The Rise of Soviet Power

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Captain Felt, members of the Naval War College and guests:

I should point out at the very beginning of this phase of your work on the Russian problem that there are no "Russian experts". There are only varying degrees of ignorance about Russia, and I'm sure you will discover that I have varying degrees of ignorance about Russia, especially after we get into our discussion.

What I want to do today is to point out some of the things which we ought to watch in Russian development in order to estimate both the capacities and the intentions of the Soviet leadership, and what they can get from their people and their regime in the way of power.

This brings us first to the question of the nature of the historic development of the last 30 or 40 years in Russia, and here I want to point out that Russia has not had just one revolution. It has had at least four revolutions, and they are not yet ended. That is why this is an open-ended problem and one that is so baffling to try to get at, quite aside from the obstacles which the Soviet government places in the way of the objective study of any problem by its own people and the objective study of Russia by people outside.

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I want to take a quick look at Russia as it was at the beginning of this century and discuss some of the main processes that have been going on in Russian society, and then see how some of those problems shape up today.

Pre-World-War-I Russia was already the most populous state in Europe, and I think that we should bear that in mind when we consider Russia’s population today. If it had not been for the losses suffered by Russia during the First World War, during the Civil War and intervention, which were much more destructive than the World War, then the period of famine, then the collectivization, (it must have eliminated around 5,000,000 people), then the Second World War which probably had direct losses of 12,000,000 people, and finally losses due to decline in birthrate during the war, (perhaps 5,000,000 more), if it were not for those great blood-lettings, which have occurred at least three times in a little over thirty years, we would face a Soviet Union which would have around 275,000,000 people rather than one which probably has around 210,000,000 today. I just want to mention in passing that even the size of Russia’s population is a State secret, and estimates made abroad vary all ways from 195,000,000 as of today, up to 220,000,000. So there is a gap of 25,000,000 people which have not been fully accounted for. That is the kind of problem that you are going to face and all of us who work on Russia face in trying to find out the elementary facts about the country.

Russia in 1941 had great resources which were only beginning to be developed, and I want to mention, also in passing, (you’ll hear much more about that later from my friend Doctor Shimkin) that, on the whole, they are badly located. Many of their mineral resources are relatively inaccessible and it requires a provision of the most elementary techniques of civilization in order to get at many of those resources.
Then the agricultural resources are poorly distributed. Although Russia is still a half-agrarian country and in 1914 was more than 80% agricultural according to the occupations of its people, Russia actually has a usable and useful agricultural area slightly smaller than that of the United States, although Russia has a total area larger than that of the United States and Canada combined. Even these agricultural resources are not well located in terms of climate. The richest areas are in the west. They narrow in width as one moves eastward, but as the winds from the central part of Asia come from the Volga, crossing the Volga, they bring periodic famines. 1947, for example, was a very bad year in Russian agriculture, but famine seems to have been averted by government steps.

Then all this area east of the Urals looks very green on the map. Actually the area from the Urals eastward and to the south is too dry, northward too wet and cold to be useful.

In 1914, Russia was engaged in an agrarian revolution. In fact, there were two revolutions going on simultaneously. One of these was the struggle of the peasants for control of the land, a pattern which is very old in Europe, and other countries too. As political awareness grows, social demands grow. The peasants have striven to take the land for themselves and to throw off the control of the landowners, and this struggle has gone on intermittently in Russia for many decades, often leading to considerable violence. In the 1950 revolution for example, there were very widespread agrarian outbursts of violence. The gradual transfer of the land from the landowners to the peasants had been going on rapidly in the decades before the revolution, and even if there had not been a violent political revolution most of the land of Russia would have been in the hands of the peasants by 1925. They would have had it in their hands much the same as the French peasant has it, mainly in small holdings.
Now this agrarian revolution had been fostered by the government after 1905. It wanted to build up a class of land-owning peasantry, feeling that that would cure the peasantry of revolutionary dealings and lead them to support the government. At the same time there was this continuing resentment of the peasantry for the past abuses of the land-owning system and a desire for revenge. I think if we look at the agrarian revolution which occurred in 1917 quite spontaneously as soon as the Czarist government was removed, we must recognize that it was more an emotional than a rational outburst. It was a response to the abuses of the peasantry under serfdom. Serfdom had only been abolished officially after 1861, and there were many people alive who had lived under it. It takes many generations to overcome the effects of serfdom with its interference with the lives of the peasantry, its control over them, the helplessness of the peasant in the face of the land-owner, backed by the authority of the state. We must remember that under serfdom a landlord could order any of his peasants exiled to Siberia, — a very severe punishment. He could interfere with his marriage, could sell the peasant individually or his family. In fact, except for the question of color, (because there was no difference of color), Russian serfdom was in many ways more severe than slavery in this country prior to our war between the states. And all that left an accumulation of class hatred. I think we cannot understand what happened in 1917 except in terms of emotional desire for revenge. On a rational pattern of thinking, the peasants should have just gone along taking over the land, becoming independent landholders.

