



STALIN'S POLITBURO
NAMUN 2019



Letter from the Chair

Comrades,

It is my distinct pleasure and honor to welcome you all to Stalin's Politburo at the North American Model United Nations Conference of 2019.

My name is Guilherme Patury, and I will be serving as Chair of this committee. I am currently pursuing my undergraduate degree in International Relations, with minors in Latin American Studies and Political Science. This is my first year at NAMUN, and I am absolutely thrilled to have been assigned to this brilliant committee.

As much as Stalin was powerful and undoubtedly changed the history of Soviet Russia, he was not omnipotent from the moment Lenin died. For almost a decade, Stalin's power was limited, and all state decisions came not from him alone, but from the Politburo, the executive committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. As delegates, or as I prefer it, ministers, of the Soviet Politburo, you will all be tasked with navigating the turbulent years of the early 1940's, just as German and Japanese aggression grows both in the east and the west.

Together with James, your Crisis Manager, we have planned a very fast-paced and interactive committee that will prove to be very challenging. Will you succeed where the Politburo failed, or fail where it succeeded? Your actions, debate, and decisions in committee will decide this. Will you make the Soviet Union a glorious nation, or leave it as a weak prey for the incoming German invasion?

I look forward to finding out the answer to the questions, to meeting all of you and to see where you are going to take this committee. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the background guide, awards, position paper or simply just want to chat MUN please feel free to email me at guilherme.patury@mail.utoronto.ca and I will happily answer as soon as possible!

Long live Stalin,
Guilherme Patury, Chair.



Letter from the Director

Dear Delegates,

On behalf of the Secretariat, welcome to NAMUN 2019 at the University of Toronto. I am proud to be the Director of Specialized Agencies this year. Whether it's your first MUN conference, your first time at NAMUN, or if you've been here before, I hope that you will have a great time over these four February days.

Every MUN conference works a little different from others. Here at NAMUN I am responsible for selecting the committee topics and quite a lot of thought went into choosing them. I'm not going to lie: the single largest factor that persuaded me to choose this topic was the 2017 film *The Death of Stalin*. If you have not yet had the chance to see the film, I would highly encourage it. However, as a student whose major pertains to the EU and recent European history, Stalin is certainly not an unfamiliar individual. His life and the actions he and other leading figures of the USSR engaged in shaped not only the Soviet Union and its successor states, but the world itself.

As to the specifics of this committee (and the other SA committees) the direction it takes is left up to your Chair and Crisis Manager. The specific time period, issues, and the crisis plan I left up to them. James and Guilherme settled on the chilling date of June 1941. I'd encourage you to not be fooled with the matters that the date implies. You all will be doing more than recreating WWII from a conference room at a university, so be sure to stay on your toes and keep yourselves prepared. I am fully confident that Stalin's Politburo will be fun, engaging, and perhaps a little dangerous. Above all else, I hope that this committee and NAMUN 2019 will be a positive and rewarding experience. I wish you all the best of luck in managing the affairs of the USSR. It will surely be no easy task.

To quote Molotov in *The Death of Stalin*, "long live the Communist Party of Lenin-Stalin. Long live John Wayne and John Ford",

Nathaniel Lapp
Director of Specialized Agencies



Introduction

The Politburo, or the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was, from 1917 to around 1937, the highest policy-making body in the Soviet Union. It was created to handle questions which were too “urgent” to await a full Central Committee meeting. The members of the Politburo were extremely influential and had the power to direct the USSR in any direction they deemed fit. However, to understand how the Politburo changed during Stalin’s regime, it is pivotal to keep in mind that the Soviet Union itself was born out of war.¹ It came into existence post World War I and was consolidated through a bloody Civil War. The violent way in which the Union was born greatly influenced the way Joseph Stalin chose to direct the nation once he succeeded the prior General Secretary of the Communist Party, Vladimir Lenin.

