

erfs from bondage to the land only in the 1860s — Russia entered World War I on the side of England and France, thus establishing a second front against Germany and its allies.

But the tsarist regime proved unable to supply its troops on the one hand and feed its people on the other. A revolutionary situation developed which brought to power in autumn 1917 the world's first "socialist-intentioned" government under V.I. Lenin and the Bolshevik Party. A proplonged civil war followed, and it was not until 1920 that the Leninists consolidated their power over the vast empire. Through harsh measures and great sacrifices Lenin set in motion the drive to modernize, industrialize and collectivize the antiquated economy.

Lenin died in 1925, and his successors, soon reduced by Stalin to Stalin, did not shrink from any violence or brutality to run the country on the basis of his will alone. It soon became apparent that, contrary to expectations, no further revolutions could be expected to occur in Europe; the Russians would have to go it alone.

As the revolutionary movement waned in Europe, the counter-revolution gained momentum. By 1941 the fascist powers, principally Germany, but seconded by Italy, Spain and a dozen or so lesser countries, had consolidated their rule throughout Western and Central Europe, under the umbrella "Anti-Comintern Pact". There can be no doubt, despite their many other crimes, including the slaughter of Jews in the Holocaust, that the principal aim of fascism was counter-revolution, and the principal target the USSR.

In June 1941 the inevitable attack took place. Led by the Nazi military machine, the most massive armies ever assembled moved rapidly toward Moscow. But the Soviet lines held, and the invaders faced a devastating winter on the Russian plains. Again in 1942 the Soviet military failed to crumble, and another disastrous winter followed for the invaders. In 1943, in the southern salient at Stalingrad, it was the Germans who could hold out no longer. The Russians began the long, slow counterattack that brought them to the heart of Germany and final victory in May 1945.

The Soviet Union was left with incredible destruction: an estimated twenty million military and civilian dead, as many more seriously wounded, a third of the nation's physical plant totally destroyed. Yet by 1960 the country had reconstructed its economy, refurbished its military, developed a nuclear capability sufficient to deter an attack by the U.S. It had become without question the second most important economy, and militarily second most powerful in the world.

Is it on a par with the U.S.? Probably not, in most ways. But the key question is: Which way are the two societies heading? Recent developments seem to indicate a continuing potential for growth and progressive change in the USSR. Their system has undoubtedly many faults; but our information about it is still and always has been systematically flawed.

RELATIONS BETWEEN THE SUPER-POWERS:

The U.S. and its European, Canadian and Japanese allies maintain that their alliance and unprecedented accumulation of military hardware, including especially nuclear weaponry, is vitally necessary to deter a potential Soviet attack, and, if and when it comes, to retaliate.

How can we evaluate the chances of such an attack? A study of past Soviet attacks against Western powers reveals that there aren't any. A study of Soviet arms budgets shows that, despite the hullabaloo at U.S. Congressional budget time about a gigantic Soviet military buildup, there isn't any. Or again, the nuclear arms race? For several years, Soviet leaders have pleaded for bona fide negotiations to



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reduce present stocks and abandon the production of new warheads. Under Gorbachev, the Soviets halted unilaterally all nuclear testing for eighteen months; and Gorbachev has stated repeatedly that his policy is to develop the Soviet economy, not ruin it with unneeded military expenditures.

Are the Soviets engaged in an expansive foreign policy and planning an eventual military conquest of the globe? True, they have built a ring of client states along their European border, and they maintain tight control over those governments. But given the massive German onslaught through those countries in World War II, it is scarcely paranoid for the Soviet state to protect its European border. The case of Afghanistan is not identical, but relies on similar thinking. And can we say there is no threat to the Soviet Union through Afghanistan? Our U.S. government admits to massive military aid to the rebel groups.

In short, there is not now, and there never has been a Soviet military threat to the U.S. or its Western allies. A quick look at Western threats to the Soviet Union, however, presents quite a different picture.

In 1918, the U.S., along with Britain, France and several lesser powers, invaded the just created USSR at Vladivostok and Archangel to prevent consolidation of Soviet control over the vast country. The incursion lasted until 1920; the invaders then gave up and went home. At least, they went home.

But gave up? They have never given up. As mentioned earlier, the fundamental thrust of fascism, which dominated Europe through the 1930s and early 1940s, was twofold: keep the revolution from spreading beyond the boundaries of the Soviet Union, and ultimately destroy the revolutionary Soviet regime itself.

As for the U.S., it refused to recognize the Soviet regime until Franklin Roosevelt became President in 1933. Even after that date there were powerful forces, in Congress and especially in the business community, that favored

the Nazis. Millions of private dollars found their way to Hitler's coffers and helped bring him to power in 1933.

In 1939, when Hitler's intention to launch his attack on the Soviet Union had become plain, the Soviets appealed to Britain, France and the U.S. to join in a coalition to stop the Nazis. They refused; and in desperation Stalin signed his own pact with Hitler. This gained him two more years to build his military defenses. The cost to the West was the conquest of France, Belgium, Holland, Denmark and Norway — protecting Hitler's rear for his inevitable invasion of the Soviet Union. Conservatives, liberals and radicals alike have denounced Stalin for his Hitler pact. But no one mentions the ill-advised refusal of the Western powers to protect themselves by joining in a treaty with the USSR.

By 1941 it was clear to those U.S. leaders already planning a glorious future for our country, that in the short term, despite their hatred of the socialist Soviets, Germany represented a greater danger to the U.S. position in the world than did the USSR. As a consequence, when Hitler did invade the Soviet Union, Britain and the U.S. finally joined forces with Stalin to defeat the Germans.

Even before the Germans had surrendered, the U.S. began clandestine operations to destabilize its wartime partner. By 1946 the Cold War was in full swing, and it has never really ceased in more than forty years.

The world has changed greatly since World War II. The U.S. gained hegemony over its Western allies and their empires. A World War III focused on the traditional combatants of North America, Europe and Japan is no longer thinkable. The only nation capable of containing U.S. ambitions to rule the globe is the Soviet Union.

The real focus of social and political change today is the third world, struggling to free itself finally from colonialism and neo-colonialist control by the old empires. U.S. world policy concentrates on stopping this liberation movement.

In principle the Soviet Union sides with the liberation movements. Often criticized by a sometimes well meaning left for not doing enough for them, it is nonetheless doing something. The Soviet regime is not, however, suicidal, and is not about to let its principles stand in the way of its common sense; it is uniquely qualified to judge how much it can do without exposing itself to U.S. attack.

If only we could believe our own country is governed by the same good sense. But apparently convinced the Almighty is firmly on its side, our government dreams of launching and winning a nuclear war.

For forty years government propaganda has drummed into our heads that the Soviet Union is responsible for U.S. problems. Not at all. If anything, our hostility and our destabilization efforts over a period of seventy years are responsible for theirs.

It is beginning to seem that it is not their violations of human rights and their non-existent military menace that we object to. What we really find objectionable is their existence.

Thus since the defeat of the fascists in 1945, the U.S. has pursued the fascist goal: prevent the spread of socialist revolution, and roll it back where it already exists.

Is this how we want our country to be judged, as the true disciple of Nazi Germany? And as individuals, do we really want to claim, like the "good" Germans of 1945, that we didn't know what was going on?

Frank Giese is a former professor of French at Portland State University and is a longtime political activist. He fought in Europe during World War II in the U.S. Army.



"He didn't say 'al dente,' did he?"

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