One other factor in the agrarian situation was very important in 1917, and has continued to be of importance, and that is the system of joint holding practiced by the Great Russians. This system of communal ownership or joint ownership was not practiced in the Ukraine, and it was not practiced in Belo-Russia.
(White Russia) or in the Baltic states, or in the Caucasus or Central Asia. It was a typical land-holding system of the Great Russians, the people inhabiting the Republic of Great Russia of today within the Soviet Union.

Now under this system, the peasants did not own the land individually but merely had the right to use it as joint owners along with the other members of the village. Under a system of periodic partition, the land was redistributed from time to time and the peasant could therefore never be sure of holding indefinitely the land which he then cultivated or, even less, of passing it on to his children.

This system of the Mir, or communal land-holding, was in my opinion the root of the population problem prior to 1914. Under the communal system, the peasant who limited the number of his children would get less land. So, in a sense, there was a competition among the peasants to see who could have the most children because that established the number of working hands in the family, or the number of mouths to be fed. That was the basis of division of the land, in the periodic redistribution.

Under the communal system of land-holding, the peasant worked his own land and enjoyed the product of it. It was not at all like the collective farm system of today, but it did mean that the individual Russian peasant had very little conception of private property. He was interested in getting all the land for all the peasants rather than getting more land for himself.

The peasants were not too enthusiastic about the government's plan for distributing the land to individual peasants. In 1917, when the government's pressure was removed, the peasants simply turned around, drove out the landlords, reestablished the system of communal ownership where it had been broken down
in part, and carried out a communal revolution of their own. This revolution committed the peasant against private ownership of land. That meant that he was not able to struggle against the Soviet regime once it was established in power, because he did not have the clear idea of individual ownership as it had developed throughout most of the rest of Europe. And the problem of the relation of the peasant to the land was further complicated by the pressure of population against the supply of land.

The population pressure which developed in Russia after 1860 was expressed in the doubling of the population every 25 years. In the United States we were doubling our population too, but we were doing it in large part through immigration of adults, able and ready to work, and in many cases already highly trained. Many of our best engineers came from Denmark, Norway, Germany, France, and so forth. In the Russian system, however, most of this increased population remained on the land with the result that the size of the individual holdings declined. The pressure merely to raise enough food to feed the peasant's own family grew more intense. The land was impoverished because the balance between livestock and cereal crops was broken down in many parts of the country. The growth of industry, while rapid, was too slow to absorb the surplus. So it backed up in the villages and left a reservoir of social resentment which complicated the solution of all the other problems.

In 1914 Russia had plenty of population, plenty of resources, although not well distributed, but it lacked capital, and it lacked industrial techniques. In spite of these handicaps, industry was developing rapidly. The rate of growth of Russian industry prior to 1914 was greater than at the corresponding period of American industrialization and in many ways was greater than that achieved by the Soviet regime in its industrialization. But
the industrialization was at the first stage when the new conditions of work weigh upon the peasants up-rooted from the villages. It was a period like the early industrial revolution in England, with its severe discipline, its repression of trade unions, and its accumulation of capital by the owners in order to finance this rapid expansion. It was not at all like the more “benevolent” and more mature type of capitalism with which we are familiar in our own generation and the last two generations in this country.

Russia then had a rapidly growing industry, but it had certain great handicaps. First of all, it had to be forced by the government. In Russia, the government accounted for more than half of the growth of industry, either directly or indirectly. Some great factories were built directly by the government and operated by it. Many more were built with government subsidies, or guarantee of loans on money borrowed abroad. In other cases contracts were given over a period of years in order to stimulate the growth of industry. In addition the government, of course, operated most of the railroad system and all of this great development had to be paid for out of the peasant standard of living in spite of the large-scale borrowings from abroad, especially from France. This meant that industry had not settled down, and the workers had not achieved a stable position in society. There was widespread discontent among the workers, and it was through that discontent that the initial nucleus of the Communist regime was created. In the revolution of 1917 this nucleus emerged victorious because it was able to control the cities and to win either the support or the neutrality of the peasants and in that way to establish control in the country.

One other factor, which proved to be important in the political strategy of Bolshevism, was the high degree of concentration of industry. This concentration was natural, because cap-
ital was scarce, because techniques had to be imported, and because the development was in such a large part, especially in heavy industry, under the guidance of the government. The tendency was to develop large enterprises. Actually, in 1913 Russia had more factories employing 1,000 men or more than the United States although the total American industrialization was at least six times more than the total Russian industrialization at that time.

Aside from the agrarian revolution and the industrial revolution, there was a third revolution which was taking place—the political revolution. Briefly, there were main forces; there was the force that supported the autocracy, which believed in strong and paternalistic rule from above and no discussion below, and this concept remained strong. It dominated the bureaucracy which ran the country until 1917, and led it into sharp conflict with the other two political forces.