Stalin was extremely afraid of a counterrevolution that could wipe out his government which was not an unreasonable fear.² All of the Bolsheviks knew that a marginally organized discontent population had more than enough power to completely topple a regime as they had effectively conducted a *coup d’état* themselves against the imperial government of Tsar Nicholas II, ending 300 years of Romanov rule in Russia.³ This fear of a counterrevolution is what caused Stalin to conduct the Great Purge, leading to hundreds of thousands Soviet citizens either imprisoned or killed due to crimes against the state.⁴

The Great Purge affected all citizens of the USSR. The Politburo itself was rocked by Stalin’s bloody campaign against his people which caused the balance of power in the Political Bureau to shift significantly.⁵ Many in Stalin’s inner circle and Politburo members such as Stanislav Kosior, Vlas Chubar, Robert Eikhe, Pavel Postyshev, and Yan Rudzutak, were shot during this period.⁶ It was clear that anyone could “suddenly be labeled an enemy”.⁷ By 1937, the Politburo was increasingly subject to Stalin’s will due to these actions.⁸

As years passed, the old Bolsheviks in the Politburo were replaced by younger Soviets who did not have the same “revolutionary credentials of the older generation”.⁹ This meant that many of the newer members of the Politburo such as Andrei Zhdanov, Nikita Khrushchev, Lavrentiy Beria, Nikolai Voznesensky, Georgy Malenkov and Aleksandr Shcherbakov owned their current

¹ Oleg V. Khlevniuk, *Stalin: New Biography of a Dictator*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2015), 153.

² Ibid., 153.

³ Ibid., 153.

⁴ Ibid., 153; Ibid., 151.

⁵ Ibid., 176.

⁶ Ibid., 176.

⁷ Ibid., 176.

⁸ Ibid., 177.

⁹ Ibid., 177.



standing directly to Stalin and were much more dependent on him than the older Bolsheviks who had campaigned under Lenin.¹⁰

Further details of the international situation of the Soviet Union will be addressed later in this Background Guide. This introduction was written for you to familiarize yourself to the background of Stalin's governing "style" and how the Politburo changed from its formation in 1917 to when it was taken over by Stalin in 1937. The most important thing to take away from this section is that, by 1937, collective leadership was fading, and Stalin was growing more paranoid and dictatorial in nature. Many Politburo members began to question if they could protect not only themselves, but their loved ones, in case they lost Stalin's favor.¹¹

Definitions

Politburo: Political Bureau of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. This was the principal policymaking body of the Soviet Union.

Candidate Politburo Member: Politburo members that were hierarchically below a Full Member. They would become full members once a position became vacant. Nevertheless, they still held significant influence in the USSR's Politburo

Full Politburo Member: Politburo members who were hierarchically above candidate members. Had extreme power for setting policy and making decisions the Soviet Union, especially in the early years under Stalin.

Collectivization: The confiscation and transformation of privately-owned farms into agrarian enterprises managed by the state. In 1929, Stalin proclaimed collectivization would be universal and immediate.

Kolkhoz: The name for a large state farm.

Kulaks: Peasants and independent farmers who were labeled by Stalin as "enemies of the state" during the 1930s. They were heavily purged, and most of them were either killed or transferred to gulags to serve as slaves to the state. Typically, kulaks were wealthier peasants.

GULAG: Government agency in charge of the Soviet forced-labour camps. In English they also refer to any forced-labour camp in the Soviet Union. GULAGs reached their peak during the Great Purge; petty criminals and political prisoners alike would be sent to serve out sentences.

Axis Powers: An "Axis" of alliance between Germany, Italy and Japan.

Allies: Alliance between the United Kingdom, France, and later the United States and the Soviet Union.

¹⁰ Ibid., 177.

¹¹ Ibid., 177.



The Big Three: A military Alliance consisting of the three main Allies in World War II: the United Kingdom, the United States and the Soviet Union. The leaders were Winston Churchill, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Joseph Stalin, respectively.

Great Purge: Period where hundreds of thousands were persecuted in the Soviet Union. These people were either imprisoned or shot for being considered by the politburo “dangerous” to the USSR.

