

Mobilization and the Red Army's Move into Civil Administration, 1925–31

David R. Stone

Civil authority in all states has long been intimately connected to preparations for war: gathering recruits and collecting taxes to pay for them have always been central functions of the state.¹ Long before the Bolsheviks, the Russian empire had been forced by the changing nature of industrial warfare to adapt to the needs of mobilization. From the late 1860s, even before German victory in the 1870–71 Franco-Prussian War had demonstrated the importance of carefully coordinated mobilization, the Russian War Ministry's Main Staff had been preoccupied with assembling an army over Russia's entirely inadequate railroad net.² This 50-year lead time meant that the Soviet state inherited a relatively effective infrastructure for mobilizing men in the event of war. This human mobilization was, however, only a part of what modern war would involve. The Russian empire, like most Western states, neglected the economic and administrative demands of war, focusing instead on preparing its human material. Before World War I, militarization was not a matter of preparing institutions, but of preparing full-fledged citizens to make them better soldiers: fit, trained, intelligent, and patriotic.³

As a result, when the Soviet state expanded military industry and prepared for war in the 1920s and 1930s, it faced qualitatively different tasks in preparing the various sectors of its civil administration. Certain people's commissariats were able to draw on a substantial imperial tradition. The People's Commissariats for Transport and for Post and Telegraph, given their long-recognized centrality to manpower mobilization, were relatively well prepared for distributing

¹ Charles Tilly has argued that military imperatives essentially created the modern state. See Tilly, "War and the Power of Warmakers in Western Europe and Elsewhere, 1600–1980," in *Global Militarization*, ed. Peter Wallenstein et al. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985), esp. 77–78; and Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990–1990* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990), chap. 1.

² Bruce Menning, *Bayonets before Bullets: The Imperial Russian Army, 1861–1914* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992), 116–17.

³ See William C. Fuller, *Civil-Military Conflict in Imperial Russia, 1881–1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), esp. 196–98, 203, 220–21, and Joshua Sanborn, *Drafting the Russian Nation: Military Conscription, Total War, and Mass Politics, 1905–1925* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003).

mobilization notices, coordinating troop movements, and delivering soldiers to the front. Matters were very different in other branches of the Soviet state. In particular, people's commissariats that had *not* traditionally been part of mobilization in their pre-revolutionary incarnations before World War I were almost entirely unprepared for the demands of total war after World War I.

Part of the story of Soviet civil mobilization and preparation for war is already clear. The opening of Russian archives has produced a flood of work on Soviet military industry in the interwar period. While differing in emphases and conclusions, this research has succeeded in outlining the growth of the Soviet defense industry and its close connections with the Soviet state.⁴ In particular, planning for war within Soviet *industry* is now quite well understood. Similarly, Osoaviakhim, the mass organization dedicated to the ostensibly voluntary preparation of the Soviet population for military service, remains the object of serious research.⁵ Many important questions remain, however, unanswered. This article focuses neither on preparing citizens for war, as in the case of Osoaviakhim or Russia's imperial traditions, nor on preparing industrial mobilization. Instead, it explores the ways in which more and more of the Soviet *state*, outside the narrow sphere of heavy industry, became embroiled in increasingly elaborate mechanisms to ready the Soviet Union for future conflicts. The Soviet Union's growing militarization did not merely involve funneling resources to military industry, but the comprehensive involvement of all arms of the state in preparing for war. This article will sketch how the imperatives of mobilization in the late 1920s and early 1930s produced increasing links between the Red Army and Soviet civil administration. In doing so, it will bring out three key themes: first, the steady encroachment of military priorities into previously untouched spheres; second, the consistent and yawning gap between directives from the center and implementation on the ground; third, as a partial explanation for this, the recurring problem of a dearth of trained and competent administrators to carry out the Soviet state's ambitious projects.

⁴ This burgeoning literature includes Nikolai Sergeevich Simonov, *Voenno-promyshlennyi kompleks SSSR v 1920–1950e gody* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 1996); Sally Stoecker, *Forging Stalin's Army: Marshal Tukhachevskii and the Politics of Military Innovation* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1998); John Barber and Mark Harrison, eds., *The Soviet Defence-Industry Complex from Stalin to Khrushchev* (Houndsmills, UK: MacMillan, 2000); Lennart Samuelson, *Plans for Stalin's War Machine: Tukhachevskii and Military-Economic Planning, 1925–1941* (Houndsmills, UK: MacMillan, 2000); David R. Stone, *Hammer and Rifle: The Militarization of the Soviet Union, 1926–1933* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2000).

⁵ See William Odom, *The Soviet Volunteers: Modernization and Bureaucracy in a Public Mass Organization* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973); Mark von Hagen, *Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990) 245–47; ongoing research by Timothy Paynich (private communication).