There was a second political force represented by liberalism, by the ambition to develop along the lines of western democracy. This element was influential, but it was not strong numerically. It had not been able to integrate most of the peasants and workers into support of its program. It rested on a very thin layer of the population which was well informed about the western countries. Many educated Russians travelled abroad. In many ways educated people found it difficult to communicate with the ordinary worker and peasant. In a sense, they were in the same predicament as many Chinese intellectuals who had studied abroad for a great many years and who were unable to lead their own people on returning to China. In Russia there was something of the same problem of social and cultural distance between the intelligentsia, the educated group, with its western sympathies, and the ordinary people. This separation was marked also by a difference in dress, in manner, in way of life. The ordinary Russian is not a very
clean person; the intelligentsia prided itself on cleanliness. The intelligentsia wore western clothes, the peasants and many of the workers still wore traditional peasant dress. There was a difference in manner, in speech, in the way they thought, even in vocabulary. And the liberals were not able really to consolidate the headstart which they had in the beginning of the revolution in 1917.

The third element was the revolutionary force, those who rejected gradualism, who were just as much opposed to parliamentary and western democracy as were the supporters of the old regime, who wanted, in some form or another, some kind of dictatorship which would lead the country, not doing what the people wanted, but what the leaders “knew” was good for them. These revolutionary groups were not large. They were of course, the extreme wing of the intelligentsia and often received sympathy and support because they were leading a bitter fight against the old regime. Many of them led an heroic underground life, carrying on a guerrilla warfare against the police authorities of the state. Many of them suffered execution, exile to Siberia, loss of health and even life. They were professional revolutionaries, a type with which we are quite unfamiliar in this country. It was a special profession, living under false papers, bound by very tight bonds of solidarity within a small group, dreaming about the future and believing they had the recipe for changing every aspect of Russian life.

Among the groups of revolutionaries, there was a small group, an extreme wing of what was then called the “Social Democratic Party”, which became the Communist Party in 1918. This party emerged in control during the chaotic period following the breakdown of the old regime. In a sense Russia in 1917 was caught in mid-stream. There were promising developments toward dem-
ocracy of the type that we know. There had been a system of county self-government established gradually from the 1860's on, which had played a very great part in improving health, education and social services in the country. After 1906, there was a parliamentary body, the State Duma, which, however, was elected under rather a restricted suffrage and which was unable to dominate the government. It was engaged in a struggle from 1906 to 1917 to secure control over the bureaucracy. The bureaucracy was always engaged in fighting off these attempts, and neither side was strong enough to win. The czarist regime, having become relatively mild and almost liberal in its last years, did not wish to suppress these institutions of representative assembly of the Duma or the Zemstvo. On the other hand, they were not willing or not weak enough to surrender the power which they had, especially the power over the police and the armed forces.

If Russia had not been defeated in the war of 1914-1917, perhaps there would have been a gradual evolution. Perhaps the power of the Duma would have been strengthened. There might have been a gradual shift of control, and with the completion of the agrarian reform from above, mentioned earlier, a catastrophic revolution might have been avoided.

All of these contradictions were tied up together with the impact of the war. While the Russian army fought very bravely and suffered very severely from 1914 to 1917, it did not have a political understanding of the war. There was discipline, yes, but when that broke down there was not a common political ambition or platform to which you could appeal to secure voluntary obedience when the compelled obedience had disappeared in the revolution.

In a sense, the Czarist regime fell or disintegrated rather than being overthrown. Then there was a struggle between the liberal and democratic forces and the revolutionary ones. The
liberal elements were unable to end the war without breaking with the allies. They wanted to cooperate closely with France, England and the United States. Therefore they refused to consider withdrawing from the war in order to make a separate peace. On the other hand, they were not able to create a new army and find a new basis for political loyalty among the masses of soldiers and sailors who made up the armed forces. So they were caught. The shift, the revolution, came when the country was in mid-stream. They were beginning to develop habits of political discussion, party life, relatively free elections, and yet the new regime, the Communist regime, was the one which reverted to paternalism, to rule from above, in an autocratic manner.

As the leader of the revolution, Lenin, said in 1917, just before seizure of power, when he was asked by many of the doubting members of his own party, “Well, how can we keep power, we are only a little group, how can we rule Russia?” Lenin said, “Well, if the Czar could rule Russia with the help of a hundred thousand land owners serving as voluntary police chiefs, and rule it against the aspirations of the bulk of the people, certainly we can rule it with three hundred thousand members of the Communist party and rule it in accordance with the desires of the people.” So, in a sense what happened in 1917 was that the slow progress towards the democracy of the west was scrapped, not without a considerable fight, it is true. A new revolutionary paternalism took the place of the old autocratic paternalism and established a new authority which could hand down orders from above. The bulk of the people could find some comfort in obeying them whether they could fully understand them or not.

