

# From pariah to saviour: the Soviet Union and Europe 1921-1945

JRCE 1 A Communist cartoon of Comrade Lenin cleaning the world of filth. The caption reads 'Comrade Lenin cleans the world of filth'



**Тов. Ленин ОЧИЩАЕТ  
ЗЕМЛЮ ОТ НЕЧИСТИ.**

**A**ccording to the orthodox Marxist view, revolution in the advanced states of Europe was essential for the success of the revolution in Russia. But this had failed to materialise. The Red Army had been defeated in the war against Poland, which Lenin had hoped would spark a European-wide revolution. All attempts at revolution in Germany and Hungary had failed. The Soviet Union was alone in a generally hostile capitalist world. Moreover, the ravages of war, revolution and civil war had left the country drained and famine stricken by 1921. The Soviet Union desperately needed to trade with capitalist countries and get economic help, so it was crucial to establish stable, working diplomatic relations with those countries. This posed a serious dilemma for Soviet foreign policy-makers since they were also committed to undermining capitalist governments.

In Chapter 18 we examine Soviet relations with Europe between 1917-1941 and why the Soviet Union came to terms with Hitler and signed a non-aggression pact with Germany. Chapter 19 looks at the Great Patriotic War and seeks to explain why a war that started disastrously ended in triumph.

**SOURCE 2** Lenin, February 1921

*We have always and repeatedly pointed out to the workers that the underlying chief task and basic condition of our victory is the propagation of revolution at least to several of the more advanced countries.*

**SOURCE 3** Lenin explaining why the Soviet Union was attending the international conference at Genoa in 1922

*We go to it because trade with capitalist countries (so long as they have not altogether collapsed) is unconditionally necessary for us.*

**SOURCE 4** Litvinov (Commissar for Foreign Affairs), December 1933

*The ensuring of peace cannot depend on our efforts alone, it requires the collaboration and co-operation of other states. While therefore trying to establish and maintain relations with all states, we are giving special attention to strengthening and making close our relations with those which, like us, give proof of their sincere desire to maintain peace and are ready to resist those who break the peace.*

**SOURCE 5** Stalin, speaking at the Seventeenth Party Congress, 1934

*The USSR would never be swayed by alliances with this or that foreign power, be it France, Poland or Germany, but would always base her policy on self-interest.*

**ACTIVITY**

**What were the aims of Soviet foreign policy?**

1 Study Sources 1-8. On your own copy of the table below, indicate which sources provide evidence of:

- a) the desire to spread revolution
- b) attempts to establish working relationships with other countries
- c) the desire to protect the Soviet Union's interests and ensure it could defend itself.

Source	Date	Desire to spread revolution	Establishment of working relationships	Defence of Soviet interests

2 What do these sources suggest about changes in Soviet foreign policy between 1920 and 1939?

**SOURCE 6** Litvinov, May 1938, to the Director General of the Czech Foreign Office, comparing the situation with 1914-17

*This time we shall observe the contest between Germany and the Western powers and shall not intervene in the conflict until we ourselves feel it fit to do so in order to bring about the decision.*

**SOURCE 7** Stalin at the Eighteenth Party Congress, March 1939

*England and France have rejected the policy of collective security ... and taken a position of non-intervention ... the policy of non-intervention reveals an eagerness not to hinder Germany ... from embroiling herself in a war with the Soviet Union ...*

*... Be cautious and [do] not allow Soviet Russia to be drawn into the conflicts by warmongers who are accustomed to have others pull the chestnuts out of the fire.*



**SOURCE 8** The front page of a German weekly magazine, published after the Nazi-Soviet non-aggression treaty of 23 August 1939. It shows Stalin shaking hands with Ribbentrop, the German foreign minister

note the differences between the three commissars under the following headings:

- background and experience of foreign countries
- status in the party
- attitude to Germany
- other policy differences.

Lenin kept foreign policy very much in his own hands. As in the 1950s under Stalin, the leader and the Politburo made the crucial decisions. However, the Commissar for Foreign Affairs worked out the style and delivery of policy.



**G.V. CHICHERIN (1872-1936)**  
**Foreign Commissar April 1918-July 1930**

An ex-Menshevik and an aristocrat by birth, Chicherin was a highly educated but rather emotional, chaotic man. He had been employed by the tsarist foreign ministry and had extensive experience working abroad. He was in jail in Britain from August 1917 to January 1918. Lenin described him as 'an excellent worker, extremely conscientious, intelligent and learned'. He was not a member of the Politburo.

**The policies he is identified with**

- He always favoured close relations with Germany and helped to bring about the Treaty of Rapallo.
- He was anti-British.
- Like Lenin, he believed that the USSR was most secure when the capitalist powers were disunited, and that if the USSR were involved in, rather than isolated from, the system of capitalist international relations then this would be more likely to occur. So he pursued a policy of *peaceful coexistence*.

**M. LITVINOV (1876-1951)**  
**Foreign Commissar July 1930-May 1939 (Deputy Commissar 1921-30 and 1941-46)**

Litvinov was an ex-Menshevik, with a Jewish background. He had spent a long time abroad, including ten years in Britain; his wife was British. He was an exceptionally talented negotiator and very good at establishing friendly relations with statesmen and opinion leaders in the democracies; a model of organisation. His influence was restricted to foreign affairs: he was not a member of the Politburo.

**The policies he is identified with**

- He believed that preventing all wars was in the USSR's interest. Unlike Chicherin, he favoured disarmament and signing the Kellogg Pact to outlaw war. He was a familiar figure at Geneva once the USSR had joined the League of Nations.
- He was pro-British and deeply suspicious of Germany, even in the 1920s, and he only grudgingly accepted the Treaty of Rapallo.
- He favoured collective security against fascism.



**V.M. MOLOTOV (1890-1986)**  
**Foreign Commissar May 1939-March 1949**

Molotov means hammer, quite an apt name. A Bolshevik from his youth, he was never exiled abroad and had no direct experience of the world outside Russia. A member of the Politburo from 1925 (unlike Chicherin and Litvinov), he was made leader of the Comintern in 1929. He became Stalin's deputy and together they signed many death sentences during the purges. Trotsky called Molotov a 'blockhead' and other colleagues referred to him as 'stone arse' but he did exert some influence over Stalin in foreign policy and has been called 'one of the toughest negotiators of the twentieth century'. His appointment as Commissar (replacing the anti-German Litvinov) in May 1939 has been seen as sending out an encouraging signal to Germany.

**The policies he is identified with**

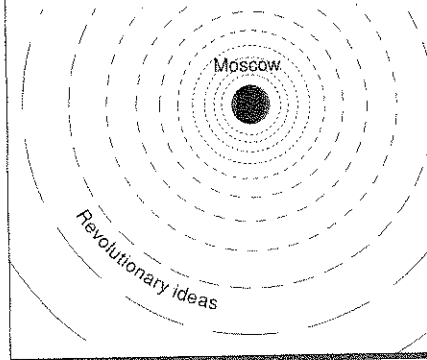
- He favoured improved relations with Germany. The Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939 is often referred to as the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact.

**B Factors that helped to determine Soviet foreign policy during the inter-war years**

When politicians make foreign policy, they are influenced by a number of different factors. For any given country, some factors are relatively constant while others vary according to the individuals involved and the circumstances in which they were operating. Here are some of the factors influencing Soviet foreign policy in the 1920s and 1930s.

