



A decisive intelligence failure?
British intelligence on Soviet war potential and the 1939 Anglo-French-
Soviet alliance that never was

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Abstract: In 1939 the British Government tried to assess Soviet war potential in order to know more about their potential ally, as part of the negotiations concerning an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance. British assessments of Soviet economic and military strength (and the internal stability of the Stalin regime) in this context have partly been neglected in earlier research, and it seems both that British estimates were much more off the mark than earlier supposed, and that the gross underestimation of Soviet strength in 1939 was probably a major factor in the British reluctance to enter into an anti-Hitler coalition with the USSR.

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Introduction

The importance of having correct intelligence on the war potential of other nations is, of course, vital for any country in times of international conflict. In recent times the importance of intelligence on the war-making capabilities of other nations has been highlighted both by the prelude and aftermath to the Iraqi war, and, in a more general context, by the US and British war on terrorism. More than sixty years ago the Second World War ended in total victory for the Allied coalition over the Axis nations. The outcome of that war paved the way for the Cold War, a prolonged struggle between the West and the Communist block which involved many factors, political, ideological, military and economic, but also intelligence. Even though the intelligence efforts of the CIA and other Western Government agencies to estimate the economic and military strength of the Soviet Union took on a special importance during the Cold War, Western intelligence efforts to estimate the strength of the USSR were of importance even before the Second World War.

But, just as in the case of the 2003 Iraqi war, intelligence on adversaries may not always be correct, although it might play a decisive role for the motivation to go to war. The history of the Second World War involved some intelligence failures of even greater importance. Germany underestimated or dismissed the long-term capabilities of its most important adversaries in the first part of the war.¹ When Hitler and his generals planned the attack on the Soviet Union they were to a large extent guided by the perception that the USSR was a weak adversary, which would collapse soon after the initial battles. According to David Kahn this gross underestimate of Soviet strength was the most serious German intelligence failure during the war.² Instead of a Soviet collapse the Red Army recuperated, and then defeated and destroyed the bulk of all the German ground and air forces in the war during 1941-45.³ It will be argued below that Great Britain also made some serious mistakes regarding intelligence on the Soviet Union, which would ultimately affect the course of the Second World War. The purpose of this paper is to show that the British

¹ M.I. Handel, 'Intelligence and Military Operations' in M.I. Handel (ed.) *Intelligence and Military Operations* (London: Frank Cass, 1990) p. 84

² D. Kahn, *Hitler's Spies: German Military Intelligence in World War II* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1978) pp. 445-461

³ J. Ellis, *The World War II Databook: The Essential Facts and Figures for All the Combatants* (London: Aurum Press, 1993) pp. 229, 255; L. Samuelson, *Röd Koloss på Laryfötter: Rysslands Ekonomi i Skuggan av 1900-talskrigen* [Red Colossus on Caterpillar Treads: Russia's Economy in the Shadow of the Wars of the Twentieth Century] (Stockholm: SNS förlag, 1999) p. 262

Government's perceptions of the Soviet Union's economic and military strength in 1939 have been misinterpreted in earlier research to some extent, and that perceptions of Soviet strength must have been much more important for the British Government's decision not to enter into an alliance with the USSR than earlier assumed.

British Intelligence, Soviet war potential and the pact against Hitler

Before the start of German rearmament in the 1930s the USSR was a test case for foreign economic intelligence for the British Industrial Intelligence Centre.⁴ The very weakness of the Red Army after the Stalinist purges of 1937-38 contributed to the British feeling that a policy of appeasement towards Germany was the best course of action.⁵ During the spring of 1939 the British discussed the possibility of including the USSR in a common Anglo-French-Soviet alliance against Hitler.⁶ From a logical point of view, the addition of the Soviet Union to a British and French coalition against Germany would seem to be a clear advantage for the Western Powers. From a purely military standpoint the Red Army could at least divert some German resources from other theatres of war. After all, during the First World War the Imperial Russian Army engaged substantial German, Austro-Hungarian and Turkish forces for about three years before the Russian collapse in 1917.⁷ But for the British Government the question of an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance was anything but simple.

In March 1939 the British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and his Secretary of State Lord Halifax still hoped to reach an agreement with Hitler over the Polish question. Both Chamberlain and Halifax privately had a very negative attitude towards the USSR. In the British Parliament references were often made to the size of the Soviet Army and Air Force, and demands were made for an Anglo-Soviet agreement.⁸ British assessments of

⁴ W.K. Wark, *The Ultimate Enemy: British Intelligence and Nazi Germany, 1933-1939* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1985) p. 159

⁵ K. Neilson, 'Pursued by a Bear: British Estimates of Soviet Military Strength and Anglo-Soviet Relations', *Canadian Journal of History*, Volume XXVIII, August 1993, pp. 189, 192

⁶ L. Beloff, 'Was there a Soviet appeasement policy?' in W.J. Mommsen & L. Kettenacker (eds.) *The Fascist Challenge and the Policy of Appeasement* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1983) p. 284; K. Neilson, 'Pursued by a Bear: British Estimates of Soviet Military Strength and Anglo-Soviet Relations', *Canadian Journal of History*, Volume XXVIII, August 1993, p. 216

⁷ P.J. Haythornthwaite, *The World War One Source Book* (London: Arms and Armour, 1992) pp. 18-20, 22, 28-29, 35-37

⁸ B.H. Liddel Hart, *Andra Världskrigets Historia 1*. (English edn: *History of the Second World War*. London, 1970) (Stockholm: Natur och kultur, 1983) p. 24; J.S. Herndon, 'British perceptions of Soviet military capability, 1935-9.' in W.J. Mommsen & L. Kettenacker (eds.) *The Fascist Challenge and the Policy of Appeasement* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1983) pp. 297-319; A.W. Johansson, *Europas Krig* (The Wars of

Soviet military strength were a factor that played a part in the British attitude towards an alliance.⁹ Several British Government agencies were involved in rather detailed assessments of Soviet economic and military strength, including the internal stability of the country – among them the Military Intelligence, the Foreign Office, the Air Ministry, the War Office and the Chiefs of Staff.