Now, in addition to these three principal revolutions, agrarian, industrial, political, there were three minor revolutions going on which I can group together under the heading of the cultural
revolution. In the cultural field, there was a great outreaching, certainly by the ordinary Russian people, for greater educational and other opportunities. In 1913 Russia was still more than 60% illiterate, but a large part of that was found among the older generation or among the village women, who were not accustomed to learning to read and write and did not see any need for it. The percentage of literacy in the younger generation was already much higher, and by the process of change from one generation to another, and in accordance with the plans for education which were under way at that time, Russia would have been a completely literate country probably around 1925 to 1930. In fact, literacy would have been achieved by these programs earlier than it was by the revolution, in spite of the Soviet claim that elimination of illiteracy has been one of the chief merits of the new regime.

Now, learning to read and write is not too much in itself. It is a question of what they are going to learn to read and write, and in what language. Was the cultural content to be a repetition of what had gone on in the old regime? Or was it to be reaching out for reforms, for political democracy, or social democracy? Here was part of the cultural problem: if you taught all the young peasants to read and write, they would probably get to reading revolutionary literature in a very short time, and their political loyalties would shift to either the liberals or the revolutionaries. So here was a first-class problem. What would you give them to read?

The second problem was-in what language? Russia, in 1914 as today, was inhabited up to 50% by Great Russians or by the Russians in the proper sense, among other numerous peoples. For instance, the Ukrainians number somewhere between 30 and 40 millions. And other peoples, such as the Poles, the Byelorussians, the Baltic peoples, the peoples of the Caucasus,—Armenians, Georgians, Azerbaijanian Turks,—and the peoples of Central Asia.
Russian nationality was dominant. Until 1914 it far out-shadowed the other Orthodox Slav elements, — the Byelorussians and Ukrainians, — while the Poles remained unassimilated by the Russians. On the other hand, the Mohammed peoples, — and we must remember that Russia is one of the largest Mohammedan countries, — were left pretty much to themselves, provided they obeyed the orders of the local officials.

If this cultural revolution took place in the Russian language and through its use would there be recognition in the other languages? Would there be recognition of the non-Russian languages and cultures, with the very real possibility that these peoples would then develop a real consciousness of their own languages, then of their literatures, then of their historic traditions, following the pattern of national survival as it has developed time and again throughout Europe. The old regime emphasized the Russian language and placed severe handicaps upon the development of the languages and cultures of the non-Russian peoples.

In the case of Poland, one of the most extreme cases, most of the secondary education, except for the Polish language and literature, had to be taught in Russian. So the Poles who had never heard Russian at home had to learn to write in schools and to write examinations and carry out class discussions in a foreign language. The University of Warsaw was almost completely Russian and was staffed by Russians. Ukrainian received no recognition at all. It was only after 1905 that little books of songs and poems could be published in Ukrainian.

So there was a strong tendency to emphasize Russian, to insist upon assimilation to the Russian culture and outlook, as a basis for becoming a first-class citizen in the Russian empire. However, except in the case of the Poles and the Finns, these separate nationalities had not created any political problem for Russia prior
to 1914. Just because the repression was so severe, it was effective. If you are severe enough you can be effective but it may lead to a terrific rebound. After 1917, however, the Russian Empire broke up, and many separate states were formed. Estonia, Latvia, Finland and Lithuania became independent. Poland, of course, became independent. Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan all became independent and were independent for several years. The most numerous non-Russian people, the Ukrainians, also formed a separate regime and, for some months were able to assert a separate existence. Actually aside from the Poles and the Finns, with their strong traditions, national separatism arose out of the Communist revolution and was a reaction of these outlying peoples with different cultural and religious traditions against the Soviet regime. As long as they had expected a democratic revolution with freedom of all kinds, there had been no really mass movement for separation except among Finns and Poles.

After the Soviet government had recognized in theory the right of every nationality to determine its own future, it turned around and reconquered as many as it could of these nationalities which had formerly been in the Russian empire. Between 1918 and 1925 it succeeded in conquering the Ukraine, half of Belorussia, the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Far Eastern Republic centered on Chita and Vladivostok. It was forced to acknowledge the separation of Poland, Finland and the Baltic States. In the case of the Baltic countries naval power was decisive in bringing power to bear to prevent Central Russia, seriously weakened at that time, from persisting in its efforts to reconquer the eastern shores of the Baltic.

The nationality problem, then, and the national revolution, — the question of the future relations between the Russians and the other peoples, — was a potential rather than an immediate
problem in 1914. It flared up prematurely, one might say, to an intense peak in 1917 because of the Communist revolution. It has become a much more difficult problem since that time.

Finally, the religious problem was a very real part of the cultural problem in 1914. The Orthodox Church, as a state church, had been very closely connected with the Tsarist government. It did not have the high degree of independent loyalty which churches may develop under a separation of church and state. It had weaknesses within its own organization. There were disreputable characters like Rasputin—who was not an official of the church, contrary to what the movies always show—who was able to exert a strong influence over the church administration and to build up a clique of his own to control it. There was a strong undercurrent of religious unrest in Russia. Russia had never gone through the Renaissance of 16th Century Western Europe, had never gone through the Protestant or Catholic reformation with its great tightening of spiritual and moral discipline which occurred in Central or Western Europe. It was a body for the carrying out of ritual, in very large part. The role of the Russian church in teaching the people was slight. As late as 1903 Pobedonostsev, the civilian head of the administration of the church, appointed by the Czar, sent out a circular, advising the priests not to preach because they were likely to make a great many mistakes, since they were not very well educated and were more likely to lead their flock into heresy than to enlighten them!