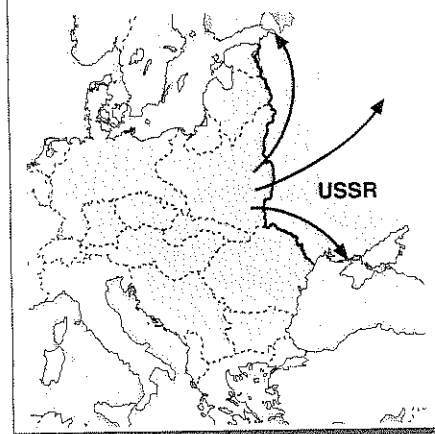
**Ideology**

Orthodox Marxism stressed the need for revolution in other countries if socialism was to survive in the USSR. The USSR's desire to spread the revolution both at home and abroad threatened the West. Ideological differences did not rule out normal diplomacy, but they did provide the basis for mistrust. The existence of the Comintern and foreign intervention in the Civil War produced mistrust from the outset.



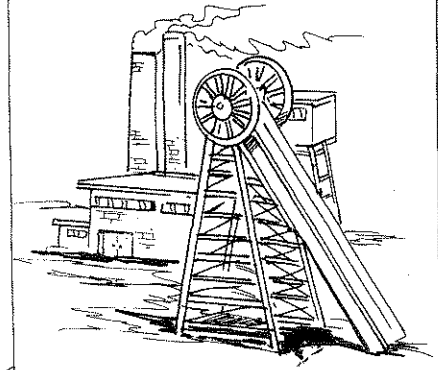
**Security – fear of invasion**

Worries about security were increased by Russia's geography. Its frontier in the north-west and west was 3200 km long and lacked natural boundaries. As the only Communist state it was not unnatural for the Russians to fear invasion by the capitalist states. The list of invaders of Russia over the previous 800 years read like a Who's Who of military aggression and was referred to by Stalin to justify the need for rapid industrialisation under the Five-Year Plans.



**Economic backwardness**

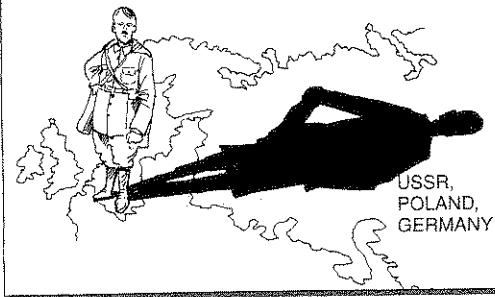
Soviet leaders were well aware of the perceived and actual technological inferiority of the Soviet state and the need for Western technological help in building Soviet industry.



**FACTORS DETERMINING SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY DURING THE INTER-WAR YEARS**

**Attitudes of other countries**

Not even the most powerful country can make policy totally uninfluenced by the actions of other countries. Foreign intervention in the Civil War left a legacy of suspicion, and the rise of Hitler and the failure of the British and French to act against him could not be ignored.



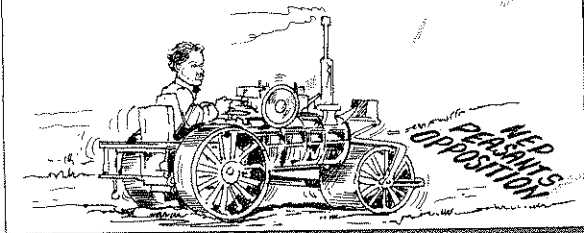
**The background and views of those making Soviet policy**

The leaders of the country – Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin – and their Commissars for Foreign Affairs – Chicherin, Litvinov and Molotov – had an influence on policy.



**The internal situation**

At any given time, the internal situation was bound to impact on foreign policy. Thus the state of the country at the end of the Civil War, the power struggle to succeed Lenin, the Five-Year Plans and collectivisation all had an influence on foreign policy.



**FOCUS ROUTE**

Which of the factors in Chart B do you think was most important in influencing Soviet foreign policy between 1920 and 1939? Place the factors in order of importance.

<b>PHASE ONE</b>	
	<b>Extricating Russia from the war: October 1917–March 1918</b>
October 1917	Decree on Peace
February 1918	Bolshevik cancellation of foreign debts
March 1918	Treaty of Brest-Litovsk
<b>PHASE TWO</b>	
	<b>The Civil War: 1918–20</b>
April 1918– September 1919	Foreign intervention in the Civil War
March 1919	Comintern (Third Communist International) set up to guide, co-ordinate and promote the Communist parties of the world.
April–October 1920	Russo-Polish war. Attempt to spread world revolution by arms defeated outside Warsaw in August.
July 1920	Second Congress of Comintern – laid on other Communist parties the overriding duty to protect the USSR.
<b>PHASE THREE</b>	
	<b>The need for recovery and peace: 1921–27</b>
March 1921	The treaty of Riga gave Poland parts of Belorussia and the Ukraine.
1921	Secret discussions with Germany on military and economic co-operation. Anglo-Soviet trade agreement.
1922	Rapallo agreement with Germany – the two countries recognise each other diplomatically. Secret military co-operation.
1924	Official recognition of USSR by Britain, France and Italy. 'Zinoviev letter' published in <i>The Times</i> newspaper in Britain.
1926	Treaty of Berlin with Germany extends the Treaty of Rapallo.
1927	Diplomatic relations between Britain and the USSR suspended (restored by Ramsay MacDonald in 1929).

### THE COMINTERN (THIRD COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL)

The Comintern is described as the 'Third Communist International' because two previous organisations had been set up to encourage the spread of socialist ideas. The first was set up by Karl Marx in London in 1864 but was so riven by disputes that it soon fell apart. The second was a much looser association set up in Paris in 1889. It held international conferences to discuss Marxist theory but ceased to meet after the outbreak of the First World War.

<b>PHASE FOUR</b>	
	<b>The left turn of the Comintern: 1928–33</b>
1928	New, more radical Comintern line. Social Democrats (SPD) in Germany attacked as 'social fascists'. Foreign Communist party leaders suspected of following a line of their own are expelled from the Comintern and discredited. They are replaced by leaders obedient to Moscow. War scares: propaganda stressed the imminent danger of invasion.
1928–32	Rise in economic and military collaboration between the USSR and Germany.
<b>PHASE FIVE</b>	
	<b>Collective security against fascism: 1934–39</b>
March 1934	Trade agreement with Germany.
September 1934	Soviet entry into the League of Nations. Litvinov promotes a 'collective security' policy.
May 1935	Pacts with France and Czechoslovakia.
August 1935	Reversal of policy by the Comintern: now supports popular fronts.
1936–39	Soviet Union intervenes in Spanish Civil War.
November 1936	Anti-Comintern Pact involving Germany and Japan and, a year later, Italy.
September 1938	Munich agreement, Soviet Union excluded.
1938–39	Japanese attacks on Soviet territory in the Far East.
April 1939	Litvinov proposes a triple military alliance between the Soviet Union, Britain and France.
May 1939	Molotov replaces Litvinov as Commissar for Foreign Affairs.
<b>PHASE SIX</b>	
	<b>The Nazi-Soviet Pact 1939</b>
August 1939	Soviet-Anglo-French talks in Moscow.
23 August	Ribbentrop and Molotov sign the Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact and a secret protocol dividing Eastern Europe into spheres of influence.  (See the separate timeline – Chart 18E on page 338 – for the events leading to the pact of 1939.)
<b>PHASE SEVEN</b>	
	<b>The aftermath of the Nazi-Soviet Pact 1939–41</b>
1 September 1939	German troops invade Poland.
17 September 1939	Red Army enters Poland from the east.
30 November 1939	Soviet Union invades Finland.
12 March 1940	Finland signs peace treaty with USSR ceding territory.
17–23 June 1940	Soviet Union occupies the Baltic States.
22 June 1941	Germany invades the Soviet Union.

## What were the aims of Soviet foreign policy under Lenin?

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### FOCUS ROUTE

Make notes in answer to the following questions:

- 1 What were Lenin's aims and what changes in policy did he make?
- 2 What evidence is there of the tension between the desire to spread revolution and the demands of political realism?
- 3 How did the Bolsheviks adapt their foreign policy to changing circumstances?