Earlier research on British assessments of Soviet strength (J.S. Herndon (1983) and K. Neilson (1993)) suggests that the British believed that the Red Army was strong in defence.¹⁰ This is true, but it is also true that this state of affairs only referred to purely military capabilities, and not to the Soviet war potential in the broader spectrum, i.e. the capacity of the economy to support a large-scale war for a long time and the internal stability of the country. And even the military capability was not attributed to the high quality of Soviet troops, since it was scarcely believed that there was any high quality Soviet troops. According to one Foreign Office report from March 1939 – in its original form from the British Moscow Embassy – the quality of many Soviet aircraft was inferior, and the practical effectiveness of the air force was not seen as counting for much in operations against the Germans. In the same report the Red Army's tactical doctrines, command and administration were considered to be poor and inefficient. That the Red Army would do better in defence, relatively speaking, was emphasised in this report.¹¹ These views were more or less repeated in a later March report originating from the Moscow Embassy, to which the War Office agreed.¹² The same month, in a Foreign Office memorandum, containing an Air Ministry reply to a question from the Secretary of State regarding Soviet armed strength; the Soviet Air Force was described as inferior in several respects, although also considered to be a “strong deterrent to any country contemplating aggression”.¹³

Europe), (Kristianstad : Kristianstads boktr., 1991) pp. 272-273; J. Keegan, *The Times Atlas of the Second World War* (London : Times Books, 1989) pp. 30, 38; P. Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to the End* (Cambridge : Cambridge Univ. Press, 1999) p. 131

⁹ K. Neilson, 'Pursued by a Bear: British Estimates of Soviet Military Strength and Anglo-Soviet Relations', *Canadian Journal of History*, Volume XXVIII, August 1993; W.J. Mommsen & L. Kettenacker (eds.), *The Fascist Challenge and the Policy of Appeasement*. (London: Allen & Unwin, 1983)

¹⁰ K. Neilson, 'Pursued by a Bear: British Estimates of Soviet Military Strength and Anglo Soviet Relations', *Canadian Journal of History*, Volume XXVIII, August 1993; J.S. Herndon, 'British perceptions of Soviet military capability, 1935-9.' in W.J. Mommsen & L. Kettenacker (eds.) *The Fascist Challenge and the Policy of Appeasement*. (London: Allen & Unwin, 1983) pp. 297-319

¹¹ 6 March 1939, N1292/233/38, FO 371/23684 and FO 481/85, National Archives, Kew, London

¹² 16 March 1939, N1542/485/38, FO 371/23688, National Archives, Kew, London

¹³ 23 March 1939, N1572/1572/38, FO 371/23698, National Archives, Kew, London

In April the British Chiefs of Staff showed some admiration for the size of the Red Army, but its inherent weaknesses – shortage of experienced leaders, inferior training, a flawed command structure and obsolete aircraft – were analysed.¹⁴ Later in the month the Chiefs of Staff presented more or less the same picture to the Foreign Policy Committee in another report. The quality of Red Army equipment was considered to be inferior in the report.¹⁵ According to a British Military Intelligence report, commented on by the Foreign Office in May, the same problems existed in the Red Army as mentioned by the other British observers, and the Foreign Office concurred. The Military Intelligence Official also believed that the Red Army's offensive capabilities were almost as bad as those of the Imperial Army of 1914, but that it would prove to be a very tough opponent in defensive situations, especially when defending Soviet territory.¹⁶ The negative effects of the purges on Soviet military efficiency were a factor that was repeated in practically all the reports mentioned above, and others. As we can see the picture of Soviet military capabilities is somewhat mixed. There is no doubt that almost all observers regarded Soviet military efficiency as inferior in several respects, but that they also believed the Red Army could be useful in some, and especially defensive, situations. Although it can be said in general that the British had a somewhat gloomier outlook on Soviet military capabilities than is revealed by Neilson and Herndon, so far earlier research makes sense, although both Herndon and Neilson omit the military-economic perspective to a large extent in their analysis, and how British observers viewed the internal social and political situation in the USSR.¹⁷

According to a Foreign Office report from March 1939 it was considered “doubtful” whether the USSR “could stand up long to the strain of war”. The War Office, which agreed and commented on the report, also believed that there was considerable discontent among the workers and peasants in (the Western parts of) the USSR.¹⁸ In their reporting from April the Chiefs of Staff believed that the Soviets would have considerable difficulties in supplying large forces in the field, due to inadequate reserves and defective

¹⁴ 19 April 1939, COS 881 (J.P.), CAB 53/48, National Archives, Kew, London

¹⁵ 24 April 1939, COS 887, CAB 53/48, National Archives, Kew, London

¹⁶ 18 May 1939, N 2572/485/38, FO 371/23688, National Archives, Kew, London

¹⁷ J.S. Herndon, 'British perceptions of Soviet military capability, 1935-9.' in W.J. Mommsen & L. Kettenacker (eds.) *The Fascist Challenge and the Policy of Appeasement*. (London: Allen & Unwin, 1983) pp. 297-319; K. Neilson, 'Pursued by a Bear: British Estimates of Soviet Military Strength and Anglo-Soviet Relations', *Canadian Journal of History*, Volume XXVIII, August 1993

¹⁸ 16 March 1939, N1542/485/38, FO 371/23688, National Archives, Kew, London

communications.¹⁹ What is maybe more telling, in a direct fashion, is the fact that several reports took the position that the Soviets would be unable to increase their production to meet wartime demands. The Moscow embassy reported home at the beginning of March that this was due to an ongoing lowering of labour productivity, lack of technical skills, poor planning, and frequent changes of personnel in higher factory management. Added to this came the purges of industrial personnel. Even though the defence industry was regarded as a sector of priority, transport problems and the lack of skilled labour would hamper its capacity. The embassy's Commercial Secretary stated: "[the] defence industry is no doubt working to full capacity already, and it is difficult to see how production can still be further speeded up in view of the lack of skilled personnel". Additional problems of the Soviet economy were mentioned in the report, and it was believed that the population of the country even during peacetime was living on "subsistence level". Other members of the Moscow embassy emphasized that the strain of war would be too much for the USSR, and that the transport system would not be able to deliver supplies satisfactorily to the air force in the field.²⁰ Other reports, referring to the weakness of Soviet industry and its inability to provide its armed forces, its population, or both, with the necessary supplies and materials during war were produced by the Moscow embassy, the Foreign Office and the Chiefs of Staff during March and April.²¹

