SOVIET FOREIGN RELATIONS DURING WORLD WAR II

I. AMERICAN AND BRITISH RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA BEFORE HITLER'S ATTACK ON USSR

Had been pretty bad.

1. Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939 -- Had linked Stalin with Hitler. 2 of a kind.

2. Soviet Invasion of Poland -- Like a vulture picking up the scraps after some predatory beast has eaten its victim.

3. Soviet war against Finland (1939-40) -- Further lowered Soviet prestige.

4. Annexation of Baltic States, Bessarabia, N. Bukovina --
   - Seemed to be additional proof that Stalin was just as bad as Hitler.
   - Both Germany and Russia appeared to be ruthless, aggressive dictatorships.

5. Battle of Britain --
   - Russia had sat and watched while Hitler bombed Britain and tried to force them to surrender.
   - Russia gave no aid or comfort to the British, yet only a few months later Stalin was demanding immediate British aid to Russia.

II. BUT HITLER'S ATTACK ON RUSSIA CHANGED ALL THIS

1. Churchill -- Immediately went on the radio, made a speech saying that any country that fought against Nazi Germany was Britain's friend.
   - Would cooperate in any way possible.
2. British-Soviet Agreement -- (July 12, 1941)

a. "The 2 govts mutually undertake to render each other assistance and support of all kinds..."

b. "They further undertake that during this war they will neither negotiate nor conclude an armistice or treaty of peace except by mutual agreement."

c. Later, this war transformed into a 20 yr. alliance, pledging military assistance. (May 26, 1942).

III. AMERICAN REACTION TO ATTACK ON RUSSIA:

1. Still not in the war. Had become violently anti-Soviet during the recent war with Finland. But now sentiment veered in favor of Russia.

2. Aid Committee -- Within one week after the attack, formed a committee to act under the State Dept. for purpose of sending aid to Russia.

3. Promise of aid -- August - promised to afford "all economic assistance practicable", including unlimited export licenses and priorities equal to those of Britain.

4. Hopkins to Moscow (July) -- To find out about Soviet needs. See if it was worthwhile sending anything to Russia, or whether it would soon collapse. Personal emissary of Roosevelt, to convince Stalin of our sincerity in promising aid.

IV. EXPECTATION OF QUICK SOVIET DEFEAT.

1. Hitler planned 6 weeks, as in France.

2. War with Finland -- had convinced many of Soviet weakness. Army purge - officer corps liquidated.

3. Soviet system inefficient -- Western people who were hostile to Communism wished to believe the worst.

4. Gen. Marshall -- Is reported (by Wm Shirer) to have told correspondents confidentially that Russia would collapse in a few weeks.

5. Gallup Poll -- 70% of Americans expected early Russian defeat.

6. But Hopkins - Convinced that Russians could hold out, persuaded Roosevelt that Lend-Lease would be a good bet.

"In my judgement, Hitler will be in control of Russia within 30 days." (24 June 1941)
V. HARRITMAN AND BEAVERBROOK TO MOSCOW (Sept. 1941)

1. To discuss aid to Russia. Told what they could send.

2. Moscow Protocol -- U.S. promised to deliver approximately $1 billion of supplies to Russia in the ensuing year.

Roosevelt declared Russia eligible for Lend-Lease, set up a $1 billion credit for her.

Sent letters to war agencies stating that he wished all material promised by the Protocol to be released for shipment at earliest possible date, regardless of the effect of these shipments on any other part of the war program." (Deane, 89)

Britain also promised aid.

But long time before aid came in important quantities.

VI. FIRST GERMAN OFFENSIVE (June 22, 1941 -- Dec. 5)

3-pronged drive.

1. Stopped on outskirts of Moscow. (within sight of Krasnnya Square)

2. Defended selves without much help from abroad.

3. If the Germans had taken Moscow & Leningrad, this might have led to collapse of morale and end of the war. But not necessarily. (Napoleon in 1812)

VII. SOVIET COUNTER-OFFENSIVE (Dec. 6, 1941 -- March 8, 1942)


II. PEARL HARBOR

Brought U.S. into war. But Third, no immediate help to USSR. On the contrary, armistice of U.S. now got 1st priority over aid to Russia.


2. Twenty Year Alliance --

a. Pledged "to afford one another military and other assistance and support of all kinds."

b. No separate peace.

Thus put into effect for 20 years. The agreement made in previous July.
DESPITE THE COMMON ENEMY,

EVEN DURING THE WAR THERE WERE DISPUTES, DIFFERENCES OF OPINION.

IX. THE SECOND FRONT DISPUTE.

1. Russia - Demanded a 2nd Front in Europe, right away, in 1941
   - Afraid that otherwise Russia would be defeated.
   - Impossible.

2. Roosevelt -- Foolishly promised a cross-channel invasion of France in 1942.
   - Unable to fulfill the promise until 2 years later, in 1944.

3. Why was the Invasion of France Delayed?
   a. Used up men and equipment in other fronts:
      - Pacific Theatre.
      - China-Burma Theatre. Iran - supply route to Russia.
      - Aleutians.
      - North African invasion (Nov. 1942) - To prevent Middle East oil from falling into German hands.
      - Sicilian invasion.
      - Italian invasion

      Western troops, ships, and munitions were spread all over the world.

   b. We learned that amphibious landings were doomed unless the supplies of planes, ships, and men were overwhelming.
      - Amphibious landings in the Pacific and on the Atlantic coast (at Dieppe) were very costly.

   c. Churchill -- Constantly coming up with some kind of scheme for landing somewhere else than in France. Perhaps influenced by his memories of the dreadful blood-letting of World War I in France.

4. Soviet Suspicions -- That we were deliberately postponing the 2nd/
   Front.
   - Would let the Germans & Russians bleed each other white, and then the West would come in and dictate the peace terms.
   - Felt they were bearing the major brunt of the war against Hitler and they were.
X. LEND-LEASE

X. DISPUTES OVER WESTERN AID TO RUSSIA.

1. America and Britain -- both sent huge quantities of goods of all sorts. Especially America. "Lend-Lease".

2. American View -- It was popularly believed by Americans at the time, and later, that most of Russia's munitions were coming from the U.S. Plus food, clothing, etc.

-- We felt the Russians should be grateful. Thought they should express their gratitude.

-- Instead, the Russians officially showed no gratitude, but always asked for more.

-- American Officials -- Asked the Russians to explain why they needed so many million yards of copper wire, etc., etc.

-- Conscious of the fact that quantities were limited, and that these supplies were needed on other fronts also.

3. Soviet View --

-- They were doing most of the fighting, were shedding priceless blood. Fighting alone against the Germans.

-- Therefore, the least we could do was to send them all the supplies they needed.

-- No Gratitude due, since we were sending them supplies out of our own selfish interests. Not because we were generous.

-- American Capitalists -- Were making millions of $$$ off the war.

4. Did Russia get Most of her Munitions from the West? NO.

-- Got large quantities of tanks, planes, guns, shells, etc.

-- But the bulk of these items were produced by the Soviet Union itself.

-- Especially important American items -- trucks, shoes, food
5. Could Russia have Survived the War without Western Aid?

- Impossible to say.

- Western aid arrived in much larger quantities after Stalingrad than before. After the American industrial machine got into full gear.

- Amounts arriving before Stalingrad -- relatively small.

- Still, the margin between Victory and Defeat was very narrow.

The planes, Tanks, Trucks, shoes, and food which we sent during 1941, 1942, and early 1943 may have spelled the difference between a German victory and a Soviet victory.

(Stalingrad, Aug. 42 - Feb. 43)