In the new Bolshevik government, Trotsky was made Commissar for Foreign Affairs. Initially, the Bolsheviks saw this as a minor post and Trotsky chose it to give himself more time for party work. But he was soon embroiled in difficult peace negotiations. Taking Russia out of the First World War had been a major Bolshevik pledge and the Decree on Peace, which called for an immediate truce and a just peace, was issued as early as 26 October 1917. But it brought no response from the major powers fighting the war. So a separate peace had to be made with Germany and the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was signed on Lenin's insistence (see page 121). In no sphere of policy was Lenin's leadership more decisive and discernible than in foreign affairs. Over Brest-Litovsk he showed a much clearer understanding of the realities of 1918 than Trotsky with his policy of 'neither peace nor war' or Bukharin with his impractical idea of transforming the war into a revolutionary war.

Hopes of world revolution were put on hold as the Bolsheviks fought for their survival in the Civil War. Nevertheless, Lenin was confident that the revolution would spread. He told the first meeting of the Comintern that 'the victory of the proletarian revolution on a world scale is assured, the founding of an international Soviet republic is on the way'. The opposite appeared to be true when foreign governments intervened on behalf of the Whites in the Civil War, but their intervention did not have a major impact on the outcome of the war. It even helped the Bolsheviks insofar as it allowed them to brand the Whites as agents of foreign imperialists.

In 1920 the Poles, hoping to gain territory, invaded Russia but the Red Army drove the Polish army back (see Chart 7D on page 130). Lenin saw the chance to use Poland as 'the red bridge into Europe' and for Russia to aid the expected revolution in Germany. It did not happen. The failure to take Warsaw was one of the major disappointments of his life. The decision to carry on the fight after the Poles had been chased out of Russia was very much his own, against the wishes of the majority of his colleagues, and although Lenin had to admit that the policy had failed he never admitted that it was wrong.

The realisation that the Poles had fought against the Red Army invaders rather than rising with them to embrace the revolution forced Lenin to accept reluctantly that peaceful coexistence rather than spreading revolution was the only option in Europe for some time. Lenin was ever the pragmatist and ready to adapt policy to changing situations. Alone in a hostile world, the Soviet Union was vulnerable to attack and Lenin sought to counter this. His main aim was to divide the imperialist countries and prevent them from forming a capitalist bloc against Soviet Russia. He worked on exploiting the differences between them. He made moves towards Germany, another outcast nation, which resulted in the Treaty of Rapallo in 1922 (see page 330). He used conventional diplomacy to begin negotiating a trade agreement with Britain in 1921 (see page 330). However, establishing foreign relationships through diplomacy was complicated by the existence of the Comintern.

### ■ Learning trouble spot

#### Bolshevik objectives

It can be difficult to work out the objectives of the Bolsheviks in this period because they were contradictory. Lenin, interested in survival, was willing to compromise in conventional diplomacy but, as Beryl Williams makes clear in her book *Lenin* (2000, page 171), 'Peaceful coexistence [for Lenin] was a means to an end . . . the goal remained a European, indeed a world Communist state'. So although the Bolsheviks were prepared to work within the normal diplomatic framework, they hoped that they would be able to foment revolution in other countries through the Comintern.

## FOCUS ROUTE

Note your answers to the following questions:

- 1 What was the Comintern?
- 2 What happened at the second Congress and with what result?
- 3 What problems did the Comintern cause?

**SOURCE 18.1** 'Workers of the world unite!': the title page of *The Communist International*, a pamphlet published in Moscow in May 1919 and printed in several languages



**SOURCE 18.2** A propaganda poster produced in Germany in 1919 by the Association for the Fight Against Bolshevism. The association was formed with support from the government and businesses to counter the threat of revolutionary influences on Germany

## Spartakus bei der Arbeit



Vereinigung  
zur Bekämpfung des  
Bolschewismus.  
Berlin W 9 Schellingstr. 2

## B Why did the Comintern exist and what problems did it present?

In January 1919, when the revolutionary wave in Europe was at its peak, Lenin had called for an international congress of revolutionary socialists. In March 1919, a motley collection from 35 groups did meet in Moscow and the Comintern – the Communist International – was formed. The Comintern appealed at its first meeting to the workers of all countries to support the Soviet regime by all available means, including, if necessary, 'revolutionary means'. Such an appeal was likely to fuel fears in Western Europe (see the German propaganda poster in Source 18.2). As Map 18B on page 329 shows, attempts to stir up revolution in Europe were singularly unsuccessful.

The failure of revolutionary attempts in Berlin and Munich and of Bela Kun's Soviet Republic in Hungary, which lasted less than four months, convinced Lenin that success could only be achieved if foreign Communist parties adopted the Bolshevik model. One of the main aims of the Second International Congress organised by the Comintern in 1920 was to bring foreign Communist parties under its control. Twenty-one conditions were drawn up for membership of the Comintern, including the following:

- Communist parties had to be organised on Leninist principles of centralisation and discipline. (The British and Spanish delegates had demanded freedom of action for their Communist parties but it was not granted.)
- Parties had to prepare for civil war by establishing an underground organisation, by spreading revolutionary propaganda among the proletariat, peasantry and armed forces, and by setting up cells in trade unions and other worker organisations.
- Party programmes had to be approved by the Comintern; disobedience could mean expulsion.

This policy had two very important and damaging results:

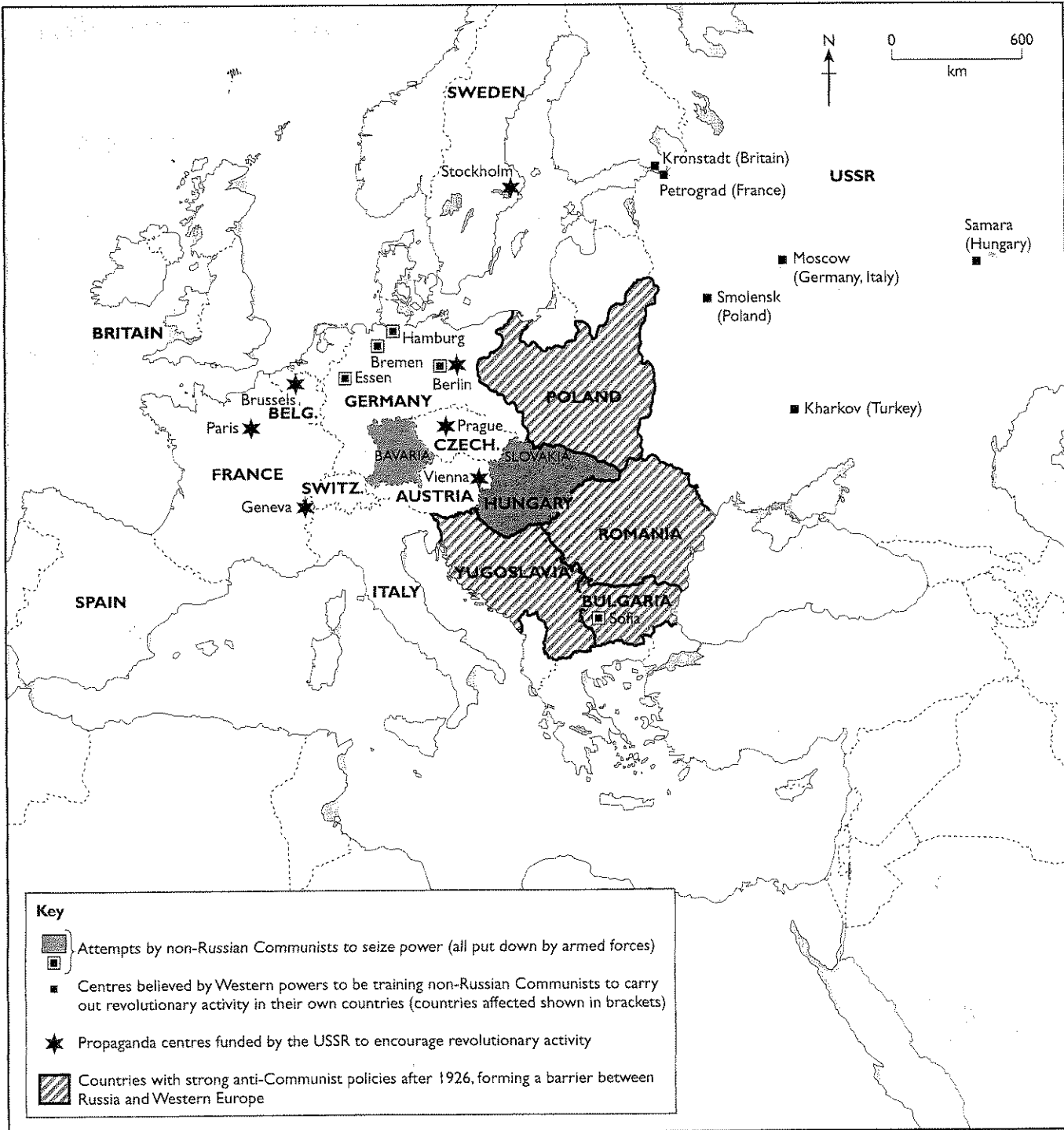
- 1 Moscow insisted upon centralised control and discipline and made the national security of the USSR the top priority for all Communist parties in other countries. But this reduced the appeal of the Communist Party to the rank and file of workers in other countries.
- 2 The stated intentions of the Comintern and the financial support (real and imagined) it gave to its members seriously weakened the Soviet Union's chances of achieving reliable and stable commercial and diplomatic relations with the European countries.

