralisation of administration, a strict censorship, capital punishment both at the front and in the rear, active propaganda, and so on. In other words, Stalin did what Nicholas II could well have done, or did inconsistently. Would it be possible to identify any of the qualities or characteristics of the regime, which show up in a positive light and played their part in achieving victory?

Soviet historiography usually pointed to the role of ideology, the Party, the socialist economy, discipline and heroism. It is doubtful that the official ideology, namely Marxism-Leninism, as revised by Stalin, played a very significant role. Many soldiers and officers had a very vague understanding of Marxism and of the particular nuances of Leninism, but fought well nonetheless. Heroism and discipline were equally characteristic of other armies, such as the American, British, German and Polish. The harshness of Stalinist discipline and harshness in general as a method of waging war, while assisting to a certain extent in seeing that orders are carried out, eventually takes on a negative quality. From the very first days of the war Red Army soldiers and officers were shot, and Stalin in actual fact made this legal with Decree No 227 in July 1942. It is the author's view that such decrees do more to demonstrate the weakness of a regime than its strength, since it is evident that it cannot lead by any other method. It is extremely doubtful that the sight of Red Army soldiers hanging from lampposts could have done anything to spur the Army on to greater exploits.

Regardless of the abundance of various kinds of documentation, as strange as it may seem, the role of the Communist Party demands more detailed analysis. Did Stalin hold Party meetings at General Headquarters? This is an interesting question, and one that still has not been answered. It is also not clear whether or not the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks (not Stalin!) had any kind of influence on the activity of, for example, the General Staff or the NKVD. The Party certainly played no role in determining foreign policy during the war years. Stalin decided everything personally. There was not even any special department in the Central Committee that would have dealt with international affairs until May 1943 (after the dissolution of the Comintern). It begins to look as though the Party worked less as an ideological institution and more as an instrument for mobilisation and the carrying out of orders. Unfortunately for the Tsarist administration, there was no such instrument available to it in 1914.

Much effort has been put into understanding the Stalinist economy, but much remains unclear. For many years it was an object of pride in the Soviet Union that her economy had shown its 'superiority' and had 'won' the war. In the heat of all the arguments many authors failed to notice that the economies of the USA and Great Britain also won. It is impossible to say how Russia might have fared in 1941 if she had had a capitalist economy. Our business is with Stalin's system, where industry and agriculture were managed on the principle of orders and the fulfilment of orders, of punishment and encouragement, and victory in the war shows that such methods achieved material results. The experience of the USSR gives pause for thought. Who knows, it may be that the failure of *perestroika* and the dissolution of the USSR in 1991 could in part be ascribed to the overwhelming nature of the economic experience of the war, since the methods of Stalinist planning and management had actually remained unchanged since 1945.[27]

The hard-fought victory in the war conferred world-power status on the USSR, Stalin succeeded in achieving advantageous resolutions with regard to all territorial questions, and it is indisputable that never before had Russia held a position of such authority. Nonetheless, the contrast between the political results that had been achieved and the state of the economy, which was in ruin, was plain for all to see. The state of the economy was simply not appropriate to that of one of the world's leading powers, and one can hardly say that this was not understood. Economic revitalisation became the priority of the entire Party and state machine, but the maintenance of superpower status demanded considerable expenditure, from the need for a vast bureaucratic apparatus to having to keep considerable financial reserves in order to be able to provide aid and assistance to developing countries in the socialist camp. For many years it did indeed appear that the USSR had almost coped with these tasks, but the years 1988-91 proved that this was not the case.

We should turn our attention to one important fact that made it far easier for Stalin (among others) to carry out his plans. This concerns the peculiarities of the social situation of the population, which gave rise to a surprising ethical and psychological climate. Since 1914 people had lived more or less perpetually in a state of militarisation and mobilisation, and the prevailing atmosphere was one filled with all kinds of threats and dangers. This created a psychological climate that, on the one hand, united people in the face of the uncertainties ahead, and, on the other, forced them to learn to live with even the most barbaric acts on the part of the authorities. The expropriation of provisions and goods, the dispossession of the kulaks, the wave of repression in the 1930s and the deportation of whole peoples were explained by social expediency and the fact that there were enemies all around. Famine, which almost always followed war in Russia, had left an indelible impression on the people – 'If only it weren't for war and famine' was a mantra repeated countless times by mothers and grandmothers to their children and grandchildren. Consequently, there was the ever-present hope that the future would be better, if not for the parents, then at least for the children. Given such an atmosphere, even the slightest improvement in the availability of consumer goods was seen as being a sign that the authorities were taking care of the people. Even if the range of goods was limited, it was at least still something positive; after all, 'It was worse during the war'. One of the main reasons for Gorbachev's failure was that, at a time of relative stability and in peacetime, he made people remember war and famine.