The Chiefs of Staff were very sceptical as to the ability of the Soviet economy to sustain a prolonged war effort, in two reports from April 1939. At first large forces could be supported in the field – 100 divisions and possibly more in the event of total industrial mobilization – but this would not last since the industrial base would not be adequate to maintain these large forces for any longer period of time. Industrial production could not be increased in the event of an emergency, according to the Chiefs of Staff, and it was not likely that the aircraft industry could increase its production during war. The inadequacy and inefficiency of industry were emphasized in the reports.²² These industrial problems, in combination with the perceived deficiencies of the railway system, were seen as working

¹⁹ 24 April 1939, COS 887, CAB 53/48, National Archives, Kew, London

²⁰ 6 March 1939, N1292/233/38, FO 371/23684 and FO 481/85, National Archives, Kew, London; 7 December 1939, N181/181/38, FO 371/24851, National Archives, Kew, London

²¹ 16 March 1939, N1542/485/38, FO 371/23688, National Archives, Kew, London; 23 March 1939, N1572/1572/38, FO 371/23698, National Archives, Kew, London; 4 April 1939, N1869/1572/38, FO 371/23698, National Archives, Kew, London; 19 April 1939, COS881 (J.P.), CAB 53/48, National Archives, Kew, London; 24 April 1939, COS887, CAB 53/48, National Archives, Kew, London

²² 19 April 1939, COS881 (J.P.), CAB 53/48, National Archives, Kew, London; 24 April 1939, COS887, CAB 53/48, National Archives, Kew, London

against the functioning of a sound economic foundation for the armed forces. Soviet communications were not considered to be adequate for the purpose of transporting large masses of troops. One problem described was the constant repair of railway facilities, and another was the fact that the COS believed that there was no organization in place for the supply of troops operating beyond the western border of the USSR. The transportation system was thought adequate for the mobilization of the army during the first weeks of a war, but that this would have serious repercussions on the economy. After two to three weeks the leadership would be forced to break off the military mobilization, in order to avoid "a complete breakdown in industry and national life." After a few weeks of war the Government would find itself in a situation where it could possibly supply its troops along the western border of the USSR with the supplies needed, but only at the expense of a considerable fall in the production of war materials. As a matter of fact, the Chiefs of Staff did not believe that the economy could deliver more war supplies to the western border than would be sufficient to maintain 30 field divisions.²³

In reality the Soviets were able to mobilize and support a much larger number of divisions in the field when war broke out in June 1941. The peacetime strength of the Red Army had increased from about 1.5 million men in 1938 to nearly 5.4 million men in June 1941.²⁴ As for the 1939 size of the Red Army the British estimates were quite accurate, or even slightly above actual strength.²⁵ But the Chief of Staff assessments regarding the wartime scenario can hardly be considered accurate, considering that the Soviet Union proved capable of mobilising 194 divisions in addition to 84 separate brigades from the start of the war up to 1 December 1941. After that date an additional 86 rifle brigades were formed up to early 1942. During the first eight months of the war more than 10 million men were mobilized.²⁶ This mobilization effort was accomplished at the same time as an ongoing full-scale enemy invasion, while substantial parts of Soviet industry alongside

²³ 24 April 1939, COS887, CAB 53/48, National Archives, Kew, London

²⁴ D.M. Glantz, *Stumbling Colossus: the Red Army on the Eve of World War* (Lawrence, KS, University Press of Kansas, 1998) pp. 9, 24

²⁵ 6 March 1939, N 1292/233/38, FO 371/23684 and FO 481/85, National Archives, Kew, London; 16 March 1939, N 1542/485/38, FO 371/23688, National Archives, Kew, London; 20 March 1939, N 1602/485/38, FO 371/23688, National Archives, Kew, London

²⁶ D.M. Glantz & J.M. House, *When Titans Clashed: How the Red Army Stopped Hitler* (Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd, 2000) pp. 63, 68

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millions of people were evacuated eastwards, and while the production of munitions was being increased several times.²⁷

According to the earlier mentioned British Military Intelligence Official, a Major Kirkman of the MI2, the USSR had some advantages in her military-economic position, despite the notion that the purges had affected industry as badly as the armed forces. The advantage of being almost self-sufficient in raw materials was one of those. The world's largest permanent armament industry was another advantage. In addition, the heavy industries were considered to be out of range of enemy bombing. Apart from the 9,000 tanks possessed by the Red Army it was believed that the armament industries could turn out 1,500 tanks per year. He also considered that the armament industries had a capacity adequate to turn out equipment to support 30 divisions (unspecified which divisions) during wartime conditions. The quality of the material manufactured was believed to be "quite good" when first produced, but with a short life span. Even though civilian industry was described as being ready for conversion to the production of armaments in war, it was not believed that the existing armament industries could increase their production during war. Kirkman believed that the efforts to mobilize industry were just good on paper, but that they could not be realized to their full extent due to problems of organisation, administration, transportation and the "human element". The railways were considered to be inefficient and the road net inadequate, as well as the country's total truck fleet. Apparently the Foreign Office believed that Kirkman's opinions were nothing new to them. His opinions were expressed at the Imperial Defence College, before reaching the FO as a paper.²⁸

From Kirkman's assessment it is obvious that although some advantages were identified with the Soviet military-economic position, the Soviet ability to mobilize troops and produce military equipment was grossly underestimated. The actual Soviet production of tanks in 1938 and 1939 was 2,271 and 2,950 units respectively, not to mention the almost 24,500 tanks the USSR produced during the war year of 1942 from a seriously crippled

²⁷ M. Harrison, *Soviet Planning in Peace and War, 1938-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) pp. 63-79; M. Harrison, *Accounting for War: Soviet Production, Employment, and the Defence Burden, 1940-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) pp. 180, 190-191