Romanov: The Russian dynasty that led Imperial Russia for 300 years before being overthrown by the Bolsheviks. The last Romanov Emperor was Tsar Nicholas II.

Vladimir Lenin: Leader of the Bolsheviks and leader of the Soviet Union from its inception in 1917 up to his death in 1924.

Central Committee: Executive leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The Committee directed all party and governmental activities. The members of the Central Committee were elected by the Party Congress, which was held every five years under Stalin.

General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union: The position that was the *de facto* leader of the USSR.

Bolshevik: Translates from Russian means “Majority”. The Bolsheviks were the faction that organized the October Revolution and overthrew the Russian Empire. Would become the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

Historical Context

The international situation of the USSR in 1937 was rather complicated. With Poland seeming to have a *rapprochement* with Germany and the Western powers pursuing a policy of Appeasement, the Politburo and Stalin lost faith that the west could or would stand up against German expansion.¹² Further stressing this view, the Spanish Civil War had broken out in 1936 and France and Britain seemed to do nothing as Germany allied itself with the Nationalists and their leader, the *Generalissimo* Francisco Franco.¹³ Thus, Joseph Stalin decided to intervene in the war to oppose the Nationalists and allied itself with the Republicans.¹⁴

International tension was growing throughout the 1930s; major activity was happening not only to Russia’s west, but also in the East. The situation was far from tranquil. With Japanese aggression in Manchuria beginning in September of 1931, the Politburo feared that at some future point, the Japanese Empire would strike its eastern regions. Fear of an invasion by Japan caused the Soviets to deport over 170,000 Koreans from the frontier regions in the far east to China. This caused great tension with the influx of refugees inside its borders.¹⁵ However, the USSR managed

¹² Ibid., 151.

¹³ Ibid., 151.

¹⁴ Ibid., 151.

¹⁵ Ibid., 156.



to avert any further conflict with Beijing by signing a nonaggression pact with the Chinese in August 1937.¹⁶

Despite the eventual stasis in the Far East, it is crucial to note the great effect that the Spanish Civil War had on the USSR. The brutal fighting in Spain frightened the Politburo and reinforced the belief that a similar conflict could break out in the USSR at any moment.¹⁷ They knew this was possible not only because of the widespread fighting in Spain (that was only a mere reminder) but also because, the Soviet Union itself had emerged from a bloody Civil War. The USSR was quite young and nearly all the high-ranking party officials remembered the fighting that only a mere two decades earlier had ousted Tsar Nicholas II, and later, the Provisional Government, to establish first, the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, and a couple of years later, The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Nevertheless, this very real reminder of the power of civil wars caused the Politburo to take drastic action. In the name of security, the body decided to purge the USSR in the “interest of military readiness”.¹⁸ This initiated the “Great Purge” in the summer of 1937, when the Politburo approved several operations that aimed to neutralize any specific groups the ministers deemed as dangerous.¹⁹ The most far-ranging of these operations was Order No. 0047 carried out by the NKVD against “anti-Soviet elements”. By 1938, when the Great Terror (another name for the Great Purge) had ended, 1.6 million people were arrested and 700,000 were shot, with an average of 1,500 people killed every single day by the regime.²⁰

Despite the USSR’s mistrust of Germany to a considerable extent, it entered negotiations with said nation in August of 1939. Signing a treaty with Hitler was extremely beneficial for the USSR as it would neutralize an aggressive and potentially dangerous state right on its border and would serve, to some degree, as the western version of the treaty signed with China in 1937. These negotiations would eventually develop a treaty known as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact which not only assured Russo-German neutrality, but also divided eastern Europe into spheres of German and Russian influence.²¹ Both powers divided up the area and decided which of them would get which part to avoid conflict between themselves.

One week after securing the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, Germany initiated its invasion of Poland. Almost two weeks later, on 17 September 1939, the USSR launched its own invasion of the country. By the sixth of October the last Polish troops surrendered at the Battle of the Kock,

¹⁶ Ibid., 156.