The Soviet vision of future war was far more total than imperial Russia's had been. One Soviet theorist, in fact, declared that Russia's dismal preparation for World War I made it an exemplary *negative* case.⁶ Strikingly, Soviet military thinkers saw nothing good in tsarist Russia's organization for war that they might draw upon. Despite inheriting the old regime's military bureaucracy largely intact, Soviet theorists and administrators alike looked to foreign models or new concepts, not to their own heritage, for answers to the problems raised by modern war. They saw Russia's economic and social disasters in World War I as leaving them little alternative. Even the victorious experience of the Civil War was too improvised and chaotic to provide a useful model for a socialist state.

Soviet thinkers thus emphasized avoiding defeat by careful preparation for the next war and the inherent advantages of a socialist, centrally-planned economy for that preparation. This included mobilizing not only troops and not simply the military industry that would supply them, but the entire apparatus of the state. Soviet military literature is replete with examples of this. Mikhail Vasil'evich Frunze, head of the Red Army and influential Bolshevik military thinker, declared that modern technology had done away with the distinction between front and rear, and that societies must now organize themselves completely for war. Socialism would provide the Soviet Union with a vital edge in doing this. Frunze's understanding of the importance of peacetime preparation of all of Soviet society for war was universally accepted. N. A. Danilov produced a 16-point plan in 1926 for preparing the state for war, the first of which was ensuring food and supplies not just to the army at the front but the civilian population. This was only possible with "extensive work in peacetime." Evgenii Evgen'evich Sviatlovskii argued at the same time that mobilizing the Soviet economy necessarily included careful preparation of the labor force, transportation, trade, and finance, all of which required systematic peacetime work. Boris Mikhailovich Shaposhnikov wrote in 1929 that even before World War I "mobilization had become a phenomenon exerting deep influence on the general life of the state, not restricted to the military alone. Now, with more complex technology, with the immense exertions of opposing sides in war, the significance of mobilization has grown still greater. In our day mobilization encompasses all aspects of the life of the state." No one denied the urgent need for comprehensive preparations.⁷

⁶ N. A. Danilov, *Ekonomika i podgotovka k voine* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1926), 194.

⁷ Mikhail Vasil'evich Frunze, "Front i tyl v voine budushchego," in *Izbrannye proizvedeniia* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1940), 69–78; Danilov, *Ekonomika*, 190, 193; Evgenii Evgen'evich Sviatlovskii, *Ekonomika voiny* (Moscow: Voennyi Vestnik, 1926), 374–75, 378; Boris Mikhailovich Shaposhnikov, *Mozg armii* (Moscow: Gosizdat, 1929), bk. 3, 289.

The Red Army's high command, along with the party and state leadership, was therefore unsatisfied with existing institutions handling preparations for war. The highest-ranking officers, fractious and squabbling over many issues, united behind this cause. As the total nature of World War I had made clear, it was not enough to put soldiers on trains to the front by including mobilization cells in the Commissariats of Post and Telegraph or of Transportation. All levels of Soviet government – central, regional, and local; economic and administrative – would have to be fully cognizant of the needs of defense.

Convinced of the superiority of military methods and discipline, the Red Army's high command began concrete measures to draw civil institutions into military planning in the early 1920s.⁸ In December 1924, a Staff report to the Revolutionary-Military Council (the collective decision-making body of top officers running the Red Army) argued that the Staff could only carry out its responsibility to prepare the country for war if it had the full cooperation of civil people's commissariats, many of which still lacked military cells. Even the "mobilization organs" that already existed within some commissariats suffered from poor leadership and no overarching coordination. The Red Army, the Staff argued, should provide guidance. It should therefore 1) coordinate the work of commissariat "mobilization organs" and create new ones as necessary; 2) draw up mobilization requirements and directives for each commissariat; 3) assist commissariats' defense cells in determining their proper wartime role; and 4) inculcate a defense-minded spirit, possibly dispatching military officers to run these defense cells.⁹

The Staff's review of commissariats made for depressing reading. As explained above, Transport along with Post and Telegraph were in acceptable shape, even by the Staff's demanding standards. Vesenkha (the de facto Soviet Ministry of Industry) was terribly prepared, however, for the demands of war, a problem that would only be slowly ameliorated from 1925 to 1927.¹⁰ The People's Commissariat of Foreign Trade's mobilization cell was moribund. Gosplan, the State Planning Commission, had a military cell, but a poor one that tried to "encompass the unencompassable" and as a result performed poorly. The Com-

⁸ On the military sense of superiority to civilian disorder, see von Hagen, *Soldiers*, 249–52.

⁹ Revolutionary-Military Council in Russian is *Revoliutsionnyi voennyi soviet* (hereafter Revvoensovet). Report from Assistant to Chief of Staff and Deputy Chief of Staff to Chair of Revvoensovet, December 1924, Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi voennyi arkhiv (hereafter RGVA) f. 7, op. 11, d. 88, ll. 1–10b.

