

Lennart Samuelson, *Plans for Stalin's War Machine: Tukhachevskii and Military-Economic Planning, 1925-1941*. Basingstoke and London: Macmillan Press in association with the Centre for Russian and East European Studies, University of Birmingham, Studies in East European History and Society, 2000, xv + 267 pp.

This book considers Soviet war preparations in the interwar period through a close study of the relationship between the central organs of the Red Army, the defence ministry, the central planners, and industry. A small number of individuals also played key roles: Tukhachevskii (of the army General Staff, but not always for it), Voroshilov (the defence minister), and Ordzhonikidze (for heavy industry), with Stalin presiding and at times brooding over them all. The centre of the stage is given over to contingency plans and mobilisation plans for war production and the associated investment plans for defence industry. Thus rearmament is considered in terms of both actual and potential war production, while potential war production is considered in both present and future; the author argues that the future targets written down on paper in mobilisation plans may tell us more about the real dimensions of Soviet rearmament than the numbers of aircraft, tanks, and guns actually being produced at the time. The main burden of evidence falls on original documentation from the former Soviet state, party, economic, and Red Army archives.

The underlying story of Samuelson's book can be paraphrased in a few sentences. Plans to build a military-industrial complex were laid down in the 1920s (chapter 1). At this time Tukhachevskii was already designing what would have become a "military-planning complex" in which the Red Army would participate directly in the overall allocation of resources in the economy, but these designs were frustrated (chapter 2). The context was not one of an immediate military threat; by the time of the so-called war scare of 1927 these decisions had already been taken (chapter 3). What was important about these plans was their association with huge investments in heavy and defence industry; the latter were aimed at the future production of weapons more than at immediate rearmament. Russians called this "American" rearmament (American economists would later call it "armament in depth"). Armament in depth was not aimed at countering any particular military threat, since at the time none existed, so Samuelson argues that its precise motivation remains unclear. In pressing for armament in depth in 1930 Tukhachevskii at first went too far, alienating other generals and also Voroshilov, who presented him to Stalin as trying to bankrupt the country with the costs of "Red militarism" (chapter 4). Tukhachevskii lost credibility and had to retreat, but survived, regained Stalin's confidence, and advanced again more circumspectly (chapter 5).

In the mid-1930s Soviet military-economic planning was reoriented away from abstract threats to real ones emanating from Germany and Japan (chapter 6). As a result the pace of war production was accelerated far beyond that envisaged in the earlier 1930s (chapter 7). In 1937 Tukhachevskii fell foul of an intrigue probably engineered by Voroshilov, and was arrested and executed; at the same time the army General Staff and officer corps were largely "decapitated" (chapter 8). In the late 1930s the pace of war production was accelerated far beyond that envisaged in the earlier 1930s and military-industrial mobilisation became all-encompassing, while contingency plans for the future became more and more ambitious.

Some concluding themes focus on 1941. Samuelson views the question of whether by that date Soviet contingency plans might have been designed to support a future

preemptive attack on Germany, rather than to counter German aggression, as remaining open to speculation. In his view the military-technical condition of the Red Army and defence industry in 1941 were on the whole better than has sometimes been portrayed. Were it not for the secrecy in which these activities were pursued, Hitler might have been better informed of the Soviet Union's military-economic potential and less eager to launch his June 1941 invasion. Samuelson considers the fact that the Germans nearly brought it off as testimony to the appalling strategic leadership of their not-so-badly equipped and supplied opponent.

Two aspects of Samuelson's story are new. One is the careful reconsideration of Tukhachevskii's role. Archival sources have enabled the author to correct oversimplified views of what Tukhachevskii really wrote or said, and what Stalin and others really wrote or said about him. He emerges from Samuelson's account as a brilliant but flawed thinker. His virtues were exceptional and his flaws were commonplace, though not less important for being ordinary. He knew why the next war would be one of offensive and manoeuvre. He grasped some of the core consequences of the mechanisation of both warfare and of production. Evidently he had little conception of how modern production systems really work, but this hardly made him exceptional as a soldier. Perhaps another failing, which again he shared with most contemporaries, was to ignore the growing importance of deterrence and the credibility of threats. Stalin was right to listen to him and right to do so sceptically, while wrong to shoot him.

The other essential new aspect of Samuelson's story is the detailed documentation of the thinking behind Soviet economic mobilisation planning and the immense calculations and efforts that went into it.

Samuelson's subject matter is dense and difficult, and so to a degree is the book itself. The book's explicit structure is chronological, and there are few signposts to guide the reader through its analytical themes. One chapter has a short final summary, and the concluding chapter to the entire volume is less than six pages long. Many issues are raised, then left unanswered, with question marks dangling; in such cases it is not clear whether the reader is meant to regard the questions as rhetorical, insoluble, or not really relevant in the first place. Previously published research is listed, but it is not stated explicitly how the author's findings are differentiated from those of his predecessors such as Cooper, Davies, Glantz, Sapir, Simonov, Tsaplin, Tupper, or Zaleski, other than by the reader's inference. A vast array of statistical data, presented in tables and dispersed through the text, is used almost exclusively for description. Perhaps this is an area of Soviet history which would benefit from a more deliberately comparative perspective and the application of more general social science concepts, enabling a return to the mainstream of historical and social science analysis.

In summary the specialist will receive this book gratefully, with heartfelt thanks for the author's diligent labours in many archives; students will benefit from more selective reading under their tutors' guidance.

Mark Harrison
University of Warwick