

Walter S. Dunn, Jr, *The Soviet Economy and the Red Army, 1930-1945*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995, ix+256 pp. £53.95

This book is the third volume of the author's trilogy, the first two being *Second Front Now, 1943* (1981) and *Hitler's Nemesis: the Red Army, 1930-1945* (1994). The common aim of these works was to illustrate the author's thesis that by 1943 the Red Army was a formidable fighting force capable of defeating Nazi Germany without the benefit of the 1944 Normandy landings. Various political implications are supposed to flow from this fact, in particular the exoneration of US President Roosevelt and Secretary of State George C. Marshall of the charges that they aided the expansion of Soviet power by means of Lend-Lease aid to Russia and their advocacy of an invasion of northwestern Europe in 1943 to divert German forces from the eastern front; although Stalin urged the latter, he did not really need or want it, and earlier Allied successes in the west would have curtailed the expansion of Soviet power into eastern and central Europe. The author also holds that it was not wartime assistance but prewar technological acquisitions - the foreign concessions of the 1920s and the American technical assistance of the 1930s - which were crucial to Soviet wartime technological success.

In the present volume, the author deals with Soviet prewar and wartime military technology and logistics. He shows that during the war the Soviet economy was able to deliver munitions to the eastern front of quantity and quality sufficient to beat Germany. The Red Army deployed a greater volume of munitions than the Wehrmacht, and more per soldier than even the US Army. The latter compares ground forces only; air and naval power are largely ignored, the former being more significant, given its role in the fate of the German Blitzkrieg. Various chapters illustrate the argument in relation to the different kinds of ground-forces weaponry and transport. The operational characteristics of weapons and transport technologies are related to the tactical context of their use in combat and the technological processes of Soviet industry. By means of a relentless accumulation of detail the author aims to destroy the western myth "that the Germans were beaten with massed attacks of poorly equipped Russian riflemen" (p. 243). But whether serious scholars ever held this belief is not shown.

The sources used are mainly secondary English-language publications, American translations of Soviet military writing, German intelligence archives, the standard Soviet military histories and encyclopedias (including recent publications on Soviet war losses), and a handful of articles from back issues of *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal*. The author's personal competence in the history of military technology is also undoubtedly a major input, accounting for a good many off-the-cuff judgements and unreferenced assertions. These assertions take the place of analysis, since the book has no analytical framework for evaluation of the relative importance of one factor or another to Soviet military-industrial success.

Since the main conclusions are already foregone, the book's originality lies mainly in assembling detail. In the detail there is much of interest for the dedicated historian. The chapters dealing with logistics and transport are particularly commendable, and allow useful comparison with available studies of German logistics on the eastern front.

There is also much that undermines the reader's trust. At a superficial level there are proofing errors on an awesome scale; it's hard to find a Russian title or place name that isn't wrongly spelt or wrongly transliterated (sometimes to English, sometimes to German). Sovnarkom becomes the "Soviet People's Commissars" (p. 9); the Red Army chief artillery administration (GAU) is elevated to a commissariat, and GKO is translated as "Defense Committee", risking confusion with the prewar Sovnarkom subcommittee of that name (p. 52). Even western names sometimes suffer this treatment - how on earth did Janusz M. Szyrmer, Holland Hunter's collaborator, become Seymour not once but throughout? Gosplan, misleadingly described as "the planning staff for the five-year plans", is credited with accomplishing the 1941 evacuation of industry (pp. 32-3). Tables follow a multiplicity of formats, making the simplest visual comparisons awkward (e.g. German time series in columns, Soviet series in rows, p. 94). The index has many gaps and oddities.

The author is also vulnerable on matters of background. The Ezhovshchina of 1936-8 is explained as Stalin's delayed response to lower-class discontent of the 1920s with the privileges of middle class intellectuals and managers (pp. 4-5). In line with Antony Sutton's multi-volume history of Soviet technology, Soviet prewar technological achievements are attributed to the influence of foreign concessions in the 1920s and American technical assistance in the 1930s, as if history did not also show that it is societies which ignore others' achievements or hold them in contempt or suspicion which fail technologically. The book is characterised by a generally undifferentiated use of secondary sources - "one authority says...", "according to another authority..." and so on, forcing the critical reader onto a wearisome trail through the endnotes.

The book is beautifully produced, and has been given the look and feel of quality. Some of that effort should have gone into ensuring equivalent quality of the content. The result is certainly not without value, but is too flawed to recommend with much enthusiasm.

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