¹⁰ Vesenkha is the Russian abbreviation for "Supreme Council of the National Economy" (*Vyssхий soviet narodnogo khoziaistva*). On improvements in Vesenkha, see Stone, *Hammer and Rifle*, chap. 1.

missariats of Internal Trade, as well as Internal Affairs, Agriculture, and Enlightenment, lacked any mobilization infrastructure.¹¹

In response to the Staff's complaints and in hopes of promoting defense preparation, the Red Army pushed successfully for some new body to guide and oversee mobilization work. With the Soviet political leadership and the Red Army equally preoccupied with foreign dangers, and seeing careful organization as a cheap alternative to full rearmament, the Red Army got precisely what it wanted. On 4 April 1925, Rykov's Commission (the Soviet Union's defense cabinet under the leadership of Aleksei Ivanovich Rykov) created a new "Mobilization Commission" to coordinate mobilization efforts throughout the Soviet state. The Council of Labor and Defense gave governmental approval soon after.¹²

The initiative for the Mobilization Commission, as well as its structure and its very name, came directly from the Red Army. In response to the Staff's alarm, the Red Army had produced several proposals in January and February 1925 to improve haphazard and chaotic efforts at preparedness. The Red Army had suggested a new organization to unify and direct mobilization work. It would be part of the Red Army but have the rights of a standing commission of the Council of Labor and Defense, giving its decisions binding legal force as government decrees. This Mobilization Commission was not intended to replace Rykov's Commission in making defense policy, differing from it in two key ways. First, by contrast to Rykov's Commission, the members of which were either People's Commissars or held equivalent rank, those in the Mobilization Commission were one step lower: Deputy People's Commissars from Finance, Transport, or Trade, their equivalents at Vesenkha and Gosplan, joined by the Red Army's Chief of Staff and Supply Director. Second, in keeping with their lower status, the members of the Mobilization Commission would not decide policy but implement it, forcing civil institutions to take measures to ensure proper wartime function. Determining policy was left to their superiors on Rykov's Commission.¹³

¹¹ Staff report, December 1924, RGVA f. 7, op. 11, d. 88, ll. 1–5.

¹² See Iosif Stanislavovich Unshlikht to Aleksei Ivanovich Rykov, 7 May 1925, Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (hereafter GARF) f. 5446, op. 55, d. 746, l. 4. The Russian name of the "Interinstitutional Mobilization Commission was *Mezhdovedomstvennaia mobilizatsionnaia komissiia*, though it was also referred to as the "Interinstitutional Mobilization Session" (*Mezhdovedomstvennoe mobilizatsionnoe zasedanie*). On Rykov's Commission, see Stone, *Hammer and Rifle*, 19–20.

¹³ Report of Deputy Chair of Revvoensovet, January 1925, RGVA f. 7, op. 11, d. 88, ll. 13–15; Draft decision for Council of Labor and Defense (*Sovet truda i oborony*, hereafter STO) from People's Commissariat for Military and Naval Affairs (Narodnyi komissariat po voennym i morskim delam, hereafter NKVM), early 1925: *ibid.*, ll. 11–12.

The first meeting of the Mobilization Commission took place on 29 April 1925 under Sergei Sergeevich Kamenev, former commander-in-chief of the Red Army and now its Chief of Staff. He would soon be replaced as both Chief of Staff and chair of the Mobilization Commission by Mikhail Nikolaevich Tukhachevskii. Its only major difference from the Red Army's original proposal was that it lacked a Gosplan representative, since Gosplan's chair Aleksandr Dmitrievich Tsiurupa "protests against ... the inclusion of a representative of Gosplan in the Mobilization Commission." In all other matters, the Red Army had its way. The Mobilization Commission was military in its outlook and procedures: the Red Army's Staff handled paperwork and the Red Army's high command served as the avenue of appeal should the group find itself deadlocked. Much of its initial mission was educational, since those working on defense in one commissariat had little idea what was going on in another. Thus the first matters taken up were a report on mobilization procedures in France, Germany, and the United States (a result of the broad consensus that foreign models were superior to Russian tradition), and approval of the principle that each people's commissariat ought to form a special body with military assistance to handle mobilization. Those already having defense sections, in particular Post and Telegraph, Transport, and Vesenkha, were merely to audit and review existing procedures.¹⁴

Though the Mobilization Commission did succeed in some coordination of defense policy, its two-year life showed that the distinction between policymaking and implementation implicit in the dual existence of Rykov's Commission and the Mobilization Commission was difficult to navigate in practice. In early 1927, Rykov's Commission was formalized, reorganized, and strengthened to become the Executive Session (*rasporiaditel'noe zasedanie*) of the Council of Labor and Defense (RZ STO), the Soviet Union's new defense cabinet. The Mobilization Commission lost its reason for being and was quickly dissolved.¹⁵