¹⁷ Ibid., 153.

¹⁸ Ibid., 155.

¹⁹ Ibid., 150.

²⁰ Ibid, 151.

²¹ Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Ministry of External Relations, *German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact*, 23 August 1939, Moscow.



signaling the termination of the Soviet-German invasion of Poland and marking decisively that country's defeat. Under the terms of the treaty signed in August, the entirety of Poland was annexed by the two victor nations.²²

Not long after this successful campaign, in late November 1939, the Soviet troops invaded Finland and had every reason to believe they would be successful.²³ Finland had a much smaller population, economy, and military power compared to the USSR so it should not have been too difficult for the Stalin to a "people's government of Finland" that he wanted to bring to the country by the invading Red Army.²⁴ Despite the good odds, the invasion was a complete failure, with the Finns showing the Red army "fierce and capable resistance".²⁵ With the war dragging on, an anti-Soviet mood was building in the west. The USSR was expelled from the League of Nations and there were talks of London and Paris intervening on behalf of Finland. Thus, fearing the endeavor in the north would bring even further chaos and humiliation, Stalin decided "not to tempt fate" and a treaty ending hostilities was signed in March of 1940.²⁶

Even though the Fins lost a considerable amount of territory they held onto independence. Internationally, this was immensely humiliating for the USSR. Furthermore, the Soviet Union lost approximately 130,000 troops, with a further 200,000 men wounded or frostbitten.²⁷ This failure exposed weakness in "every component of the Soviet military machine", and many argue that this conflict was one of the reasons that caused Hitler to accelerate plans to invade the Soviet Union.²⁸

Wanting to recover the prestige lost in the Winter War against Finland the Politburo authorized that an ultimatum be sent to Lithuania in May of 1940.²⁹ The Soviet Union accused all three Baltic States — Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia — of conspiring militarily against the USSR.³⁰ The ultimatum presented to Vilnius demanded that the government of Lithuania allow an unspecified number of troops to enter the nation. With no hope to match the might of the Red Army, the small Baltic nation gave in, and on 15 May 1940, the Soviet army occupied the country and General Vladimir Dekanozov was sent to organize the incorporation of the state into the Soviet Union.³¹ The very next day, the two remaining Baltic nations received very similar demands and by the end of May both nations were under Soviet control.³²

²² Ibid.

²³ Oleg Khlevniuk, *Stalin: New Biography of a Dictator*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2015), 172.

²⁴ Ibid., 172.

²⁵ Ibid., 172.

²⁶ Ibid., 172.

²⁷ Ibid., 172.

²⁸ Ibid., 172.

²⁹ Prit Buttar, *In Between Giants: The Battle for the Baltic's in World War II*, (London, Osprey Publishing, 2015), 80.

³⁰ Ibid., 80.

³¹ Ibid., 94.

³² Ibid., 99.



A top priority for the Politburo after that point was the “rapid Sovietization” of the Baltic states.³³ Moscow expropriated a very large amount of private property while initiating a purge in the region. Between 1940 and 1941, over 370,000 people were moved from eastern Ukraine, western Belarus and the Baltic states into Siberia and the general Soviet interior.³⁴ It is also important to add that not long after this, Stalin ordered the NKVD to murder his most implacable enemy, Leon Trotsky, who at the time was already exiled in Mexico.³⁵