²⁸ 18 May 1939, N 2572/485/38, FO 371/23688, National Archives, Kew, London

industrial base (due to the huge losses of economic assets in 1941).²⁹ The last figure is especially interesting, since the British observers emphasized that it would be very hard, if not impossible, for the Soviets to increase production of war materiel when war broke out. The actual production of other Soviet munitions also increased at a very rapid pace during 1941-42, and continued to increase, although at a slower pace, in 1943 and 1944.³⁰ The actual Red Army tank strength in 1938 and 1939 was probably much larger than the 9,000 estimated by Major Kirkman. Estimates from the Moscow embassy in March put Soviet tank strength at 9,000 and 9,800 respectively.³¹ The total Soviet tank strength at the time of the German attack in June 1941 was 22,600.³² Already, by January 1933 the Red Army had 10,000 tanks, tankettes and other armoured vehicles at its disposal.³³ The total production of tanks during 1933-37 was nearly 16,500 units³⁴, and, as we have seen above, the 1938-39 production was over 5,200 units. These figures indicate that actual Soviet tank strength in 1938 and 1939 was well above the British estimates. In April the Chiefs of Staff estimated that the Red Army had 9,000 tanks and that these were thought to have light armour, even if in general they were considered to be of high quality. But it was also assumed that they had no defence against a modern and efficient anti-tank defence. The equipment of the Red Army in general was described in the following manner: "The equipment of this army is more noteworthy for its quantity rather than its quality." The opinion on the artillery was that it had low firepower and consisted mostly of old pieces.³⁵ As for the actual quality of Soviet tanks in 1939 it is hard to make a fair evaluation. The production of the modern and superior T-34 and KV medium and heavy tanks models was just being started in 1939. Although they had better armour, firepower and speed than any German tanks in 1941

²⁹ M. Harrison, *Soviet Planning in Peace and War, 1938-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) pp. 81-84, 250; R. Overy, *The Dictators: Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia* (London: Allen Lane, 2004) p. 498

³⁰ M. Harrison, *Accounting for War: Soviet Production, Employment, and the Defence Burden, 1940-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) p. 187

³¹ 6 March 1939, N1292/233/38, FO 371/23684 and FO 481/85, National Archives, Kew, London; 16 March 1939, N 1542/485/38, FO 371/23688, National Archives, Kew, London

³² D.M. Glantz & J.M. House, *When Titans Clashed: How the Red Army Stopped Hitler* (Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd, 2000) p. 306

³³ L. Samuelson, *Röd Koloss på Laryfötter: Rysslands Ekonomi i Skuggan av 1900-talskrigen* [Red Colossus on Caterpillar Treads: Russia's Economy in the Shadow of the Wars of the Twentieth Century] (Stockholm: SNS förlag, 1999) pp. 182

³⁴ M. Harrison, *Soviet Planning in Peace and War, 1938-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) p. 250

³⁵ The number of artillery pieces in every division was estimated at 36, but it was also noted that this number would increase in the future. 24 April 1939, COS887, CAB 53/48, National Archives, Kew, London

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they were not part of the Soviet tank force in 1939. But the fact is that even the older Soviet light tanks were better than their German counterparts, at least with regard to armour and firepower.³⁶

The Soviet air strength was also underestimated. On June 1941 the Soviet Armed Forces had nearly 21,000 aircraft at their disposal.³⁷ In January 1933 the Soviets had 5,000 military aircraft.³⁸ Total production of military aircraft during 1933-37 amounted to nearly 16,800 units, and the 1938 and 1939 production was 5,467 and 10,382 units respectively.³⁹ Marshal Zhukov stated in his memoirs that between January 1939 and 22 June 1941 the Red Army received 17,745 combat planes, of which 3,719 were of the latest types.⁴⁰ These figures indicate that Soviet military aircraft were regularly upgraded in quality, but they also indicate that Soviet air strength in 1939 ought to have been closer to the June 1941 figure than the January 1933 figure. But most British estimates showed a different picture. In March 1939 the Moscow embassy estimated that the Soviets had four to five thousand first line aircraft at their disposal, most of them outdated.⁴¹ A FO memorandum from March, containing the Air Ministry reply to a Foreign Secretary request for an evaluation of Soviet armed strength, concerned the strength and efficiency of the air force. The total number of aircraft available to the Red Army was estimated at 4,281, about two thirds being various types of bombers, and most of the rest fighters. In contrast to the fighters, which were believed to be relatively modern, many of the bombers were considered obsolete.⁴² In April the Chiefs of Staff estimated the size of the air force at 4,387 aircraft, of which 1,324 were classified as fighters, 1,206 as long-range bombers, 1,656 as either bombers, ground-attack or reconnaissance planes, and 201 as flying boats. Most of the bombers were regarded as

³⁶ R.W. Davies, 'Industry' in R.W. Davies, M. Harrison & S.G. Wheatcroft (eds.) *The Economic Transformation of the Soviet Union, 1913-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) p. 146; A. Clark, *Barbarossa: the Russian-German conflict, 1941-1945* (New York: William Morrow, 1965) pp. 21, 29; D.M. Glantz, *Stumbling Colossus: the Red Army on the Eve of World War* (Lawrence, KS, University Press of Kansas, 1998) p. 119

³⁷ D.M. Glantz, *Stumbling Colossus: the Red Army on the Eve of World War* (Lawrence, KS, University Press of Kansas, 1998) p. 21

³⁸ L. Samuelson, *Röd Koloss på Laryfötter: Rysslands Ekonomi i Skuggan av 1900-talskrigen* [Red Colossus on Caterpillar Treads: Russia's Economy in the Shadow of the Wars of the Twentieth Century] (Stockholm: SNS förlag, 1999) p. 182

³⁹ M. Harrison, *Soviet Planning in Peace and War, 1938-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) p. 250

⁴⁰ K.R. Whiting, 'Soviet Aviation and Air Power under Stalin' in R. Higham & J.W. Kipp (eds.), *Soviet Aviation and Air Power: a Historical View* (Boulder, Calif., 1978) p. 66

⁴¹ 6 March 1939, N1292/233/38, FO 371/23684 and FO 481/85, National Archives, Kew, London

⁴² 23 March 1939, N1572/1572/38, FO 371/23698, National Archives, Kew, London

outdated and very slow, even if it was considered that they had some advantages in long range and were usable for night bombing. The fighter planes were described as relatively modern, but not in comparison with British or German fighters. The reserves were estimated at about 50% of the first line strength, which would then add up to a total air strength of 7,180.⁴³ As for the alleged inferior quality of Soviet aircraft as compared to Western standards it seems that the British were rather accurate in their estimates.⁴⁴

The underestimate of Soviet tank and to some extent air strength implies not only that the British believed that the strength of the Red Army was lower than it actually was, but also that the economic capacity to maintain and/or produce large amounts of munitions was underestimated. The sources do not reveal whether or not the British actually believed that all aircraft and tanks were ready for action more or less immediately, or if, for example, there were many items under repair in their estimates, but there seems to be no doubt that they actually did believe that their assessments included all the physically available tanks and aircraft in the Soviet Armed Forces. This implies that the Soviet production capability was underestimated, not just regarding tanks (see the Kirkman estimate above), but also with regard to aircraft. But there is also an objection to this notion, since the British actually could have believed that the Soviets were taking more obsolete aircraft out of active service than they actually did. Despite this it seems more likely, considering all the circumstances, that aircraft production was underestimated.