During the Mobilization Commission's short life, its chair Tukhachevskii worked diligently to expand the network of mobilization organs. In July 1926 he complained of the Soviet Union's relative unpreparedness. War planning had begun in 1925, he lamented, with the establishment of the Defense Commission (i.e., Rykov's Commission), but many people's commissariats dealing with the economy had not done enough to prepare for war. Its efforts to cajole other institutions into devoting more resources to defense were defeated by their more

¹⁴ Protocol #1 of Mobilization Commission, 29 April 1925, GARF f. 5446, op. 55, d. 746, ll. 10–12; see also Unshlikht's complaint to Rykov on Gosplan's refusal to participate, 7 May 1925, *ibid.*, l. 4.

¹⁵ On the Executive Session (*Rasporiaditel'noe zasedanie*), see Stone, *Hammer and Rifle*, 48–49; RZ STO meeting #5, pt. 9, 25 June 1927, RGVA f. 4, op. 17, d. 61, l. 38.

pressing priorities, as there were always more tasks at hand than resources to complete them. As the Red Army saw it, people's commissars themselves had pawned off defense to their deputies, refusing to make it their own responsibility. In particular cases, glaring defects threatened defeat. The People's Commissariat of Agriculture, for example, had not properly accounted for the damage to the agricultural economy imposed by the call-up of millions of Soviet peasants.¹⁶

Tukhachevskii's concerns were repeated in a February 1927 report for Rykov on mobilization readiness both in the Soviet Union's constituent union republics and in the central government. The picture was quite mixed. On the bright side, the all-union commissariats by this time almost all had some mobilization cell preparing for war.¹⁷ Some were quite good: Transportation, Post, and Telegraph, now joined by Vesenkha, had prepared extensively for mobilization. The only all-union institutions without mobilization cells were the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs and the Worker-Peasant Inspectorate (Rabkrin), which at least had a subordinate Military-Naval Inspectorate. The Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic, the Soviet Union's largest union republic, was also covered, for the republic-level commissariats under its control had their own mobilization cells. Thus the center was fine, but the periphery proved problematic. The union republics other than the Russian Republic almost all lacked provisions for mobilization in the event of war.¹⁸

The new RZ STO defense cabinet attempted to improve matters in June 1927. In response to an investigative commission led by Red Army head Kliment Efremovich Voroshilov, the RZ STO granted the lion's share of responsibility for war preparations to the Red Army's Staff and to Gosplan, but also ordered the creation of mobilization cells in civilian commissariats. Where an all-union people's commissariat already existed, defense preparation would be centralized there. For matters having only republic-level commissariats, most notably Inter-

¹⁶ Mikhail Nikolaevich Tukhachevskii (Chair of Mobilization Commission) memorandum for 3 July 1926, Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii (hereafter RGASPI) f. 76, op. 2, d. 182, ll. 157–63.

¹⁷ Simonov argues that the key moment in mobilization preparation among civil industry came at the end of 1927 as a result of the spring 1927 war scare. This seems incorrect in two ways. First, by February 1927 most institutions already had mobilization organs, some for several years. Second, the crux of the issue is not so much when a particular mobilization organ began to function, but when it began to function effectively, something that could be a matter of several years. See Simonov, "The 'War Scare' of 1927 and the Birth of the Defence-Industrial Complex," in *Soviet Defence-Industry Complex*, 40–41.

¹⁸ 1927 information digest on defense work over 1926, GARF f. 5446, op. 55, d. 1433, l. 11. On the more-or-less satisfactory state of mobilization preparation in Vesenkha and the People's Commissariats of Transportation and Post and Telegraph, see also Revvoensovet protocol #35, 19 July 1927, RGVA f. 4, op. 1, d. 562, ll. 13–15.

nal Affairs and Agriculture, mobilization preparation would be run through the relevant commissariat of the Russian Republic.¹⁹

Staffing these mobilization cells proved a constant problem. The RZ STO allowed three weeks for the civilian commissariats to set up defense offices, not nearly enough time to train civilians in the specialized knowledge mobilization required. As a result, the RZ STO ordered that mobilization cells were to be led “predominantly” by military officers seconded to civilian service, who would “retain all rights and privileges” of military officers.²⁰ In a recurring theme, this mere order from the center was not enough, and the Red Army’s high command felt it necessary to urge additional measures, requesting on 19 July further directives from the RZ STO to speed work.²¹