Here is one example of how the activities of the Comintern damaged diplomatic relations with Britain.

- In 1924, the 'Zinoviev letter' – a letter supposedly from the Comintern to the British Communist Party instructing the latter to conduct propaganda in the armed forces and elsewhere – was published just before the British general election. It was a forgery, but it indicated how British opinion perceived the threat presented by the Comintern. The new Conservative government virtually suspended all dealings with the Soviet government throughout 1925.

Throughout his time in office, Chicherin petitioned the Politburo to separate the personnel, policies and activities of the Comintern from those of the Soviet government. In practice this did not happen. Key players like Zinoviev, Trotsky and Bukharin were all involved in the Comintern at different times and they could not be ignored.

Stalin abolished the Comintern in 1943 as a goodwill gesture to his wartime allies.







## What were the Soviet Union's relations with Britain and Germany between 1921 and 1933?

Soviet Russia could not afford to remain isolated. It needed to trade with other countries and to bring in capital goods to help to revive its industry. There were also all sorts of other matters, such as the movement of people in and out of Russia, which needed to be sorted out by the normal round of diplomatic relations. These matters were handled largely by men working in the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs who had some diplomatic experience, like Chicherin, or by the new intake who soon became specialists in the field. There was often tension between these men and the revolutionary agitators working for the Comintern. What progress was made by conventional diplomacy?

### FOCUS ROUTE

Draw a table with four columns and these headings:

Moves that strengthened/maintained relations with Britain 1921-33	Moves that weakened relations with Britain	Moves that strengthened/maintained relations with Germany 1921-33	Moves that weakened relations with Germany

As you work through this section, enter events/actions in each column.

### Relations with Britain

The Anglo-Soviet trade agreement of 1921 marked the first positive contact with the Soviet Union (trade was mutually profitable) although relations between the two countries were never easy. The Conservatives dominated British governments for most of the 1920s and 1930s and were particularly suspicious of Soviet activity in Britain and the empire.

Diplomatic relations were strained in 1926 by what the British government saw as subversive Soviet behaviour during the General Strike. The Soviet leadership saw the strike as a political act and the beginning of a proletarian revolution. In reality, it was a dispute about wages. The Russian Central Council of Trade Unions sent a cheque for £26,000 (a considerable sum) to the Trades Union Congress (TUC), the national leadership of the trade unions. The TUC leadership sent it back to prevent the British government from claiming that they were in the pay of the Bolsheviks. All that Soviet policy had achieved was to encourage anti-Soviet die-hards in Britain.

### Relations with Germany

It has been said that Germany and the USSR were natural allies in the 1920s. Both were outcast nations: Germany because it had been defeated in and blamed for the First World War, the USSR because of its Communist ideology and its refusal to support the Western powers in the First World War. The Rapallo Treaty of 1922 between the two countries was central to the Soviet Union's security. Although on paper it amounted to no more than the re-establishment of diplomatic relations, a renunciation of financial claims on each side and a promise of economic co-operation, it ended the isolation that both countries were experiencing. In the years that followed, it was underpinned by significant economic and military collaboration. In spite of the tensions caused by the activities of the Comintern, especially its involvement in Communist risings in Germany in 1921 and 1923, co-operation was mutually beneficial (see Chart 18C on page 331).

after 1923 the chances of a Communist rising in Germany faded, removing the cause of tension between the two countries. However, in 1925 the Locarno treaties (a set of treaties between Western powers, which guaranteed the existing frontiers of Western Europe) indicated better relations between Germany, Britain and France. This worried Russia: would Locarno reintegrate Germany into the Western world and isolate the USSR? As a result, a whole clutch of trade treaties were signed between Germany and Russia on the eve of Locarno to reassure the Soviets. The Treaty of Berlin, signed in 1926, had the same purpose. It reaffirmed the terms of the Treaty of Rapallo and was to remain in force for five years. The USSR and Germany pledged neutrality if either were attacked by another power. Militarily and economically, though not politically, ties between the two countries grew stronger.

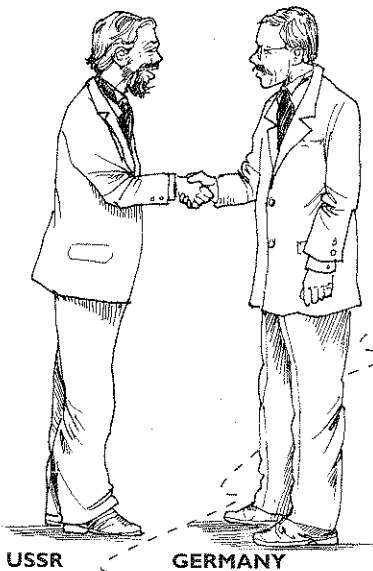
**SOURCE 18.3** The German President, Hindenburg, welcomes Marshal Tukhachevsky (right) and a Soviet delegation in 1932. The Soviet army officers had come to observe German army manoeuvres



■ 18C Advantages of mutual co-operation between the USSR and Germany, 1922–32

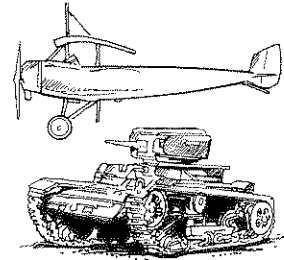
**Diplomatic advantages**

Both ceased to be isolated outcasts. The USSR avoided the nightmare prospect of capitalist countries combining against it and Germany strengthened its bargaining position with Britain and France.