The most terrible consequence of both wars was the number of victims. In the period from the beginning of the First World War to 1 March 1917, the number of those mobilised in the Russian Army reached 15.1 million, with total losses of personnel by 31 December 1917 of 7.4 million (1.7 million killed), and that does not include 3.4 million captured by the enemy.[28] Losses rose sharply as a result of the civil war and famine. Sadly, there are no accurate figures, but according to approximate calculations the population decreased in the period 1918 to 1922 by between 14 and 18 million. Of these, 5-6 million starved, 3 million died from illness, about 3 million from the 'red' and 'white' sides were killed, and approximately 2 million left the country.[29]

The USSR's human casualties in the Second World War have been a matter for political feuding for such a long time that it would appear that the precise figures will never be known. The only thing we can say with any degree of certainty is that these figures vary from 25 million to 32 million. It is a terrible fact that for every day of the war around 20,000 died. If we add to all this the tens of millions who were injured, crippled and maimed, and those left without relatives, then either directly or indirectly every Soviet family was touched by the war.[30] Material destruction was on a no less monstrous scale, with 1,710 towns, more than 70,000 villages and 6 million buildings (including 1,670 churches) being destroyed, ruined or burned. Around 25 million were made homeless. Losses during the war years were 20 times greater than the national revenue in 1940. In other words, the USSR lost around 30 per cent of her national wealth.[31]

The experience of both wars shows that each time it took around 10 to 15 years to rebuild the country and achieve a relatively normal kind of life. Paradoxically, Russia at the end of the 20th century found herself in something resembling a post-war situation. One can hardly predict the way Russia will develop, but the questions as to whether the people have enough patience, and whether the authorities have enough knowledge of history so as not to repeat the mistakes of the past, will in due course find their answers.

Recommended reading

Erickson, J., *Stalin's War with Germany* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1975)

Frenkin, M., *Russkaya armiya i revolutsiya* (Munich: Logos, 1978)

Giatsintov, E., *Zapiski belogo ofitsera* (St Petersburg: Interpoligraftsentr, 1992)

Harrison, M., *Soviet Planning in Peace and War, 1938-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985)

Linz, S. J. (ed), *The Impact of World War II on the Soviet Union* (Totowa: Rowman & Allanheld, 1985)

Malia, M., *The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia* (New York: Free Press, 1995)

Stone, N., *The Eastern Front, 1914-1917* (London: Penguin, 1998)

Wildman, A. K., *The End of the Russian Imperial Army* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980)

Zetterberg, S., *Die Liga der Fremdfolker Russlands 1916-1918* (Helsinki: Finnische Historische Gesellschaft, 1978)

Notes

1 Immediately after its beginning the First World War was formally proclaimed in Russia to be 'Great' and 'Patriotic'. In Western historiography some scholars still refer to the war as 'the Great War'.

2 Daniel Orlovsky, 'Velikaya voina i rossiyskaya pamyat' in *Rossiya i pervaya mirovaya voina* (St Petersburg: 1999) pp49-57

3 One can mention the re-creation of the Christ the Saviour Cathedral right in the city centre of Moscow, which cost millions of pounds.