So there was a kind of spiritual and moral unrest too, in Russia. The Russian intellectuals were asking themselves “the eternal questions”, staying up all night to discuss them. What was their duty? Should they become revolutionaries? Should they work within the existing society? What could they do to help the people?
In 1914, Russia did not have any plans for dominating the world, contrary to many theories that are now put about which maintain that Russia has always tried to spread over the entire world. In 1914 Russia was one of six great powers in Europe, one of four great powers in the Far Eastern balance of power, and it operated through a system of alliances. In order to be strong it had a direct alliance with France and a potential one with England. It operated as one power factor within a balance of power which sometimes operated as a concert of Europe.

There was within Russian thought a Messianic strain, a feeling that Russia had a great message to bring to the world, but that was hardly ever carried into the field of practical politics in those days, as it is today. In fact the basic trend in Russia among the educated people was one of admiration for the West, of liking for its freedom and its development, and a strong desire to imitate it. Many of them perhaps had their eyes fixed so much on the West that they did not study the peculiarities of Russia closely enough and were not able to control the political forces which swept across it in 1917.

Since 1917, and its establishment through a seizure of power, the Soviet regime has gone through several great crises. The first of these was the political and military struggle for survival in war and intervention. The intervention was a very half-hearted affair. If carried out on a full-scale it could have been successful but the problems it would have created in the homelands of the intervening powers would have been very great too. In any case, the interests of England and France were more in weakening Russia, and the Soviet regime seemed likely to be a weak regime. Certainly it was very weak for the first fifteen years of its control. There was not really a strong determination,
except among individuals like Churchill, to overthrow the Soviet regime by outside intervention.

Within the country, the Soviet leaders were skillful in either winning the support of most of the workers and a large part of the peasantry or of neutralizing those who were not on their side, thus reducing the opposition to relatively small and divided groups. One of the techniques which they developed at that time, and have applied over and over ever since, is the technique of sharpening the conflict, of building up the extremes, trying to make sure that their extreme grows faster than the opposite extreme, trying to deny the capacity or right of any middle group to survive. This is a technique which they applied within Russia by saying that it was a choice between the Soviet regime or a return of police rule, landlord control of the peasants, control by the factory owners, in the old autocratic way. On that basis the Bolsheviks secured active support by a militant minority and passive tolerance of their rule by a great majority of the people.

At the same time of course, another technique which they used and have used over and over again is to promise those things which will bring immediate support even though they later reverse their pledges. In 1918 they were saying to the peasants, “We have given you the land. You have got the land, and the Soviet regime is the only one that can guarantee that you will keep it.” Then from 1929 to 1933 they took away the land again through collectivization. For them no political agreement is permanent, provided they can violate it to their own advantage and without risk of defeat. That was another technique which they developed very rapidly at that time and have used ever since.

A second crisis came from 1929 to 1937 in the field of industrialization. The Soviet government embarked upon a very
wide-scale industrialization. I have no time to go into details of that but it meant more than doubling industrial population and increasing industrial output roughly three times over in a very short period of years. Along with this was the question of the control over the peasantry. During these same years of industrialization, the government was engaged, from '29 to '33 in a bitter war against the peasantry in which the peasants were forced into the collective farm system. Over five million peasants were removed from their homes and sent into forced labor as "Kulaks". The name was applied in a very loose scale. Anyone who did not like collectivization could be put under that rubric and eliminated. This was a tremendous struggle. There were many thousands of casualties among the government as well as millions of casualties among their opponents, whether actual or potential.

Finally after 1941 the Soviet government was involved in the greatest war in history, fighting on its own soil, using a large part of its industrial and agricultural areas, and suffering great hardship and great losses of manpower. In the latter stages of the war it recovered all its territory and expanded its control over a large number of its neighboring peoples. In every case, except that of Yugoslavia, it first secured military dominance in the area. Then it established political control through the local Communist parties and then through political and economic control, it has pulled its satellites closer and closer to the Soviet pattern.

What are the factors which we have to watch in estimating Soviet strength and weakness? One factor is the complete centralization of control, exercised by a very small group at the top. This creates both strength and weakness. It has the strength to direct resources, skilled manpower, including administrators,
where it is most needed. I remember in 1943, during the period of the Moscow conference, I was complaining to one of the Soviet negotiators about the great slowness of replies to requests or proposals that had to be sent to Moscow, under the Soviet system of centralizing even minor decisions there. He said, "Mr. Molotov is busy building tanks all day until 11:00 at night and he deals with foreign policy after 11:00 at night. So that only a limited number of problems can be brought before him at any one time."