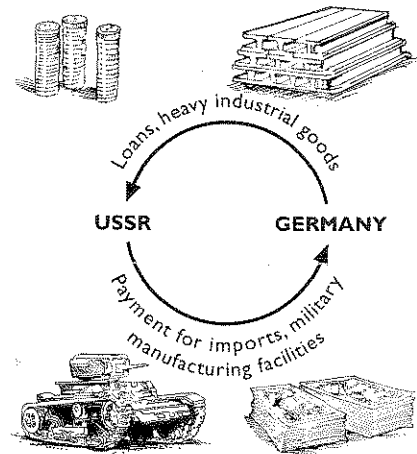
**Military co-operation**

German officers trained the Red Army in tank warfare and military aviation. The German army was able to train and experiment with weapons forbidden by the Treaty of Versailles – especially tanks, aircraft and gas. Co-operation reached its high point at the beginning of the 1930s.



**Economic co-operation**

Germany was the only major country to make significant long-term loans to the USSR. German financial and technical help was important during the NEP and the First Five-Year Plan. The USSR supplied markets for German heavy industry. By 1932, 47 per cent of total Russian imports came from Germany. German firms in the USSR manufactured guns, shells, aircraft and tanks.



## D How did Stalin change Soviet foreign policy between 1924 and 1932?

### FOCUS ROUTE

Make notes to prepare for a discussion on the following issues:

- 1 How did Stalin and Trotsky differ on foreign policy?
- 2 How did internal concerns shape Stalin's attitude towards the Comintern?

Stalin was not internationally minded like Lenin and he was not particularly interested in the activities of the Comintern. Stalin did not believe that the Comintern would bring about a revolution, even in 90 years. Stalin was committed to 'Socialism In One Country' – the idea that socialism could be built successfully in the Soviet Union without the necessity for revolution elsewhere. He thought it would be utter folly to risk the socialist transformation of Soviet Russia for the sake of possible revolution abroad. He dismissed the potential of foreign Communists to achieve revolutionary change. In his view, 'One Soviet tractor is worth ten good foreign Communists.'

This policy line brought splits in the party over foreign affairs for the first time since the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Many sided with Trotsky and his idea of 'Permanent Revolution'. Trotsky believed that revolution could not survive long in one country. Only when revolution had spread to Western Europe could socialism be established. If it did not spread it would, in time, succumb to a conservative Europe or be undermined by Russian backwardness. Trotsky and his supporters were alarmed by the way Stalin was sidelining the Comintern. Trotsky argued that under Stalin foreign Communist parties changed from being 'vanguards of world revolution' to the more or less pacifist 'frontier guards' of Soviet Russia.

Stalin, it seemed, was changing the focus of the Comintern from promoting world revolution to protecting the interests of the Soviet state.

### How did the Comintern change?

The leadership of the Comintern reflected the situation in the Soviet Union. Zinoviev was president from 1919 to 1926. When the United Opposition – Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev – was defeated, Bukharin, Stalin's ally, succeeded Zinoviev. When Bukharin in turn was forced out, the loyal Stalinist Molotov succeeded him.

In the late 1920s, Stalin's attention was fixed very much on the struggle for the leadership of the Communist Party. In 1928, he made his 'left turn' (opting for extreme left-wing policies of rapid industrialisation) and moved against Bukharin and the right wing of the party. As Stalin moved to the left, so did the policy of the Comintern. Foreign Communist parties were instructed to denounce social democratic parties as 'social FASCISTS' because they co-operated with bourgeois parties and governments (mirroring the attack on Bukharin for his co-operation with the bourgeois elements of the peasantry and the NEP).

Probably the most damaging consequences of this new policy direction were felt in Germany where the KPD (the Communist Party) was instructed to attack the SPD (the Social Democrats) as 'social fascists'. This divided the left just at the time when the Nazis and fascism were beginning to grow stronger. Stalin rejected pleas for joint action by the left in Germany against the Nazis and thereby contributed to Hitler's rise to power.

#### FASCISM

Extreme nationalist political movement, originating in Italy in the 1920s and taken up by Nazi Germany in the 1930s.

## What was achieved in Soviet foreign policy between 1921 and 1933?

Between 1921 and 1933 conventional diplomacy had been much more successful than had the Comintern:

- the USSR was regarded as a European power once more
- there was no united capitalist front against the USSR
- foreign governments had begun to think they might be able to do business with the USSR
- valuable military and industrial gains had come from co-operation with Germany
- in 1933 the USA gave the USSR official recognition.

### FOCUS ROUTE

To help to write your report you will need to explain what collective security against fascism meant. Make notes on its limited success.

### ACTIVITY

It is 10 August 1939; Stalin wants your advice. He has asked you to write a report on whether the USSR should make an agreement with Germany or with Britain and France. Your report will have two parts:

- 1 Factual information for the main body of the report. You will find help for this in the Focus Route tasks in sections E–F.
- 2 Your recommendations. This will involve you drawing conclusions and giving your opinion, making the points that you think will weigh most heavily with Stalin.

You will find guidance on how to set out your report on page 337.

## **E** What was collective security against fascism?

In 1933, Hitler came to power in Germany. This changed international relations in Europe profoundly, especially in regard to the Soviet Union. Hitler's anti-Communist intentions were well known and the makers of Soviet foreign policy were going to have to re-adjust. One option was to work with other states to stop fascist expansion, i.e. collective security against fascism. In the USSR, the shift towards this can be seen in Litvinov's speech in December 1933 (Source 4 on page 322) and he is identified with this policy. However, relations with Germany were never broken off and behind the scenes between 1935 and 1937 there were negotiations on improving economic and political relations. Molotov, in particular, wanted improved relations with Germany and was openly critical of the policy of collective security.

In September 1934, the USSR became a member of the League of Nations, once referred to by Lenin as the 'robbers' den'. Litvinov was active in the League and had hopes that it could be an effective body. He denounced appeasement towards Germany as suicidal and urged the League to act decisively and resolutely to stop German aggression.

In May 1935, the Soviet Union signed mutual assistance pacts with France and Czechoslovakia. The Soviet Union was obliged to help the Czechs only if France came in, too. Although these pacts were good for the USSR's reputation as a supporter of collective security, neither was backed by military talks. Litvinov had no illusions: 'One should not place any serious hopes on the pact in the sense of real military aid in the event of war. Our security will still remain exclusively in the hands of the Red Army.' The French saw the pact as a political measure to scare Hitler and not an agreement which would require any military action on their part.

In August 1935, the Comintern line of attacking Western social democratic and labour parties as 'social fascists' was completely overturned. Communists sought the help of such parties in the creation of 'popular fronts' that aimed to contain the spread of fascism. Soviet policy was to support governments that pursued an anti-German, pro-Soviet foreign line.

Two popular governments were formed in France and Spain, but they were not successful. In Spain it proved an excuse for the right-wing rebellion, which began the Spanish Civil War. The Nationalists, whose supporters included the Spanish fascists, could not accept the election of the Republicans, a left-wing popular front government, and civil war broke out in 1936. The Spanish Civil War was really about Spanish issues but foreigners saw it as a battle between left and right. This made it difficult for Stalin to ignore, especially as fascist Germany and Italy were helping the Nationalists. In the end, the Soviets decided to intervene but the aid given was limited: advisors were sent rather than regular units, and equipment was supplied – planes, tanks, machine guns, clothes and medical supplies – for which the Republic was systematically overcharged. However, this was still more than neutral France and Britain provided. Their failure to help the Republic alongside the USSR offered no encouragement for those like Litvinov who saw collective security against fascism as the way forward.