4 M. Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia* (New York: 1995) p16; V. Buldakov, *Krasnaya Smuta* (Moscow, 1997) pp17, 120-1

5 A. Brusilov, *Moi vospominaniya* (Moscow: 1963) pp81-3

6 E. S. Senyavskaya, *Psikhologiya voiny v XX veke* (Moscow: 1999) pp195-7

7 For latest debates and documents see Peter Klein (ed) *Die Einsatzgruppen in der besetzten Sowjetunion 1941/42* (Berlin: 1997) and A. Mertsalov, *Stalinism i voina* (Moscow: 1998) pp320-36

8 V. Buldakov, op cit, p122

9 See D. P. Oskin, *Zapiski praporschika* (Moscow: 1931); M. Frenkin, *Russkaya armiya i revolutsiya* (Munich: 1978); A. K. Wildman, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army*, Vols I-II (Princeton: 1987)

10 V. S. Diyakin, 'Nikolai, "Alexandra i Kamariliya"' in *Noviy Chasovoi* No 3 (1995) pp154-5; G. Z. Ioffe, *Velikiy Oktiabr i epilog tsarisma* (Moscow: 1987) p15

11 The best-known in the West are the NKVD (internal secret police) and SMERSH (Soviet counter-intelligence body). The latter is an abbreviation of the Russian expression 'Death to the spies'.

12 See V. G. Korolenko, 'Zemli! Zemli!' in *Novyi Mir* (1990) p169; V. Buldakov, op cit, pp22-21

13 S. Miner, *Between Churchill and Stalin* (London: Chapel Hill, 1988, pp65-6; M. Kitchen, *British Policy towards the Soviet Union during the Second World War* (Basingstoke: Houndmills, 1986) pp66-7

14 M. Kitchen, op cit, pp140, 148; M. Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, Vol VII (London: 1986) pp189, 364

15 R. Dallek, *Franklin Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945* (New York: 1979) p504; W. Taubman, *Stalin's American Policy* (New York and London: 1982) p76; *Perepiska Predsedatelya Soveta Ministrov SSSR s presidentami SSHA i premier-ministrami Velikobritanii*, Vol 2 (Moscow: 1976) pp194-5

16 *Perepiska*, op cit, Vol 2, p213; W. Taubman, op cit, p96

17 C. Bohlen, *Witness to History 1929-1969* (New York: 1973) pp197, 217

18 E. S. Senyavskaya, op cit, pp260-3

19 *Velikaya Otechestvennaya voina, 1941-1945*, Kniga 4 (Vol 4) (Moscow: 1999) pp270-6

20 See E. Giatsintov, *Zapiski belogo ofitsera* (St Petersburg: 1992)

21 D. P. Oskin, *Zapiski soldata* (Moscow: 1929) pp45-6, 119-29; V. Buldakov, op cit, pp120-7

22 *Kanun i nachalo voiny* (Leningrad: Dokumenty, 1991) p294

23 *Krasniy Arkhiv* (Moscow: 1929) Vol 2, p10; S. Zetterberg, *Die Liga der Fremdfolker Russlands 1916-1918* (Helsinki: 1978)

24 See *Vosstanie v Srednei Azii i Khazahstane* (Moscow: 1971)

25 As an illustration of such literature see W. Alexeev and T. Stavrou, *The Great Revival: Russian Orthodox Church under German Occupation* (Minneapolis: 1976); C. Andreev, *Vlasov and Russian Liberation Movement* (Cambridge: 1987); J. Hoffmann, *Deutsche und Kalmyken 1942 bis 1945* (Freiburg: 1977); idem, *Die Ostlegionen 1941-1943* (Freiburg: 1981)

26 Materials of the symposium on Holocaust and collaboration in the Baltic States, March 1999, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC; Materials of the conference on Holocaust and Education, 26-28 January 2000, Stockholm (author's archive)

27 For more details see Peter Gatrell and Mark Harrison, 'The Russian and Soviet Economy in Two World Wars' in *Economic History Review* Vol 46 (3) (1993) pp425-52; M. Harrison (ed), *The Economics of World War II: Six great powers in international comparison* (Cambridge: 1999)

28 *Rossiya v mirovoi voine 1914-1918 goda* (Moscow: 1925) pp17, 30-1

29 V. Buldakov, *Krasnaya smuta* (Moscow: 1997) p244

30 See *Velikaya Otechestvennaya voina, 1941-1945*, Kniga 4 (Moscow: 1999) pp282-4

31 Ibid, p294; *Narodnoye Khozyaistvo v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine* (Moscow: 1990) pp52-3