In September of 1940, the Tripartite Pact was signed between Germany, Italy and Japan. This was very negative for Stalin and the Soviet Union because, even though the agreement was made with the United Kingdom and the United States in mind, Moscow was now surrounded by hostile powers both in its east and west. Hitler was aware that the Tripartite Pact was extremely worrisome to the USSR, and thus, wishing to “avoid tensions”, he invited the Soviet Foreign Secretary, Vyacheslav Molotov, to Berlin in November of 1940.³⁶ In this meeting, Hitler suggested that the USSR should become a fourth partner of the tripartite pact.³⁷ However, while this conference was underway, Hitler was already making plans for the invasion of the Soviet Union.³⁸ Stalin instructed Molotov to lay out several conditions for the USSR to become part of the tripartite pact, such as recognizing Soviet influence over the Turkish straights and removing German troops from Finland.³⁹ Despite these stipulations, it is now known that the Soviet General Secretary never seriously considered Hitler’s proposal, and that these demands were “intentionally designed’ to be completely unacceptable for the Germans.⁴⁰ As it was to be expected, Germany did not react positively to Stalin’s demands and Molotov headed back to Moscow.⁴¹ After the failed negotiations, Hungary and Romania joined the pact with Germany. In December of 1940, Hitler approved plans to invade the USSR with a timetable set for May 1941.⁴² By March, Bulgaria had also joined the pact. By April, Germany had invaded and entirely taken over Greece and Yugoslavia.⁴³

Stalin was not sitting still as Germany marched across Europe. He spent the entirety of 1940 and 1941 strengthening the Red Army, believing that war could break out at any moment.⁴⁴ He focused almost entirely in the army and the munitions production.⁴⁵ The large labour force of the USSR combined with the abundance of resources caused the build up to be very successful,

³³ Oleg Khlevniuk, *Stalin: New Biography of a Dictator*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2015), 173.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 174.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 174.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 174.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 175.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 175.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 175.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 175.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 176.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 176.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 176.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 183

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 183.



having a profound military and economic effect in the country.⁴⁶ By the time Germany marched on Russia, the Soviet Union had more than twenty-five thousand tanks and eighteen thousand fighter planes nearly three of four times more than Germany.⁴⁷ By 1940, military production in the USSR was two and a half times what it had been in 1937.⁴⁸

Nonetheless, it is very important to highlight that Stalin and the military leaders did not in any way believe this increase was sufficient. Weapons were often of extremely poor quality and well-trained military men were lacking.⁴⁹ Of the 25,000 tanks in the Soviet Union as of June of 1941, only 1,500 were truly of modern design and only one quarter of the planes were new.⁵⁰ The job of truly building up the army, which included modernizing equipment, was far from over.⁵¹

While the USSR built up the army, the efficiency of the Wehrmacht was increasingly worrisome to the Soviet leadership. Despite that, Stalin did believe war could be delayed, allowing the USSR time to build up its military capabilities.⁵² He was not delusional as it is often stated and had good reasons to believe war would not happen soon. Firstly, he believed that Hitler would not be foolish enough to commence a war on a new front while still fighting Britain in the west.⁵³ Secondly, Soviet-German economic cooperation was very important for Berlin, with Moscow providing the Germans with the raw material it needed to continue production of war-making materials.⁵⁴ Thirdly, goods imported into Germany from three other nations travelled through Soviet territory. War between the powers would, in Stalin's eyes, undermine German economic position to a point where Hitler would give up on the prospect of war.⁵⁵

Unknowingly to Stalin, however, Hitler wanted to exploit exactly these "good reasons". He knew very well that his enemies considered a war on two fronts an impossibility, and thus, because of that, he attempted to employ the "element of surprise" and made the risky move of opening a war on two fronts by attacking the USSR.⁵⁶ That was, of course, not known to the USSR, the United Kingdom or the United States.

The intelligence reports coming to the Politburo became increasingly confusing and contradictory. Stalin's "predisposition" to believe that Hitler would not attack soon influenced Soviet intelligence agencies.⁵⁷ Wishing to not anger Stalin, these agencies only told Stalin what he

⁴⁶ Ibid., 183.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 183.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 184.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 183.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 184.

⁵¹ Ibid., 183.

⁵² Ibid., 187.