Furthermore, the internal stability of the USSR was not considered as being a factor supportive of either the economic or military capabilities of the country in the event of war. The impression obtained from the Moscow embassy's annual economic report on the USSR of April 1939 was one of economic inefficiency, and an industrial structure still suffering from the purges. Industry was showing decreasing labour productivity, unsatisfactory results and a shortage of skilled labour. The collectivized farmers were believed to be expressing discontent, and the living conditions of the workers were one reason given for decreasing labour productivity.⁴⁵ But the Moscow ambassador himself,

⁴³ 19 April 1939, COS881 (J.P.), CAB 53/48, National Archives, Kew, London

⁴⁴ D.M. Glantz, *Stumbling Colossus: the Red Army on the Eve of World War* (Lawrence, KS, University Press of Kansas, 1998) pp. 187, 193; W. Koenig & P. Scofield, *Soviet Military Power* (London: Bison Books Ltd., 1983) p. 102; K.R. Whiting, 'Soviet Aviation and Air Power under Stalin' in R. Higham & J.W. Kipp (eds.), *Soviet Aviation and Air Power: a Historical View* (Boulder, Calif., 1978) p. 66; I.V. Hogg, 'Soviet Air Power' in S.L. Mayer (ed.), *The Russian War Machine 1917-1945* (London: Bison Books Ltd., 1977) pp. 166-167

⁴⁵ 15 April 1939, N 2035/2035/38, FO 371/23698, National Archives, Kew, London

expressing his opinions in a memorandum transmitted to the FO in March, concerning the stability of the regime, argued: “the Soviet regime is as firmly established as any regime can reasonably expect to be”. Although he considered that the internal situation might be problematic in the event of an offensive or longer war, there were great differences as compared with Tsarist Russia. The new regime possessed “a stronger moral stamina”, despite the fact that he considered that there existed “a certain inborn inefficiency”. Strengthening his opinion that the regime had greater stability than the old, he also thought that the ruthlessness and total control of the regime over the population contributed to this state of affairs. But he also spotted some enthusiasm for the new regime and better general education, which in turn made people more recipient to propaganda. Another embassy official, who had prepared the memorandum’s political section, did not anticipate any “political upheaval” in the USSR, apart from in the event of war or economic collapse. The passivity of the population, the totalitarian style of government, the lack of alternatives and understanding of the outside world on the part of the population were reasons for this. He claimed to represent the embassy as a whole on this viewpoint.⁴⁶

In April Ian Fleming (the creator of James Bond, who, in the spring of 1939, officially visited the USSR on behalf of *The Times* and unofficially for the Foreign Office) commented upon a memorandum written by a recent visitor to the USSR.⁴⁷ He sent the memorandum to the Foreign Office. The memorandum painted a rather bright picture of the strength, morale and efficiency of the Red Army as compared with other British accounts. The ability of the civilian society to withstand the strain of war was considered good, but the ability of industry to supply the armed forces with war material in the event of a large and prolonged military conflict were not seen as good. Fleming believed that the memorandum was too optimistic with respect to the probability of internal revolution in the event of war. He believed that there was “considerable latent unrest” in the USSR. The political direction of the Red Army could result in the murder of political commissars in wartime, which in turn could spark internal trouble on a grand scale.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ 6 March 1939, N1292/233/38, FO 371/23684 and FO 481/85, National Archives, Kew, London

⁴⁷ 18, 19, 21 April 1939, The memorandum “Russia’s Strength” with various supplementary letters, FO 371/23688, National Archives, Kew, London compared to J. Pearson, *The Life of Ian Fleming*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1966) pp. 86-88

⁴⁸ 18, 19, 21 April 1939, The memorandum “Russia’s Strength” with various supplementary letters, FO 371/23688, National Archives, Kew, London

The Kirkman paper from May also shed some light on perceptions of internal stability. In this respect the purges of 1936-38 were seen as a stabilizing factor. Kirkman stated that according to "competent observers" Stalin's regime was in a "considerable stronger position" than the Tsarist regime in 1914. As to the efficiency of the higher administrative and organisational circles of the Government the judgement was more ambiguous. Also with reference to this, the "ruthless and despotic" nature of the Government was seen as an advantage, as was the notion that it had "permanent organisations" responsible for the preparation and conduct of war. The readiness for war was seen as a considerable improvement over the situation in 1914, but nevertheless Kirkman considered this readiness to be something of a paper tiger. He wrote: "on the other hand, it [the organisation for war] also depends for its working on the human element; and time alone will show whether the Soviet system is really succeeding in eradicating those inherent defects in the Russian character such as irresponsibility, lack of initiative, and an absence of administrative ability. There seems, at present little indication that much progress in this direction has been made, and the purge has probably accentuated rather than cured them."⁴⁹

From this evidence it seems as though many British observers believed that the Soviet regime was firm in the saddle at the moment, *but if* the situation should worsen, e.g. in the event of *war*, there would be serious trouble from the regime's perspective. This notion, in combination with what we know of British assessments regarding Soviet economic strength, especially when this strength was related to military capabilities, clearly indicates that British Government observers did not think much of the Soviet ability to perform with success during a protracted and large scale military conflict. Perhaps the Chiefs Of Staff made the most revealing assessments in April (see above) when they stated that the transportation system was considered sufficient for the mobilization of the army during the first weeks of a war, but that this would have serious repercussions on the rest of the economy. After two to three weeks the Soviet leadership would be forced to break off military mobilization, in order to avoid "a complete breakdown in industry and national life." After a few weeks of war the Soviet Government would find themselves in a situation where they could possibly supply their troops along the western border of the USSR with the needed supplies, but only at the expense of a considerable fall in the production of war