As this suggests, efforts at systematic preparation for war were crippled by the eternal quandary of Soviet defense: an order from the center did not necessarily produce local implementation. Simply demanding better preparation was not enough, and Soviet defense policymakers would return again and again to the problem of improving mobilization cells inside Soviet civil administration. Rykov tried to do this in a circular on 21 December 1927. Lamenting that his own central government had to date provided no systematic leadership to prepare the union republics for war, Rykov demanded change. The union republics were now obliged to replace any currently active committees or commissions dealing with defense with “a special restricted meeting” (*suzhennoe zasedanie*) of the republic’s governing Council of People’s Commissars. In addition to the Council’s Chair and his deputies, this “restricted meeting” would include the local military district commander, representatives of the OGPU secret police and the Workers’-Peasants’ Inspectorate, as well as the chair of the republic Vesenkha and Commissar of Agriculture. In any event, total membership was not to go above six or seven, and the group would have its own secretariat to handle paperwork. Rykov’s communiqué, while it told local authorities all they needed to know, was not an official order. That came a week later in a governmental decree from Rykov’s deputy Ian Ernestovich Rudzutak, directing the union republics to form special bodies for defense preparation.²²

These union republic groups were based on Rykov’s own RZ STO, including their misleading title. The term that came to be applied to these bodies was

¹⁹ RZ STO protocol #5, pt. 1, 25 June 1927, Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv ekonomiki (hereafter RGAE) f. 3429, op. 16, d. 6, ll. 127–28.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Excerpt from Revvoensovet protocol #35, 19 July 1927, RGVA f. 4, op. 1, d. 562, ll. 13–15.

²² Rykov as Chair of STO and Council of People’s Commissars (*Sovet narodnykh komissarov*, hereafter Sovnarkom) to Chairs of union republic Sovnarkoms, 21 December 1927, RGVA f. 7, op. 10, d. 632, ll. 1–2; Sovnarkom decree, 30 December 1927, *ibid.*, l. 3.

“restricted Sovnarkom” (*suzhennyi Sovnarkom*), giving no hint of their essentially military responsibilities. This was reminiscent of calling the USSR’s defense cabinet the “executive session” (*rasporiaditel'noe zasedanie*) of the Council of Labor and Defense. The nomenclature was not the only link between the RZ STO and the “restricted Sovnarkoms.” Both were state bodies, made up of state, not party, officials, and branches of local Council of People’s Commissars, not the party hierarchy. Both were also organized on functional lines, linking representatives of civil authority, the military, and the economy.

The experience of early 1928 showed mixed but generally favorable results from these union republic defense cabinets. Rudzutak reported in September that some had greatly expanded their responsibilities, going beyond preparations for mobilization to readying the entire local economy for war. Others were hardly functioning at all, meeting only to coordinate anti-aircraft defenses, and all suffered from a lack of systematic planning and guidance from above.²³

In an attempt to further improve their work, Konstantin Aleksandrovich Mekhonoshin, Deputy Director of Gosplan’s Defense Sector, circulated guidelines in early 1929 aimed at improving their efficiency in relaying directives from the center.²⁴ This did not go far enough for the Red Army Staff, which demanded still further clarification of the responsibilities of the “restricted sessions” and, more importantly, their full subordination to the center. Mekhonoshin was not doing enough, in the Red Army’s view, to systematize and control defense work at the local level, a criticism echoing earlier complaints from the RZ STO.²⁵

The most extensive efforts at local preparation came through Vesenkha. Most of the Soviet Union’s major military plants fell under the all-union Vesenkha; during wartime, however, expanded military production, especially of ammunition, would force industry at all levels, including smaller factories under the jurisdiction of local branches of Vesenkha, to produce war materiel. Accordingly, on 7 May 1929 Vesenkha’s Standing Mobilization Conference, coordinating preparations for war within Vesenkha, ordered the creation of local plenipotentiaries (*upolnomochennnye*) of Vesenkha’s Presidium to oversee mobilization work. This measure gave local authorities additional power, but did not set up a

²³ Ian Ernestovich Rudzutak report, 18 September 1928, RGVA f. 4, op. 1, d. 456, l. 461.

²⁴ Konstantin Aleksandrovich Mekhonoshin circular, 16 January 1929, RGVA f. 7, op. 10, d. 632, l. 9.

²⁵ Bokis reaction to Mekhonoshin proposal, 26 January 1929, *ibid.*, ll. 6–7; Bokis short response on same subject, 25 January 1929, *ibid.*, l. 8. See also the RZ STO’s April 1928 request for “maximum centralization” in union republic mobilization preparation, RGVA f. 4, op. 1, d. 473, l. 66. For an example of these groups in action, see meeting protocol on defense under Siberian district executive committee, 4 January 1929, RGVA f. 7, op. 10, d. 632, l. 14.