This high degree of centralization means that they can bring policy and strength to bear rapidly and with complete absence of responsibility to anyone outside a small group. On the other hand, it means that they face difficulties of control down the line. People further down the line report those things which will make it safe for them in order to avoid punishment and keep safe. It is like the old story of three banks in a small town, which moved the cash reserve from one bank to another just in time for it to be counted by the inspector. Soviet administrators have to survive. To do that they often have to deceive their own leaders in spite of the great risk which that brings. Then there is the inefficiency of over-centralization, but I haven't time to go into that detail.

The basic concept of Soviet control is found in the party line. At any given time there is a certain interpretation, a certain pressure toward a goal which is set from above. At a later time, that may shift to a somewhat different emphasis. It is only by a very careful study of slogans, editorials, speeches, that one can foreshadow the shifts which are about to occur or, in many cases, have already occurred, only to be made public after being tried out in secret first. Every member of the administration is required to know the line. One of the things which has been striking in negotiating with the Russians is that something which happens, let us say in Indonesia, may affect something that is going on in Austria, where it is all closely tied in. A shift sometimes occurs...
in a Soviet position by negotiating, and it isn’t until afterwards that you can figure out that it is in response to something that has happened anywhere else in another theatre. We tend to decentralize our problems and view each one on its merits. That is one of our difficulties in dealing with the Russians, because they are always trying to deal with it as a whole.

The “line” then is the ideological guide thrown out at any given time. There are three main channels through which the line is given at a time. One is through public statements, and those statements often follow experiments with initiating a new line. The second is through instructions given in party meetings by a system of party controls. Here the instructions are passed on to party members only at meetings. And the third channel is a system of circulating secret information and secret directives only to a top group which is estimated to run to about 3,000 people in Moscow and in the provinces.

The Russians themselves have had many jokes about the party line and the way it frequently shifts, changing its emphasis from the left to the right foot, so to speak. The ability to be with the “line” and to change with it is very important in the survival of Soviet administrators and leaders of all ranks.

The second factor of strength and weakness is in the forced industrialization which has been carried on throughout the 1930’s and has been renewed with even greater ruthlessness since the war. (I haven’t time to go into the details, Dr. Shimkin will want to take that up). But I want to point out that this has created great strength. After all, the Soviet Union was able, in spite of the loss of so much of its industrial territory, to produce its own tanks, most of its own planes, and a large amount of its other equipment during the war. It has certainly hung on to that equipment as well as a great amount of captured equipment, and has gone on
producing since the war on a considerable scale, although of course not in the same proportion as during the war, as far as we can judge.

There are many bottlenecks in the Soviet industrial system. It is like any wartime economy which is operating in full capacity, a shortage develops here in some specialized tool or some gauge, and production suffers. It requires great effort to assure a flow of raw materials, equipment and skilled manpower. The Soviet economy since 1928 has never had the sort of "gravy" which our economy has and which in 1939 to 1941 facilitated so greatly the transfer to wartime production. They are always operating right up to capacity. They have many breakdowns and losses because of that. They have not even approached the smooth, continuous operation which we consider essential to efficient operation.

Another factor is that this industrialization has been paid for right out of the blood and marrow of the people. The basic device by which it is paid for is the turn-over tax or sales tax. It seems incredible but the Russians pay a tax of 1800% on bread, 300% on eggs, 400% on sugar and corresponding sales taxes. Roughly the industrial investment of the government corresponds to the income from the sales tax plus income from sales under government monopolies like salt, liquor, matches and tobacco. So the people themselves are paying higher prices due to these high taxes for industrialization.

A third factor is that the main emphasis has been given to heavy industry, production of war material and machine tools. If you take a factor like steel for example, which rose from 6,000,000 metric tons in 1928 to 10,000,000 in 1932, 18,000,000 tons in 1940, and it is expected to reach 25,000,000 tons in 1950 and you compare that with cotton textiles, basic to the livelihood of the people, the output of cotton goods planned for 1950 is the same as
that achieved in 1932. Meanwhile the area and population of the country have grown greatly. Civilian equipment was not replenished at all during the war. Since the war it has been replenished at a very low rate. In other words, the whole emphasis is on heavy industry and this leads to great strain.

One of the main problems is the problem of discipline of labor. Labor is restless. The government has tried all kinds of devices. A worker who leaves his job without permission can be sentenced to three months in prison or six months work in his factory, paying 25% of his wages, small as they are, as a fine. A person who comes more than 20 minutes late for work three times over a period of time can be sentenced to continue to work at his job, deducting 25% from his wages. That sort of thing has not been tolerated for 100 years by American labor. Similar things occurred in many countries at the very beginning of the industrial revolution. The problem of low standard of living in Russia which is the basic factor in labor unrest, cannot be solved as long as the government insists upon devoting primary effort to heavy industry and war material.