⁵³ Ibid., 187.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 187.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 187.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 187.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 187.



wanted to hear and would hardly ever make clear that a German invasion was very likely.⁵⁸ This changed on 17 June 1941 when a report claiming that an attack was imminent reached Stalin.⁵⁹ Hearing this news, Stalin rapidly labeled them as false.⁶⁰ This made his intelligence officials and ministers frightened to speak up, rendering them all much less effective.⁶¹ All high-ranking Soviet officers hoped Stalin knew what he was doing. Unfortunately, he did not.⁶²

Timeline

Timeline of Major events of the Soviet Union from 1917-1941.⁶³

Date	Description of Event
April 1917	Vladimir Lenin and many revolutionaries return to the Soviet Union
25 October 1917	Bolsheviks overthrow the provisional government that had replaced the Tsar following his abdication. St. Petersburg and Moscow taken by the Soviets.
7 November 1917	Civil War between the Bolsheviks and anti-Bolsheviks breaks out.
3 March 1918	Treaty of Brest-Litovsk signed with Germany. Soviets cede a large amount of territory to Berlin, to end the First World War for the Russians.
1918-1922	Policy of “war communism” established by Lenin. State takes control over the entire economy. Millions starve as a result.
17 July 1918	Bolsheviks assassinate Tsar Nicholas II in Yekaterinburg.
1921	New Economic Policy introduced by Lenin partially brings back market economy and a period of stability.
1922	The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is created, joining Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Transcaucasia into the Soviet Union.
1922	The Weimar Republic (Germany) recognizes the Soviet Union.
1924	Soviet Union adopts constitution based on the “dictatorship of the Proletariat”, stipulating public ownership of land and the means of production.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 187.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 188.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 188.

⁶¹ Ibid., 188.

⁶² Ibid., 188.

⁶³ BBC, “Soviet Union Timeline”, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17858981> (Accessed Dec. 10, 2018).



21 January 1924	Vladimir Lenin dies
1928	Adoption of the first five-year plan. New Economic Policy abandoned.
1928	Collectivization of agriculture begins. Numerous Kulaks purged and killed.
1933	United States recognizes the Soviet Union.
1934	Soviet Union joins the League of Nations.
Summer of 1937	Great Purge begins.
August 1939	Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact signed.
September 1939	Soviet troops enter Poland, which is then divided between Germany and the USSR.
30 November 1939	Soviet troops invade Finland, triggering the Winter War.
13 March 1940	Peace treaty between Finland and the USSR signed. The Soviets are largely defeated.
1940	Soviet Union incorporate the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.
April 1941	The USSR and Japan sign a nonaggression pact.

Issues

An Uneasy Friendship: Hitler and Stalin

When considering the relationship that the General Secretary of the Soviet Union had with the Führer of the Third Reich, it must be said that it was an uneasy friendship. Even though both nations had signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact in 1939 and were supposedly not going to attack each other as per the agreement, it cannot be stated that both sides trusted each other. For example, Adolf Hitler had plans to attack the USSR by at least March of 1940 when the USSR suffered a humiliating defeat against Finland.⁶⁴ Despite that, Stalin did have a certain level of trust for Hitler. That trust was less of a desire to believe Hitler's word and more of a trust based on logical assumptions.

Even though Germany's *Wehrmacht* seemed invincible (having dealt with France in under two months) the fact remained that the UK was still very much alive to the west. The Royal Air Force had found victory against the German *Luftwaffe* in the latter's attempt to blockade the nation and destroy its infrastructure in order to either force the British to surrender or to gain air superiority over the English Channel. Seeing Germany's failure in these goals, Stalin was led to believe that the chances of Germany to launch a full-scale attack of the USSR at that point was extremely unlikely. Thus, the Soviet leader believed that Germany would not be foolish enough to accept a commencement of hostilities on two fronts simultaneously.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Oleg Khlevniuk, *Stalin: New Biography of a Dictator*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2015), 172.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 187.



Hitler was quite aware of this rational line of thought and chose to exploit that. He realized that he had the element of surprise on his side as the Soviets were not at all prepared for an all-out invasion.⁶⁶ Thus, wishing to make the most out of this situation, Hitler made the apparent “foolish decision” of invading the Soviet Union. Even though most historians point this as Hitler’s fatal mistake that cost him the war, claiming this with historical hindsight is unfair.