⁴⁹ 18 May 1939, N2572/485/38, FO 371/23688, National Archives, Kew, London

materials. As a matter of fact, the COS did not believe that the Soviet economy could deliver more war supplies to the western border than would be sufficient to maintain 30 field divisions. This can be compared with British intelligence estimates on German military and economic capabilities. In late July 1939 the War Office and the Industrial Intelligence Centre estimated that the total size of the German Army in the event of war would be between 121 and 130 divisions, i.e. more than the actual strength (103 divisions, including 5 armoured divisions) at the outbreak of war in September. It also seems that the British overestimated German Air Force strength somewhat in 1939.⁵⁰ There is no indication that the British believed that the Germans would be unable to supply all their divisions in the field, or that German mobilisation would bring about a national economic collapse.⁵¹ The Ministry of Economic Warfare believed in 1939 that the German production of fighter aircraft, bombers and tanks were 180, 200 and 225 percent respectively of the actual production of these items.⁵² It is therefore not surprising that the British officials who actually took part and analysed these intelligence reports on Soviet (and German) strength, were very sceptical as to the Soviet ability to give any serious contribution (relatively speaking) to a war effort against Germany.

Another obvious and very revealing underestimate of Soviet economic strength was the notion that the Soviet economy would be unable to increase its production of war materials during wartime. This means, for example, that the Kirkman estimate from May concerning the Soviet ability to produce 1,500 tanks per year also was the estimated wartime annual production figure. Quite apart from the fact that this was a tremendous underestimate in itself (see above) it was also not much compared with the wartime production figures of the other great powers. The average annual production of tanks and self-propelled guns for the predominately sea and air power United Kingdom during 1940-44 was almost 5,400 units. Germany produced more than 8,200 units of the same calculated as an annual average during 1940-44.⁵³

⁵⁰ W.K. Wark, *The Ultimate Enemy: British Intelligence and Nazi Germany, 1933-1939* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1985) pp. 111, 244, 248

⁵¹ W.K. Wark, *The Ultimate Enemy: British Intelligence and Nazi Germany, 1933-1939* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1985) pp. 110-123

⁵² B. Klein, *Germany's economic preparations for war* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1959) pp. 101-102

⁵³ M. Harrison, 'The economics of World War II: an overview' in M. Harrison (ed.), *The Economics of World War II: Six Great Powers in International Comparison* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) pp. 15-16

Neilson, and also Herndon, argue that perceptions of Soviet military strength had very little to do with the failure of the negotiations surrounding a possible pact against Hitler, but that these failed largely for political reasons. But their conclusion in this respect is also based on the assumption that the British believed essentially that the Red Army was rather strong in defence.⁵⁴ The discussion above seems to suggest that the total intelligence picture available showed a Red Army that was very weak for several reasons – even in defence – but mainly due to the assumed inability of the economy to provide the Red Army with its needed supplies for waging war. Besides, even if the British believed that the Soviets were reasonably strong in defence of their own country, a view, for example, clearly expressed by the British military attaché in Moscow, Colonel Firebrace, the question was whether or not the Soviets could contribute to a military scenario largely taking place outside own borders, i.e. in their support of Poland and possibly also Romania.⁵⁵ Niedhart argues that British assessments of Soviet military-economic strength really carried some weight in Whitehall in the spring and summer of 1939. He also more correctly analyses the British perceptions of Soviet military and economic weaknesses, although he does not go into detail. From Niedhart's arguments one can only assume that the supposed weakness of the USSR reinforced the British negative attitude towards her, which in turn made them more reluctant to enter into an alliance with the Soviet Union against Germany.⁵⁶

As for the reluctance of the British to see the value of the USSR as an ally alongside Poland, supporting the Polish war effort, there is also an economic explanation that is relevant. The USSR, among other nations, was regarded as a potential supplier of armaments to Poland. The Industrial Intelligence Centre had produced a report on this subject in May 1939, in which it was concluded that the USSR in fact had a "relatively large manufacturing capacity", and large stocks of armaments, but that she would need both her stocks and her manufacturing capacity for her own armed forces if she was engaged in active large scale operations. The Joint Intelligence Committee noticed the report and also wondered on behalf of the Minister for Co-ordination of Defence, if actual supplies could

⁵⁴ K. Neilson, 'Pursued by a Bear: British Estimates of Soviet Military Strength and Anglo-Soviet Relations', *Canadian Journal of History*, Volume XXVIII, August 1993, pp. 189-221; Herndon 1983 pp. 311-312

⁵⁵ K. Neilson, 'Pursued by a Bear: British Estimates of Soviet Military Strength and Anglo-Soviet Relations', *Canadian Journal of History*, Volume XXVIII, August 1993, pp. 218

⁵⁶ G. Niedhart, 'British attitudes and policies towards the Soviet Union and international communism, 1933-9' in W.J. Mommsen & L. Kettenacker (eds.) *The Fascist Challenge and the Policy of Appeasement* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1983) pp. 292-293

really be delivered to Poland due to the inefficiency of the transport system.⁵⁷ The inefficient state of transport was also mentioned in connection with a Joint Intelligence Committee meeting on 18 May 1939, again regarding the Soviet ability to supply Poland with arms in the event of war with Germany.⁵⁸ The problem of transport was also touched upon in the Joint Planning Sub-Committee (a sub-committee to the Committee of Imperial Defence) paper JP 529, where it was described as "one of the principal limiting factors in Russian development and trade".⁵⁹

Of course, there is no doubt that the British had several reasons not to enter into a military alliance with the USSR, but since Soviet military strength was actually studied by British decision makers it must have made some impact on their final decisions. We have seen that the Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax even requested to see military attaché reports regarding Soviet strength in March 1939. According to Herndon, Chamberlain and other high-ranking British officials were contemplating assessments of Soviet military strength in the spring and summer of 1939. Neilson states that "a proper evaluation of Soviet military strength was [important] for British policy makers." Both the Chiefs Of Staff and Sir Samuel Hoare of the FO, were in favour of making a deal with the Soviets in March, but political reasons hindered this. The Chiefs Of Staff continued to support an alliance, as did other members of the Cabinet Committee on Foreign Policy. But Chamberlain and Halifax were against it. Halifax argued that Poland and Romania (whose territory was to be defended) would oppose an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance. The reluctance of the Polish Government to agree to Soviet military assistance was the foremost problem the British would have when trying to make a deal with the Soviets. The British also doubted the reliability (as opposed to the notion of capability) of the USSR as an ally.⁶⁰ Purely political considerations such as the reluctance to make an alliance with the dictatorial government of the Bolsheviks must also have entered the minds of many British policy makers.