The agricultural basis is weak. The collective farm system has achieved its political purpose. It has given the government control over the disposition of the crops, and it is effective in that way. It has led to some increase in the area of cultivation, much of it in sub-marginal land which should not have been brought under cultivation. It definitely has not raised the standard of living of the peasants. In fact, I believe it has lowered it somewhat, even compared with 1913. Soviet agriculture under its present system does not produce abundance of food and agricultural raw materials. During the war, despite the large reserves which were believed to have been accumulated, the Soviet Union had to depend in large part, on lend-lease food in order to supply critical elements in the armed forces and industry.
The nationality problem is another strength and yet weakness. The Soviet government has proclaimed the policy of developing cultures which are "national in form and socialist in content", — in other words, "Soviet" in content. The word "socialist" should not be given to the Soviet system, in my opinion, but should be reserved for the democratic Socialism of the West.

This development of the nationalities has, however, undergone a number of important shifts. After a period in the 1920's when the emphasis was on favoring the non-Russian nationalities and upon stimulating the development of their cultures, by the mid-1930's the shift came back to Russian culture. Emphasis was placed on Russian as a common language of the whole country, as well as of the armed forces, and as the language of the "leading" nationality within the Soviet state. In 1945, two weeks after V-E Day, Stalin made a special toast, saying, "I want to drink to the Russian people", — and he emphasized the word "Russian," "which has borne the main burden of the war."

There has been a very sharp shift back toward emphasis on the primacy of Russian culture and language. For instance in Georgia or Azerbaijan, a worker can become a foreman in a factory, studying in his own language, Georgian or Azerbaijani Turkish. But if he wants to become an engineer, he must learn Russian and must learn it well, in order to be able to absorb the education and in order to compete with Russian-speaking fellow-students for a chance at advanced training.

At the end of the war there were large groups of non-Russian Soviet people who refused to return to the Soviet Union. Many of them were returned by force. Among these groups were many Ukrainians, as well as people of other non-Russian groups. There were other peoples, of course, not to mention the intelligentsia of the Baltic States, which was quite unreconciled to being
under Soviet rule. It is clear that the Soviet promotion of the national languages and cultures, even under the severe limitation of conformity to Soviet ideas, has started a long train of evolution which may extend way beyond our times. Whether it will result in the development of a genuine federation of nationalities or whether the repulsion of the separate nationalities against Soviet rule will lead them at a critical moment to break away from Russia is a question which will require very careful study.

The Soviet Union develops cultural isolation and cultural autarchy as a means of emphasizing the deep separation of the Soviet from the non-Soviet world. This has certain weaknesses too. In the technical field they are very active, as we know, to our very great disadvantage, in securing every kind of information. In this country they are free to buy copies of every patent and copies of every technical magazine, while Soviet periodicals of the same type are now forbidden to be exported.

In the few remaining minutes I have only one or two more matters which I can call to your attention. One of these is the question whether the Soviet revolution was a Russian revolution or a world-wide revolution? The revolution came about in Russia because of many peculiar conditions, not duplicated exactly anywhere else, either in Europe or in Asia. There are many writers on the Soviet revolution who maintain that it was a “Russian” revolution. However, the Soviet leaders have always insisted that it was the beginning of a world-wide revolution. As soon as they were able they established a Communist international. When that was abolished in 1943, they had available considerable cadres of trained Communists, many of them with experience in Soviet administration, including both the intelligence and secret police systems and were able to operate through them and without the outward form of a universal or world-wide communist organization.
Even in 1928 when Stalin was hopeful of getting loans abroad and trying in every way to get foreign help, he stressed that the purpose of industrialization was to strengthen the Soviet Union so that it could fulfill its duty to assisting the triumph of Communism throughout the world.

The Soviet leaders assume that conflict between the Soviet and non-Soviet worlds is inevitable and continuous. But whether this conflict will take the form of a war-to-the death is left open. The Soviet leaders maneuver so that they can push hard in some sectors and play it soft in others, whereas we are inclined to be soft all over or hard all over. They do this in part, so that it cannot be said at any given time that they want to have an all-out conflict. We need to learn that. Apparently we have been either too soft with them, as I felt was the case during the war, or we are hard all along the line. Perhaps it would be more confusing to an antagonist if we would vary our own tactics more.

Another factor which is very important in a revolutionary technique is the combination of military and political factors, using one and then the other, and using military predominance to get control of political power by skillful use of each.

In the Soviet view of the world, the whole question of "getting along", of sitting down together, is quite irrelevant. Conflict is basic to life. They take a strictly material point of view and apply it to social and political life. They do not believe one can put conflict out of the way by simply agreeing to do so. And when people in our country say we should sit down and have a general settlement, or when Mr. Churchill, to my amazement, says we should "sit down" with Stalin and just settle things, they are unrealistic. Actually, because the Soviet leaders believe that conflict is inevitable, they are very much disappointed when something is given to them without having to struggle for it. I thought
after Yalta that the Russians were disappointed that the Far Eastern concessions were given to them without argument and without struggle. They must have gone away with the feeling that they might have gotten even more, and they probably blamed themselves for not having asked for even more. The psychology of making even a friendly concession in the expectation that goodwill will be created doesn’t work out with them. I do not know any time in our dealings with the Soviet Union when it has worked out.