## **F** Why did the USSR make an agreement with Germany rather than with Britain and France in 1939?

### FOCUS ROUTE

You will need to do the following in preparation for your report:

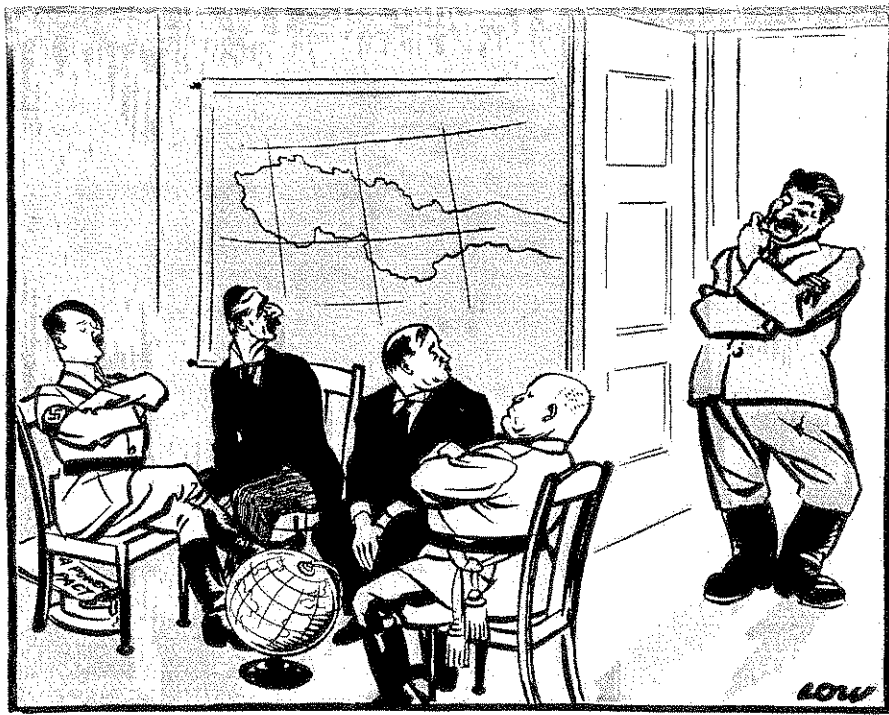
- 1 Assess the significance of the Munich Conference – how does it affect your view about whether the Soviet Union should make an agreement with Britain and France? Make notes on this.
- 2 Note down important points from Chart 18D on page 336. This should help you to weigh up the arguments over which side was the more attractive to the Soviets.
- 3 Don't forget the Japanese factor, which had a significant influence on Soviet policy. Which direction is it pushing you in – towards Germany or Britain and France?

In 1936, Hitler had marched German troops into the Rhineland. In March 1938, he had forced the Anschluss with Austria. Reacting to these aggressive moves, Litvinov stressed the grave dangers lying in the future and the readiness of the Soviet government to join in a conference of the great powers to 'check the further development of aggression'. Litvinov specified Czechoslovakia as the area threatened. His proposal was rejected by the British government.

The Soviet Union was not invited to the Munich Conference in September 1938 in spite of its pact to join France in defence of Czechoslovakia. The Soviets always claimed they would stand by their treaty obligations, but had probably realised that they were unlikely to be called upon to do so. In any case, it would have been impossible to help Czechoslovakia without going through either Poland or Romania, neither of which was likely to agree to having Russian troops on their soil.

The Munich Conference and its concessions to Hitler must have made the Soviets wonder whether Britain and France would ever stand up to Hitler. However, the USSR did not drop its contact with Britain, although by March 1939 it was beginning to make some overtures to Germany. Whatever Stalin's preference, better terms would be achieved by being known to be negotiating with both sides.

Whether Stalin always preferred an agreement with Germany to one with Britain and France, or whether this was a last resort after the failure to reach agreement on collective security with Britain and France in August 1939, is a matter of debate. It could be argued that the cagey Stalin had no preferred option, was very flexible and was looking for the alliance which would be of most benefit to the USSR. Negotiating with both sides would drive up the terms; Stalin was interested in what each side had to offer.



**SOURCE 18.4** 'What, no chair for me?', a Low cartoon published in 1938. At the Munich Conference attended by (left to right) Hitler, the British Prime Minister Chamberlain, Daladier (Prime Minister of France) and Mussolini, Hitler's demands were acceded to and the Sudetenland and one-third of the population of Czechoslovakia were transferred to Germany. War was avoided for the time being. Neither the USSR nor Czechoslovakia was invited to attend the conference

**ACTIVITY**

Cartoonists and British policy towards the USSR 1938–39

Study Sources 18.4 and 18.5.

a) Low was a cartoonist working in London. What is his message in 18.4 and what do you think is his view of British policy?

b) What is the Soviet view of Britain's policy towards the USSR expressed in 18.5? Using the information on pages 334–337, how might British behaviour in 1938–39 have encouraged this view?



**SOURCE 18.5** The Russian view of the Munich Conference: Chamberlain and Daladier direct German expansion east. The left-hand sign points to Western Europe; the right-hand sign to the USSR

## 18D Which side should the USSR make an agreement with – Britain and France or Germany?

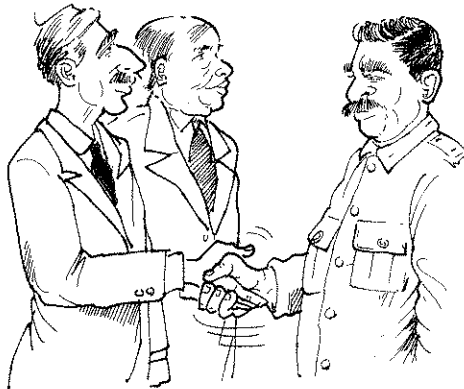
### The British and French perspective

- They were parliamentary democracies. They greatly distrusted the USSR and saw Communism as a threat to their empires.
- They were happy to preserve the situation in Europe that had been established under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles which ended the war with Germany in 1919.
- Britain believed the Red Army had been seriously weakened by the purges.
- They gave a guarantee to Poland, the most anti-Soviet of the eastern states, in March 1939. Britain would not put pressure on the Poles to give Soviet troops rights of passage across Poland, although France by August 1939 was prepared to do this. It was the stumbling block in the August 1939 negotiations in Moscow.
- Britain and France did not anticipate a deal between Germany and the USSR.
- They were prepared to give a guarantee to Poland in response to demands from the British parliament and public to take action.

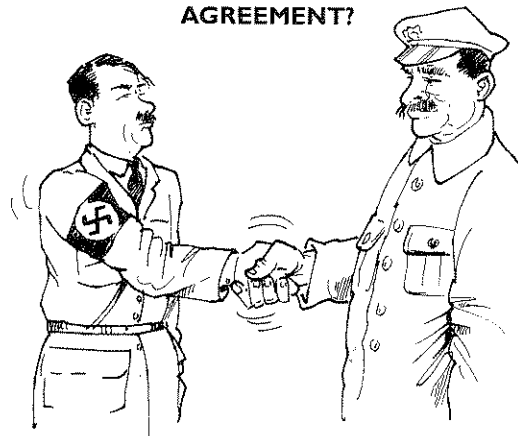
### The Soviet perspective on agreement with Britain and France

- The Soviets suspected that Britain wanted to turn German aggression on to the USSR while it watched from the sidelines, happy to see the Nazis and Communists destroy each other.
- Britain and France had repeatedly appeased Hitler and shown little enthusiasm for collective security against fascism.
- They had excluded the USSR from the Munich Conference, even though the USSR had treaty obligations to Czechoslovakia.
- Britain and France had dragged their feet over the triple alliance negotiations proposed by Litvinov in April 1939.
- Alliance with Britain and France might not prevent war with Germany and, if it did not, the USSR might bear the brunt of the fighting.
- Britain and France were not prepared to accept the USSR taking territory or having a sphere of influence across eastern Europe.

### AGREEMENT?



### AGREEMENT?



### The German perspective on an agreement with the USSR

- Hitler wanted to avoid a war on two fronts.
- A non-aggression pact with Russia would scare off Britain and France; they would not intervene to defend Poland.
- A non-aggression pact that included promises of Soviet economic help would overcome any Anglo-French blockade – the Allied blockade had been important in Germany's defeat in the First World War.
- Agreement was needed in August so that Poland could be defeated before the autumn rains.
- Hitler had no qualms about conceding other countries' territory to Stalin.
- It would appear to be an ideological somersault – next to anti-semitism, anti-Communism was Hitler's strongest feeling. But Hitler was very flexible in his tactics; his ultimate aim of defeating the USSR had not changed.