But the essential conclusion to be derived from the archival sources in this context is that, even though the British really had political objections and definitely did not believe

⁵⁷ 18 May 1939, JIC 99, CAB 56/4, National Archives, Kew, London; 14 May 1939, ICF/1176, CAB 56/4, National Archives, Kew, London

⁵⁸ 18 May 1939, JIC 26th Mtg., CAB 56/1, National Archives, Kew, London

⁵⁹ The JP was a sub-committee to the CID. 26 August 1939, C12194/281/17, FO 371/22925, National Archives, Kew, London

⁶⁰ J.S. Herndon, 'British perceptions of Soviet military capability, 1935-9.' in W.J. Mommsen & L. Kettenacker (eds.) *The Fascist Challenge and the Policy of Appeasement*. (London: Allen & Unwin, 1983) pp. 309-311; K. Neilson, 'Pursued by a Bear: British Estimates of Soviet Military Strength and Anglo-Soviet Relations' in *Canadian Journal of History*, Volume XXVIII, August 1993, p. 216

that the USSR was militarily strong, the British Government was supplied with intelligence that pointed to the Soviet Union being much weaker than was earlier supposed by Herndon and Nielsen. Considering just how weak the British believed the Red Army (and its economic support) to be, *in contrast* to Herndon's concluding statement (regarding British perceptions of Soviet military capabilities) is telling: "Succinctly expressed, the Red Army was expected to prove a dangerous opponent to an invader, but less formidable offensively."⁶¹ That perceived fact alone ought to have deterred the British from putting any trust in a military alliance with the USSR. Therefore, relatively speaking, it is possible to upgrade the importance of British assessments of Soviet military-economic strength as a factor in the failure to establish an Anglo-French-Soviet pact in 1939 to contain German aggression.

Neilson also concentrates primarily on the military aspects of the British assessments of Soviet military strength, and fails to take sufficient account of the economic aspects of their assessments. On the other hand he points to the fact that the Chiefs of Staff, Lord Chatfield (the Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence) and even Chamberlain had more or less the same picture of Soviet military strength in May 1939, and that there was nothing in that analysis (at least) that hindered the first two from recommending an alliance. As we have seen above many British officials were hopeful of an alliance. But Chamberlain and Halifax had many additional considerations in addition to the military analysis. And as Neilson states: "The realities of political power favoured the latter duo". The Soviets insisted on a "full-blown alliance" in contrast to Chamberlain who wanted further negotiations. Neilson stresses the political difference between the two countries as the reason for the failure to conclude an alliance, and not any considerations concerning Soviet military strength. Instead he argues that the British truly thought that the Soviets were weak at the time of the Munich agreement, which in turn made the British more inclined to make a deal with Hitler, but in 1939 the British believed "that the Soviets might indeed be strong enough to prevent German aggression".⁶² The archival evidence speaks against such a conclusion.

⁶¹ Herndon also states that the British were correct on the whole in their assessment of Soviet military strength, which from the arguments forwarded above in the preceding section we can see is wrong. J.S. Herndon, 'British perceptions of Soviet military capability, 1935-9.' in W.J. Mommsen & L. Kettenacker (eds.) *The Fascist Challenge and the Policy of Appeasement*. (London: Allen & Unwin, 1983) p. 312

⁶² K. Neilson, 'Pusued by a Bear: British Estimates of Soviet Military Strength and Anglo-Soviet Relations', *Canadian Journal of History*, Volume XXVIII, August 1993, pp. 216-220

So much for economic and military strength; but there also seems to be ample evidence to assume that the internal stability of the Soviet Union was not up to the standards of protracted war, according to British assessments. This fact just adds to the notion already presented, namely that if war should begin, the USSR would – from the British perspective – not be able to wage a serious war effort. The British were not alone in their low regard for Soviet strength. At least as late as the autumn of 1938 French army intelligence ‘believed that “militarily” the Soviet Union was “entirely impotent”.’⁶³

Louise Grace Shaw has made a very thorough analysis of the attitudes of the British leadership towards the Soviet Union in 1939. She argues that the failure of the Anglo-French-Soviet alliance was due to the fact that British ministers were unable to set aside their anti-Soviet prejudices, and that the British Government was *not* constrained by factors outside its control. The Polish objection to cooperation with the USSR was just an excuse for Chamberlain. According to Shaw “This was confirmed when both the Polish and Romanian objections to Soviet inclusion in an alliance system were later dismissed, as fears of a German-Soviet rapprochement increased.” Chamberlain harboured more fears of Communist expansionism than of Nazi Germany and in addition he was convinced that the Soviets were trying to bring Great Britain and Germany into war with one another. Chamberlain knew about what she refers to as “Soviet weakness”, and that he ignored the advice from his military advisers (including the Chiefs of Staff) who also knew about the “Soviet weakness” but despite this insisted on an inclusion of the USSR in a common security arrangement against Germany.⁶⁴ Shaw makes a mistake in assuming without further comment that the Soviets were weak. One problem was of course the purges, but when contemplating the Soviet Union’s enormous military-economic potential such an argument sounds less convincing, even in the short run. The major problem was of course, as we have seen above, that the British Government grossly underestimated Soviet strength. Some ministers in the British Government were supportive of a Soviet alliance and some against. Furthermore, Shaw argues that the Minister for Co-ordination of Defence and Chamberlain “deliberately misreported” the Chiefs of Staff reports in order to

⁶³ A. Adamthwaite, ‘French Military Intelligence and the Coming of War, 1935-1939’ in C. Andrew and J. Noakes (eds.) *Intelligence and International Relations 1900-1945* (Exeter: Exeter University Publications, 1987) p. 206

⁶⁴ L.G. Shaw, ‘Attitudes of the British political elite towards the Soviet Union’ in *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, Vol. 13, No.1 (March 2002) pp. 55-58

portray the USSR as “militarily worthless”.⁶⁵ But as we can see above there was no actual need for Chatfield and Chamberlain to do this – I am not disputing that they did – since not only did the Chiefs of Staff disregard Soviet economic and military strength in general, their assessments grossly underestimated actual Soviet capabilities. Besides, a further underestimation of an already underestimated potential ally only further strengthens the argument that an USSR that was perceived as weak would constitute a less interesting potential alliance partner for the British Government.