mechanism for independent inspection. In Ukraine, for example, the Chair of Ukraine's Vesenkha was made a plenipotentiary of Vesenkha's central Presidium. The same was true in Belarus'. In Leningrad, the job went to the chair of the Leningrad region's Council of the National Economy, with the same pattern for Moscow, the North Caucasus district, the lower Volga district, and the Ural region. These new plenipotentiaries had extensive responsibilities, including oversight of investment, current production, labor plans, evacuation, anti-air defense, quality control, and overall coordination of mobilization, all controlled by the Mobilization Divisions (*otdely*) of the Union Republic Vesenkhas.²⁶

It seems puzzling in retrospect that Vesenkha's central authorities appointed top regional administrators to audit their own defense preparations – hardly a recipe for vigorous oversight. The answer lies in the jurisdiction granted these local representatives. Both the original decision and later clarifying instructions mandated that local plenipotentiaries enjoyed the power to inspect any enterprises within their geographic scope, whether an all-union plant answering to Moscow, a republic-level factory responsible to the union republic's Vesenkha, or an enterprise of purely local significance. They were not limited to those plants under their normal administrative purview, alleviating to at least some degree the problem of conflict of interest.²⁷

The move to organize civil people's commissariats for war gained momentum over the first half of 1929 with the approval of the First Five-Year Plan and commensurate measures for defense. In January, the Red Army presented the RZ STO a proposal for mobilizing civilian commissariats, a proposal that "should become the basic leadership for both state and economic apparatus in preparing the country for defense." Mobilizing the civilian sector had no drawbacks from the Red Army's point of view: the effort and resources would come from other commissariats, not the Red Army. What the high command needed was the agreement of other institutions, and a mandate from the party-state's highest organs of power, to force reluctant civilian bureaucrats to accede to these plans.²⁸

That mandate came in mid-1929. On 15 July, the Politburo issued two wide-ranging decrees: "On Defense" and "On Military Industry." A major overhaul of Soviet defense policy, "On Defense" mandated further refinements and closer linkage among the Soviet system of mobilization organs. At both the all-union and union republic levels, in both civil and military institutions, mobiliza-

²⁶ Decision of Standing Mobilization Conference, 7 May 1929, RGAE f. 3429, op. 16, d. 14, ll. 26–27.

²⁷ See Decision of Standing Mobilization Conference, 7 May 1929, *ibid.*, and explanatory instructions, 26 July 1929, *ibid.*, ll. 22–23.

²⁸ Revvoensovet meeting #1, pt. 1, 2 January 1929, RGASPI f. 85, op. 1s, d. 90, l. 29.

tion cells were to be established by the spring of 1930.²⁹ This was slow to begin, but by the end of 1929 and the beginning of 1930, the RZ STO spearheaded a new drive to introduce war planning in non-military government bodies, or improve those already-existing mobilization organs. The militarization of civil administration continued to expand.

The People's Commissariat of Agriculture, for example, had an importance for defense not immediately apparent. The Red Army's high command, particularly in the wake of collectivization, was intensely concerned with the state of the Soviet countryside. While some, notably Tukhachevskii, saw collectivization as a welcome step towards converting petty-bourgeois property-holding peasants into good proletarians, most officers seem to have feared the impact of rural discontent on the morale of an overwhelmingly peasant army.³⁰ Upon the outbreak of war, the Red Army would become even more dependent on peasant conscripts, and Soviet agriculture would have to feed the wartime population despite a sudden loss of manpower to conscription. Agriculture also had to prepare for the loss of horses. The Red Army was in the 1920s and 1930s dependent on horse-drawn transport, a problem only partially rectified during World War II. Just as with soldiers and trucks, the Red Army made extensive preparations for requisitioning horses from the Soviet countryside upon the outbreak of war. As a corollary to this, Agriculture was also responsible for forming a veterinary corps capable of keeping the Red Army's horses healthy.

Accordingly, on 30 December 1929, the RZ STO ordered the People's Commissariat of Agriculture to develop a defense policy. The Red Army, fearing Agriculture's inability to assemble a coherent plan and hoping to put its own stamp on any policy, helpfully forwarded a model statute.³¹ The Red Army's priority was ensuring a commitment to defense within Agriculture, reflected in military insistence that the chief of the mobilization department *not* simultaneously hold other positions. The Red Army argued that both practically (in terms of time devoted to defense matters) and symbolically (in order to demonstrate that defense did indeed merit a full-time overseer), the position deserved undivided attention. Shaposhnikov and Nikolai Nikolaevich Movchin complained that splitting the job "cannot *not* produce a reduction in the pace and quality of

²⁹ Politburo decision "On Defense," pt. 10, 15 July 1929, GARF f. 5446, op. 55, d. 1966, l. 34. See discussion of the two decrees in Samuelson, 145–49 and Stone, *Hammer and Rifle*, 124–28.