### The Soviet perspective on an agreement with Germany

- A pact with Germany was the only way to be sure of avoiding war in the West – Soviet security was Stalin's main concern.
- It would avoid a war on two fronts – the USSR was involved in hostilities with Japan, and Germany had influence with Japan through the Anti-Comintern Pact.
- Soviet armed forces had been hit by the purges and the rearmament programme was nowhere near completion. A pact with Germany would at least buy Russia more time.
- Russia would gain half of Poland and a sphere of influence from Finland to Romania, including the Baltic states.
- Agreement with Germany would be in line with the Treaty of Rapallo and the good relations of 1922 to 1934.
- Germany was still the USSR's major trading partner.
- It was in Stalin's interests to stand aside while the capitalist nations fought each other.
- It would appear to be an ideological somersault – a reversal of collective security against fascism.

It is now time to write your report to Stalin. Use the notes you have made in the Focus Route activities in this chapter. Do you recommend that he make terms with Germany or side with Britain and France against Germany?

Note: How to set out your report.

### 1 Title page

Title: Should the Soviet Union make an agreement with Britain and France or with Germany?

From: Yourself

Date: 10 August 1939

For: J.V. Stalin

### 2 Introduction

- Explain why the report is being written – the danger of war, both Britain and France and Germany were negotiating.
- Explain the need to calculate the best option for the Soviet Union.
- Method: evaluate the success of the policy of collective security against fascism in the light of events 1936–39. Analyse the attitudes and actions of the three countries. Offer an assessment of what each side can offer the Soviet Union.

### 3 Main text

Headings:

- The policy of collective security against fascism
- Spanish Civil War – extent and results of Soviet involvement  
– British and French policy
- Munich Conference
- Key arguments for and against an agreement with Britain and France
- Key arguments for and against an agreement with Germany

### 4 Conclusions

Draw conclusions on how the collective security policy has worked and suggest which side has most to offer.

### 5 Recommendations

In the light of all the above, make recommendations to Stalin on what he should do.

### ■ Learning trouble spot

#### The Japanese influence

The Soviet Union's concern about Japan is often neglected when considering Stalin's actions. Stalin, like Hitler, wanted to avoid a war on two fronts. In the war scare of 1928, Stalin saw Japanese aggression as a significant danger. The Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 was a direct threat to Soviet railway interests there and a potential threat to Mongolia (a Soviet satellite) and to Siberia in the Soviet Union itself. A further worry was the Anti-Comintern Pact signed by Germany and Japan in November 1936 and directed solely against the Soviet Union. The Japanese ambassador in Berlin was the architect of the pact, and Italy became its third member in 1937. In 1938 and 1939, there were major battles ending in Soviet victories when the Japanese tested Soviet defences: in July and August 1939 the Japanese suffered 61,000 casualties. If Soviet Russia signed a pact with Germany, then Hitler could persuade the Japanese to cease their attacks on the Soviet Union and the danger of war on two fronts would be removed.



## ■ 18E Relations between the USSR, Germany and the West during 1939

Date	Relations with Britain and France	Relations with Germany
10 March	Stalin's speech at Eighteenth Party Congress warns that the USSR will not 'be drawn into conflicts by warmongers who are accustomed to have others pull the chestnuts out of the fire'.	
16 April	Litvinov proposes a triple pact of mutual assistance between Britain, France and the USSR.	
17 April		The Soviet ambassador in Berlin proposes a resumption of trade talks between the USSR and Germany.
28 April		Hitler omits the usual attack on the USSR from a major foreign policy speech in which he denounces the German-Polish Non-Aggression Treaty and the Anglo-German Naval Agreement.
3 May	Litvinov (a Jew, identified with collective security against fascism, and married to an Englishwoman) replaced as Foreign Commissar by Molotov.	
8 May	Britain rejects Soviet proposals for a military alliance.	
20-30 May		Germany puts out feelers for renewed trade talks with the USSR.
27 May	Chamberlain instructs British ambassador in Moscow to open talks with the USSR on a mutual assistance pact.	
31 May		In a major foreign policy speech, Molotov questions the commitment of the Western powers to negotiations with the USSR and shows a readiness to continue trade talks with Germany.
12 June	Ambassador Maisky (Soviet ambassador in London) proposes a visit to Moscow by Lord Halifax (British Foreign Secretary).	
18 July		Soviets offer Germany a favourable trade agreement.
23 July	Britain and France agree to military talks with the USSR.	
5 August	Drax (the admiral heading the British military mission) leaves London for Leningrad by slow boat.	
11 August	Drax mission arrives in Moscow. Military talks begin.	
14 August		Ribbentrop instructs the German ambassador in Moscow to request, on his behalf, an audience with Stalin so that Ribbentrop could tell Stalin of Germany's proposals at first hand.
19 August	Breakdown of Anglo-Soviet negotiations.	German-Soviet trade agreement announced.
20 August		Molotov agrees to Ribbentrop's visiting Moscow on 26 or 27 August. Hitler cables Stalin asking him to receive Ribbentrop by 23 August at the latest (no European statesman had ever addressed Stalin directly before).
21 August		Stalin agrees.
22 August		Ribbentrop flies to Moscow.
23 August		Ribbentrop and Molotov sign the Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact and a secret protocol dividing Eastern Europe into spheres of influence. Stalin had led the discussions.

## What were the attitudes of Germany, Britain and France?

Naturally we are focusing on Stalin's thinking, but the attitudes of German, British and French policy-makers are important, too.

**SOURCE 18.6** P. Kennedy, *The Realities Behind Diplomacy*, 1981, p. 308, quoting a speech by Commander Bower, a backbench Conservative MP, to the House of Commons, March 1939

*I am not prepared to regard Soviet Russia as a freedom-loving nation but we cannot do without her now. I know they have shot a lot of the people but there are some 170,000,000 of them left.*

**SOURCE 18.7** Neville Chamberlain, in a letter to his sister on 26 March 1939

*I must confess to the most profound distrust of Russia. I have no belief whatever in her ability to maintain an effective offensive, even if she wanted to. And I distrust her motives, which seem to me to have little connection with our ideas of liberty, and to be concerned only with getting everyone else by the ears.*

### ACTIVITY

- 1 Look at Chart 18E on page 338. What does it tell you about which power was most eager to make an agreement with the Soviet Union?
- 2 How does your understanding of the perspectives of Germany, Britain and France influence your own views about why Stalin chose Germany?

Do you think that Chamberlain, together with the British and French negotiators, was just as responsible for the Nazi-Soviet Pact as Stalin and Hitler? Do you think that the British and French seriously blundered or do you think that whatever they did they were never going to make any difference to the outcome?

### Germany

Hitler's attitude to the USSR is not hard to understand. He needed to defeat Poland before the autumn rain and this is reflected in an increasing sense of urgency during August. Look at Chart 18D on page 336 to see what Germany could gain from a pact with the USSR. Hitler revealed his thoughts when talking to a League of Nations diplomat on 11 August 1939: 'Everything that I have in mind is directed against Russia; if the West is too stupid and too blind to grasp this then I will be forced to come to terms with the Russians, to smash the West and after its defeat to turn against Russia with all my forces. I need the Ukraine so that we can't be starved out as in the last war.' He did what he said. It did not contradict his anti-Bolshevism and shows his flexibility in approaching long-held objectives.