Shaw describes a British leadership that was confused over the question of an alliance with the Soviets. On the one hand they knew that it would be practical to ally with the USSR, and on the other hand they had their doubts, for several reasons. Not even when rumours started to circulate about a Soviet-German rapprochement in May did this change the mind of the British. During June and July the British and not the French dictated the directions of the negotiations with the Soviets. According to Shaw it was Chamberlain himself that was the biggest obstacle against a working alliance with the Soviets, and not so much (at least from the late spring of 1939) the other members of his Cabinet and other prominent individuals within the British Government. But during the summer most members of the Cabinet changed their minds once again and the chosen policy was (only) to continue negotiations with the Soviets. Most had abandoned the idea of an alliance. Chamberlain never wished that the half-hearted Anglo-French military mission to Moscow in August should go there in the first place. The arguments of Shaw can more or less be summarized in the statement: “Throughout most of 1939, decisions regarding Soviet proposals were determined by ideological suspicion and hostility. The unwillingness of certain ministers and officials to put aside their anti-Soviet prejudices during the foreign policy decision making process led to the loss of a crucial ally.” But she also argues that some British officials actually managed to overcome their distrust in face of “increased evidence of its [the Soviet Union’s] potential”.⁶⁶ This particular idea is a mistake from her side, at least with regard to British assessments of Soviet war potential.

The ideological aspect of British decision-making during the 1930s has also been studied by Mark L. Haas. He seems not to have investigated British intelligence concerning Soviet war potential, but he argues that the British conservatives considered the Soviet Union a

⁶⁵ L.G. Shaw, ‘Attitudes of the British political elite towards the Soviet Union’ in *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, Vol. 13, No.1 (March 2002) p. 60

⁶⁶ L.G. Shaw, ‘Attitudes of the British political elite towards the Soviet Union’ in *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, Vol. 13, No.1 (March 2002) pp. 60-61, 64-65, 67-68, 70

greater ideological threat than Nazi Germany. As a result the conservatives preferred not to ally with the USSR, because the cost were too high, and instead chose to appease Germany. He admits that there were prominent conservatives in Britain, like Winston Churchill, who wanted to ally with the Soviet Union, but they were politically isolated. Chamberlain was one of those conservatives (in power) who mistrusted the Soviets. Haas's arguments seem reasonable, and he also asserts that perceptions of German military power played a part in the British (and French) decision-making process during the 1930s.⁶⁷ But ideological considerations among decision-makers must have some limits when it comes to making a deal with foreign powers for the sake of national security. Haas notes that the British were more than eager to ally with the Soviets after 1940,⁶⁸ when it was too late to contain Hitler in the same manner as had at least been possible to do in 1939. But it seems likely that even the British conservatives would have been more eager to overcome their aversion towards the USSR and the possibility of an alliance with her in 1939, if they had known the reality of Soviet strength. The disparity between assessments and reality would probably have been too great to overlook.

Conclusion

Although not intended, it is obvious that my article belongs to the 'counter-revisionist' school⁶⁹ regarding the road to war in Europe, since it argues that an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance was a viable option. But it also explains why the alliance was of less value to the British Government than earlier believed, considering the circumstances. The point is not that the arguments proposed by Shaw and other scholars are wrong, which they are not in general, but that they have misinterpreted, or more or less disregarded British assessments of Soviet strength. This of course creates the wrong picture of British perceptions concerning the whole question of the Anglo-French-Soviet alliance. This study shows that the military-economic aspect had much more relevance for British perceptions than previous research seems to suggest, since the British in fact really believed that the USSR was even weaker than earlier supposed. Although there were many reasons for the British not to conclude an agreement with the Soviet Government, the gross underestimate of

⁶⁷ M.L. Haas, 'Ideology and Alliances: British and French External Balancing Decisions in the 1930s' in *Security Studies* 12, no. 4 (Summer 2003) pp. 34-57

⁶⁸ M.L. Haas, 'Ideology and Alliances: British and French External Balancing Decisions in the 1930s' in *Security Studies* 12, no. 4 (Summer 2003) p. 74

⁶⁹ L.G. Shaw, 'Attitudes of the British political elite towards the Soviet Union' in *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, Vol. 13, No.1 (March 2002)

Soviet economic and military strength contributed to the British reluctance. Asking a contra factual question can also strengthen this line of argument: what would the British have done if they had known the full extent of Soviet strength? Even though it is impossible to answer this question in full it seems unlikely that the British would have dismissed the Soviets as an ally as easily as they did. Even though Poland, Romania, prejudices and ideology⁷⁰ stood in the way, more pressure could have been used to make all these factors comply with British interests in the name of the common good. Therefore, if the British had had truthful intelligence on Soviet (especially economic) strength it is possible that the Second World War could have taken an entirely different course. Or, to put it in a different way, if Hitler had dared to gamble on war despite an Anglo-French-Soviet alliance (and considering German assessments of Soviet strength this cannot be regarded as totally unrealistic), one can only imagine what would have happened if the full war potential of the Soviet Union had been unleashed upon Nazi Germany while the French Army was still intact.

It seems that it was not only Germany that underestimated Soviet strength on the eve of the Second World War. The British Government had no realistic comprehension of how much the Soviet Five-Year Plans had changed old Russia since the late 1920s. Just like Nazi Germany's leadership underestimate of Soviet military power in 1941 led to the beginning of the end of the Third Reich, the British underestimate of Soviet strength in 1939 contributed to missed opportunities on a grand scale.

⁷⁰ There is no doubt that ideology actually played a part in the security policies of Britain in the 1930s. M.L. Haas, 'Ideology and Alliances: British and French External Balancing Decisions in the 1930s' in *Security Studies* 12, no. 4 (Summer 2003) p. 79

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