³⁰ See Jonathan Haslam, *Soviet Foreign Policy, 1930–33* (London: Macmillan, 1983), 121–22; von Hagen, *Soldiers*, 319; Roger R. Reese, "Red Army Opposition to Forced Collectivization, 1929–1930: The Army Wavers," *Slavic Review* 55: 1 (1996), 45; David R. Stone, "Tukhachevskii in Leningrad: Military Politics and Exile, 1928–1931," *Europe-Asia Studies* 48: 8 (1996), 1377.

³¹ Nikolai Nikolaevich Movchin (Staff) to Iakov Arkad'evich Iakovlev (Agriculture), 10 February 1930, RGVA f. 7, op. 10, d. 981, l. 14.

work.” Voroshilov followed the lead of his staff, declaring that “as shown by sad experience in other commissariats,” Agriculture’s military section must have a sizable apparatus and, more importantly, “be headed by a person freed from all other responsibilities.”³²

On 8 March 1930 the RZ STO ordered the creation of a full-fledged mobilization section in the People’s Commissariat of Agriculture. After six weeks of preparation, Agriculture organized its “Defense and Mobilization Sector” under the general supervision of G. F. Grin’ko, Deputy People’s Commissar, and under the direct leadership of V. V. Semashko.³³ The defense sector, at least in theory, would prepare collective farms for war (especially in border areas), supply sufficient veterinarians for the Red Army’s horses, run military training in agricultural schools, and service and support requisitioned tractors.³⁴

Creating a defense sector on paper did not produce adequate preparedness. Simple inability to find competent personnel crippled the new Defense and Mobilization Sector for nearly a year. Grin’ko requested qualified officers from the Red Army, which quickly obliged.³⁵ Even with military assistance, Narkomzem could not manage its defense responsibilities. By September, it had only six of 16 statutory personnel, none of whom had experience in mobilization work; by November, there were only five.³⁶

The true obstacle, of which insufficient staffing was only a symptom, was official neglect. The People’s Commissar Iakov Arkad’evich Iakovlev and his deputies, including Grin’ko, saw defense work as a waste of time. In a sign that non-military administrators shared military laments over lack of commitment to defense, Semashko complained to the Red Army’s Ieronim Petrovich Uborevich that his Defense Sector suffered from “absence of direction on fundamental issues,” and that he could not even speak with his superiors. As a result of the low priority of defense, “business-like communication with the leading personnel of the commissariat has not been established, despite long hours in waiting rooms and insulting refusals to meet with me, with the exception of four or five literally

³² Shaposhnikov and Movchin (Staff) to Ernest Fritsevich Appoga (RZ STO), 1 March 1930, RGVA f. 7, op. 10, d. 981, l. 15; Voroshilov to Iakov[lev?], undated but after 8 March 1930, *ibid.*, l. 16.

³³ RZ STO decision, 8 March 1930, RGAE f. 3429, op. 16, d. 77, ll. 93 and ob.; Agriculture order #2ss, 19 April 1930, RGVA f. 7, op. 10, d. 981, l. 37.

³⁴ See the theoretical structure of the Defense Sector of Agriculture, October? 1930, *ibid.*, ll. 88–89.

³⁵ See Grin’ko (Agriculture) to Shaposhnikov (Staff), 18 April 1930, *ibid.*, l. 36; Shaposhnikov and Sergei Ivanovich Ventsov report to NKVM on the transfer of staff officers to Agriculture, 27 April 1930, in *ibid.*, l. 38.

³⁶ Complaint from NKVM to RZ STO, September 1930, *ibid.*, l. 44; Shaposhnikov to Agriculture, 30 November 1930, *ibid.*, l. 85.

minute-long meetings with Grin'ko." He could not even obtain Moscow housing through Agriculture, so "from this date my family and I will be forced to live on the street."³⁷

The Red Army found plenty of blame to apportion for the sad state of Agriculture's defense sector. The Staff found that Agriculture's collegium had not discussed issues of mobilization even once during the course of its existence, and readiness naturally suffered as a result. Despite Semashko's attacks on his superiors, however, the Red Army held him partly responsible, while still remaining dissatisfied with Grinko and Agriculture's leadership. S. I. Ventsov of the Red Army Staff concluded that Semashko had shown himself incapable of handling his job, and requested his dismissal. Semashko indeed lacked a defense background: he appears to have been an in-house appointment from Agriculture. Ventsov suggested a replacement from the Defense Sector of the Russian Republic's Gosplan.³⁸ By the end of November 1930, the unhappy Semashko had been replaced by Aizenberg as director of the defense sector. Aizenberg had no choice but to appeal widely for help not to Agriculture itself but instead to the RZ STO, the Staff, and the Defense Sector of Gosplan. Nearly a year had passed with absolutely no result. Without substantial assistance and pressure from outside, Aizenberg would accomplish little more than Semashko had done.³⁹

In the People's Commissariat of Trade, efforts to organize for war dated back to at least 1927. On 13 September 1927, Deputy People's Commissar Lev Mikhailovich Khinchuk held a meeting to discuss improving the already-existing mobilization section. As soon as Movchin (temporarily head of Gosplan's Defense Sector) heard of Khinchuk's activities, he quickly stepped in to offer guidance, particularly on the goals toward which Khinchuk should be working. While applauding Khinchuk's plans to coordinate his efforts with the Red Army, Movchin's priority, judging by his advice, was an uninterrupted supply of food. He stressed maintaining stockpiles of bread and grain, in addition to other agricultural raw materials and imported goods, along with preparing flour mills, bakeries, grain elevators, and warehouses for mobilization.⁴⁰

³⁷ Semashko to Uborevich, 31 July 1930, *ibid.*, l. 54.