We must learn to deal with the Soviet leadership on its own terms of reference, accepting, for practical purposes, the idea that conflict with our world is inherent in the whole nature of things. We have to conduct our part of that conflict in a much more effective and coordinated way than we have done. At any given time, it does not mean that the Soviet government has determined that war is inevitable. They have written a good deal since the war about “socialist encirclement” of capitalism, rather than “capitalist encirclement” of the Soviet State. The Soviet leaders will try to go on to encircle the democratic world, which they prefer to call the capitalist world. Our problem is to cope with that probably rather than a direct frontal attack.

In their reasoning about the nature of the conflict, the Soviet leaders differ in at least one respect from Hitler. Hitler felt time was working against him; that if he did not establish control of Europe within a limited time, it would be too late. The growth of Russia, the continued strength of the British Commonwealth, and so on, would make his aim impossible of achievement at a later time. Hitler had a rather tight time-schedule. I believe the Soviet leaders accept war as a distinct possibility, perhaps in the long run, a certainty. They would not hesitate to use it if they thought it would be effective in securing their aims. On the other hand I think they do not, from their own philosophy, feel
the immediate urge to use it within a limited time. From their point of view, the forces of dissolution of capitalism, especially in the colonial world, would be more effective than an early war in spreading the Soviet system, and, if given more time would perhaps work out to the Soviet goal without the losses and risks of a major war.

At any given time Soviet policy is based upon maximum and minimum aims. Those aims have to be watched whether we are looking at Asia, Europe, the Middle East or Africa.

That brings us to the three ways of trying to deal with Russia. Should we try to defeat Russia outright in the hope that that would simplify our problems? I think that fighting people generally feel that even a short war of that kind is much more costly in social, political and material ways than a long period of preparation for war in the hope of avoiding it, but of course I can’t speak for that.

The second way is by appeasement. I have already said that, from my own experience of spending some 2,000 hours negotiating with the Russians, as well as observing and discussing other negotiations, it is sometimes possible to work out individual adjustments here and there, but not to settle any of the major problems permanently. They always reappear because in the Soviet view each problem represents a contest for power. It goes on. Even though one side may wish it would not go on, it cannot be wished out of existence.

The other is the policy of containment. I believe that containment, intelligently and effectively applied, is our only hope. I am very glad that we are beginning to raise our military power, — our armed power in the broad sense, — to something approaching the level of the political commitments that we have undertaken.
since the war. I believe that containment alone is not enough, that there are elements of weakness within the Soviet regime or Soviet orbit which we should play upon to the maximum, by skillful psychological warfare, which, however, must be backed by a really well-thought-out political party.

It is possible that the Soviet regime will settle down and become more "livable with." We must remember that the Soviet regime is not very "livable with," even for the Soviet people. During the war, Soviet citizens told me quite frequently that they hoped things would be better after the war, that there would be a material improvement because of greater emphasis upon raising the standard of living rather than keeping it at a bare minimum for most of the people, so that there would be somewhat greater freedom for the individual even within an over-all political dictatorship. Even under an absolutism it is possible to have some freedom of discussion. It is not necessary to have a single official line in everything, including linguistics, (you may have noticed that Marshall Stalin has recently laid down the line even in linguistics, in which he is surely not an expert).

Now as one Soviet official of fairly high rank, and speaking in Russian and in confidence, said to me toward the end of the war, or rather before the shift which came in November 1944 toward a stiffened Soviet line towards the West, "Before the war the regime did not trust the people; now the people have saved the regime and the regime has got to trust the people." These hopes were shattered by the new tightening up which began in late 1944 and has continued since the war. Briefly, there was a reversion to emphasis upon dictatorship of the party in place of the wartime appeal to broadly patriotic and national sentiments. In foreign policy that shift was paralleled by the stiffening of the line, the gradual placing of the United States in the place formerly occupied by Hitler in the
Soviet concept, and by the renewed drive to capture all our “good” slogans of “Freedom — Democracy — Opportunity” and to claim those as Soviet monopolies.

The Soviet regime can, presumably become a “livable” regime. The rank-and-file of its officials live under a great strain, and a mis-step may lead to elimination and destruction of themselves and their families. If there should be a settling down in the Soviet regime, it would come through establishing clear lines of authority, so that an official, whether civilian or military, will know whether he is wrong or not, and what he is supposed to do. At present, he may be punished for something he did not do or punished for something that he thought he was not supposed to do, a very complicated system to live under. A process of settling down might lead from that to a system of defining a clearer status for the different groups of people. It would lead to a better standard of living, a lessened emphasis on capital goods industries and military industries.

I emphasize that at present I see no signs of such an evolution in the Soviet regime. I merely mention these possible lines of development which we should be alert to detect. If signs of an internal “settling down” should begin to appear, as a result of the postponement to an indefinite future of the desire to conquer Western Europe and to conquer the rest of Asia, it would be the most helpful sign in a long time of the Soviet leadership accepting limitations on their role and on their power. Such an evolution would make other peoples feel that the Soviet leaders were beginning to practice what they preach when they assert that different systems can co-exist in the same world.