### Britain and France

When Hitler took over the rest of Czechoslovakia in March 1939, the gravity of the situation forced Britain and France into guaranteeing Poland on 31 March. The Anglo-French guarantee to Poland was important. They were now bound to a country determined that the Red Army should not cross its borders again, as it had in 1920. The attitude of the Poles was a major stumbling block in the Anglo-French negotiations with the USSR, and one reason why the British spun things out was to delay reaching the sticking point of Soviet rights of passage through Poland.

British public opinion was in favour of a military alliance with France and Russia (84 per cent in favour according to a Gallup opinion poll) and there was support for it in the House of Commons (see Source 18.6). Chamberlain's attitude was rather different (see Source 18.7). He was strongly anti-Communist, and he wanted only as much Russian support as would be convenient to the British, would not alarm the Poles, and would not annoy the Germans. Molotov, on the other hand, was looking for an unbreakable alliance covering every possibility of Soviet-German conflict. The British also had concerns about how useful an alliance with the USSR would prove to be. In the wake of the purges, the British General Staff did not have a high opinion of Soviet military might and advised the Cabinet that Soviet intervention in a European war was likely to be 'an embarrassment rather than a help'.

The guarantee to Poland meant, in effect, that Britain and France had chosen Poland rather than the USSR. This situation was not as serious for the Soviets as it might appear; it had significant advantages for the Soviet Union. If an isolated Poland were to be attacked, the USSR would be vulnerable because Hitler might not stop at the Soviet-Polish border. But if Hitler attacked Poland now, Germany would face Britain and France. Both sides would want the Soviet Union, if not on their side, at least to remain neutral, and a long war between the three Western powers could allow a neutral USSR to achieve long-term gains.

There has been argument over the extent to which Chamberlain was responsible for the breakdown of the talks. It can be argued that however enthusiastically Britain had negotiated, it could not offer the Soviet Union as much as Germany - look at Chart 18D (page 336). On the other hand, it cannot be denied that Chamberlain was consistently sending out negative messages to the Russians. We cannot be certain of the intentions and assumptions of Stalin and Soviet policy-makers, but Chamberlain's attitude and the British lack of urgency provided a series of justifications, if not the true reasons, for Soviet rejection of any alliance.

SOURCE 18.8 P. M. H. Bell, *The Origins of the Second World War in Europe*, 1987, pp. 261–62

*The Soviets held a central position, and could judge which set of talks would better serve their interests. It is reasonable to assume that these were twofold: to keep out of a European war, especially when they were actually engaged in serious fighting with the Japanese in the Far East – they did not seek a war on two fronts; and to secure territory – a sphere of influence which would add to Soviet security, internal as well as external. It would be advantageous to bring the Ukrainians in Poland under Stalin's control. The British and French offered nothing substantial under either heading.*

*The Germans on the other hand were able to meet both Soviet interests. Instead of a risk of war, they could offer certain neutrality. In terms of territory and spheres of influence, they came bearing gifts, ready to carve up Poland and to yield at once when Stalin asked for the whole of Latvia to be in his sphere instead of only a part, as Ribbentrop at first proposed. Moreover the Germans could deliver the goods forthwith, whereas the British and French could deliver nothing.*

*Between the two sides, the Soviet choice could hardly be in doubt. It is only surprising that so much obloquy [criticism] has been heaped upon Stalin's head for making the best deal he could get, and that so much criticism has been levelled at the British for their dilatoriness [lack of urgency] when nothing could have enabled them to match the German offers. The competition was decided on substance, not on method.*

### **The Nazi–Soviet Pact, August 1939 and its aftermath**

This pact referred directly to the Treaty of Berlin of 1926, which committed both countries to refrain from aggression and to observe neutrality in conflicts involving third parties. A secret protocol (whose existence was denied until 1991 by the USSR) defined future spheres of influence, with part of east Poland, plus Estonia, Latvia and Bessarabia (part of Romania) passing to the USSR.

Germany invaded Poland on 1 September 1939 and advanced very rapidly. The Soviet Union joined in on 17 September, attacking from the east. Poland was soon overrun. A new Nazi–Soviet treaty was agreed on 28 September: in return for giving Germany slightly more of Poland than was originally agreed, Lithuania was transferred to the Soviet sphere of influence. Important economic concessions were made by the Soviets to Germany, and the economic agreements made in October were crucial to Hitler's plans. The amount of grain and raw materials he gained from the USSR, together with the rubber from the Far East which came through the USSR, enabled Hitler to get round any Allied blockade. Without these supplies of natural rubber, neither the western campaigns of 1940 nor the later campaigns in the USSR could have been fought.

Stalin moved to turn spheres of influence into a more solid defensive buffer. When Finland refused to make the concessions he wanted, the Red Army invaded at the end of November. The Finns resisted the incompetent Soviet forces and inflicted heavy casualties on them. As a result, the Soviets accepted Finnish requests for an armistice. The USSR gained territory around Leningrad and further protection for the Leningrad to Murmansk railway. In June 1940, on the pretext of dealing with acts of provocation, half a million Soviet troops were sent into the Baltic States. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were bullied into petitioning for incorporation into the USSR. Later in the month, more former Tsarist territory was taken when Romania was forced to hand back Bessarabia.

After the invasion of eastern Poland in 1939, political, economic and cultural élites were rounded up and 400,000 ethnic Poles were arrested, deported and/or executed. This included the 22,000 officers Stalin notoriously ordered to be shot and buried at Katyn. Similarly, the occupation of the Baltic States led to the murder or deportation of several hundreds of thousands of 'anti-Soviet elements'.

Stalin had hoped for a long war in which Germany and the West exhausted each other; Germany's spectacular success and France's rapid collapse in the summer of 1940 was deeply worrying, especially when contrasted with the Soviets dismal performance in the Winter War against Finland. This had revealed gross defects in organisation and planning and the war with Japan had shown up weaknesses in the air force. Stalin admitted in November 1940 that, 'We're not ready for war of the kind being fought between Germany and England.' Hitler would have to be appeased.

### ACTIVITY

Write an essay: Why did Stalin make an agreement with Germany in 1939 rather than with Britain and France?

As well as using the material in this section, you could look a little more closely at Hitler's motives. He was the one in a hurry!

## KEY POINTS FROM CHAPTER 18

### Alone in a hostile world: how did Soviet foreign policy develop between 1921 and 1941?

- 1 Soviet foreign policy had two tracks; strengthening the security of the USSR, and promoting world socialist revolution, for which purpose the Comintern was designed. However; failure to spread revolution meant that Soviet security became the top priority.
- 2 The USSR felt very vulnerable after the Civil War and needed economic help and foreign trade. In spite of a trade agreement with Britain (1921) relations were strained. The Treaty of Rapallo and good relations with Germany were central to foreign policy up to the end of 1932.
- 3 Stalin's policy of 'Socialism in One Country' advanced the interests of the USSR above those of world revolution. Switches in Soviet foreign policy were often determined by Stalin's domestic priorities.
- 4 By the end of 1932, the USSR was recognised as a European power again and there was no united front against her, but Hitler's aggressive nationalism changed the situation.
- 5 Litvinov is particularly associated with collective security against fascism. Joining the League of Nations and joining the popular fronts was part of this.
- 6 Contact with Germany was never lost in the 1930s and the exclusion of the USSR from the Munich conference was a blow to the collective security policy.
- 7 During 1939, the Soviets negotiated with Britain and France and with Germany.
- 8 In May 1939, Molotov replaced Litvinov as Commissar for Foreign Affairs, a sign that the Soviets were moving away from collective security.
- 9 Stalin made the Nazi-Soviet Pact because Hitler could offer much more than Britain and France.
- 10 The USSR took half of Poland and occupied a swath of territory from Finland to Romania. Several hundreds of thousands of 'anti-Soviet elements' were murdered or deported.