When the decision was made it seemed like a good one from Hitler’s perspective. Stalin’s denial of the facts is evident by his reaction to an intelligence report issued on 17 June 1941 that claimed that a German attack was about to occur. Stalin had so much faith in his “friendship” with Hitler and in his conception that the Germans would not attack with Britain still engaged that he disregarded his own intelligence services by claiming that the state security commissar, the man who issued the report, could send his supposed “source” back to his “f**king mother”, and that the report was simply “disinformation”.⁶⁷

Thus, Stalin’s relatively good relationship with Hitler and the fact that he believed too much in his own conception of the situation rather than the hard facts has caused the Soviet military to be unprepared for the almost certain German invasion.

Diplomacy

While diplomacy can be easily ignored on the eve of war, an important solution of dealing with a possible invasion could be more than a military response but the diplomatic response. Diplomatically speaking, a German invasion could be delayed and, most importantly, allies can be won. It may be possible for the USSR to delay the German invasion while simultaneously brokering some sort of cooperation agreement with the United Kingdom or other countries that would allow the USSR to build up its strength against the German threat and, in the future, project Soviet power further throughout the globe.

Task of the Committee

State of Affairs

The day is June 19th, 1941. After weeks of heavy movement in the western border, it is now clear to all with access to intelligence reports that the Germans intend to break the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop pact and launch an all-out invasion in the Soviet Union’s western frontier. Nevertheless, the General Secretary, Joseph Stalin, refuses to believe there is an imminent invasion coming and believes that war will be delayed due to numerous factors, such as Germany not yet defeating Britain. It would be unwise to defy Stalin, but the USSR is not yet mobilized. Every hour lost is an hour the Soviet forces could be transferred to the border regions. Therefore, the Politburo of the Soviet Union has convened to an emergency meeting. The aim of this session is to determine what course of action to take against the Germans. You will discuss whether to mobilize the Red Army, and/or to open a diplomatic channel with Berlin. The committee will have to evaluate what could happen if a German assault occurred and prepare for such a possibility immediately.

Call to Action

The course of action the Soviet Union will take is now entirely in your hands. Since a German invasion is almost a certainty, ministers should consider how to most effectively act. It

⁶⁶ Ibid., 187.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 188



could be possible to delay the German invasion by a few days by attempting to contact Berlin. That could be interesting to give the Politburo time to convince Stalin of the danger of the invasion, and, furthermore, commence the mobilization of the Red Army. However, the opposite side should also be considered. If diplomacy fails to give the USSR time, the western frontier will be largely unready to deal with the incoming German advance. But, if the Politburo was to mobilize the forces of the Soviet Union without first convincing Stalin of the likelihood of the invasion, it is quite likely the General Secretary will be highly displeased and might act against members who operate in violation of his wishes. The dangers and benefits of each action should be carefully considered, but as you convene for this emergency meeting in Moscow, one thing is clear: the German Wehrmacht has already conquered most of Europe, and intelligence reports claim the Soviet Union is its next target. It is up to the ministers of the Politburo to assess this situation and collectively decide how to proceed.

Questions to Consider

- I. What is the best course of action for the USSR to take right now? What does your specific character want in this situation?
- II. Is the Red Army ready for invasion? Could it hold back the German *Wehrmacht*?
- III. How is public opinion at home? How does the population view the war? (Note: Remember poor public opinion during the Great War resulted in the fall of Tsar Nicholas and the previous regime).
- IV. Is a diplomatic response possible? Can the USSR gain time?
- V. How would a military response be organized?



Appendices

Appendix I: Map of Europe in the Eve of Operation Barbarossa⁶⁸



⁶⁸ OmniAtlas, "Europe 1941: Eve of Barbarossa", <https://omniatlas.com/maps/europe/19410621/> (Accessed Dec. 10, 2018)



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