³⁸ NKVM to RZ STO [corrections in Shaposhnikov's hand], September 1930, *ibid.*, l. 44. This document is itself a minimally reworked version of a July 1930 report to Shaposhnikov from Svirshchevskii, *ibid.*, ll. 48–49. See also Ventsov (Second Directorate of Staff) to Kalmykov (Main Directorate of RKKA), 4 October 1930, *ibid.*, l. 43.

³⁹ Aizenberg to RZ STO, Second Directorate of Staff, and Defense Sector of Gosplan, end of November 1930, *ibid.*, l. 126.

⁴⁰ Movchin (Defense Sector of Gosplan) to Lev Mikhailovich Khinchuk (Trade), 3 October 1927, *ibid.*, d. 338, ll. 6–7.

Despite Movchin's concern with food, by 1930 the People's Commissariat of Trade was moving towards *eliminating* its military sector, though this effort was doomed to fail given the Politburo's renewed commitment to defense. Trade officials proposed to split the central body responsible for military imports into smaller cells in each of Trade's numerous foreign trade directorates. Though the motives for this are not entirely clear, it seems to have been intended to boost Trade's autonomy with respect to the Red Army by fragmenting any military presence at the commissariat's heart. The new, smaller cells would be further from the commissariat's center of gravity and less powerful.

The Red Army certainly interpreted Trade's proposal as an attack. According to Iosif Stanislavovich Unshlikht, deputy chair of the Military-Revolutionary Council, the proposal would reduce the military's authority. Moreover, the reorganization would seriously hamper military imports. Decentralizing military work would demand more trained staff, and though Trade officials argued that the military lost sight of the commercial side of its operations, Unshlikht countered that whenever trade bypassed military men who knew what equipment ought to cost, huge cost overruns resulted.⁴¹

Importing military equipment, though important to Unshlikht and the Red Army, was only part of the Trade Commissariat's defense responsibilities. Trade also controlled the stockpiles that would keep the Soviet war economy running through the initial period of war. In addition to food and forage for the Red Army, this meant raw materials for industry and food stores for cities. Trade's Mobilization and Defense Sector was charged with maintaining these stores untouched, a difficult task when industrial managers desperately needed those valuable and hard-to-find commodities amid the shortages of the First Five-Year Plan.

In 1930, the People's Commissariat of Trade revised its basic policy outlining its defense responsibilities, providing not only a sketch of the state of civil-military links, but also illustrating the Red Army's increasing influence. On 10 February 1930, Deputy Commissar of Trade Khinchuk circulated a draft to the Red Army and other commissariats. In it, Vashkevich, director of Trade's Mobilization Section, described his responsibility as providing the Red Army during mobilization with two months of food, fodder, and key raw materials from "mobilization funds" (*mobilizatsionnye fondy*). These included "colonial products," i.e., tropical goods such as rubber not produced domestically. Trade would also accumulate "special funds" to feed important population centers, and "defense funds" to provide raw materials for industry. These were intended strictly for factories supplying the Red Army; plants manufacturing civilian goods were ex-

⁴¹ Unshlikht to Anastas Ivanovich Mikoian and Sergo Ordzhonikidze, 27 January 1930, RGASPI f. 85, op. 27, d. 190, l. 1.

pected to accumulate their own stockpiles from internal resources. The Red Army had the privilege of determining its own needs, which Trade would be obliged to meet. Under the draft policy, the Red Army controlled the distribution of these stockpiles and determined its own level of mobilization support.⁴²

By 15 August 1930, a revised list of responsibilities and table of organization for Trade's Mobilization-Defense Sector were ready. The sector was charged, first and foremost, with carrying out defense measures throughout Trade at the government's behest. It would oversee defense preparations among Trade's branches, while readying contingency plans for mobilization and possible evacuation, in addition to providing for the anti-aircraft defense of its warehouses and stockpiles. Appointed to ensure a steady supply of goods to the Red Army, the sector would also accumulate and manage stockpiles of raw materials in the event of war.⁴³

In addition, the sector would determine control figures (broad general guidelines) for wartime internal trade and wartime supplies for the Soviet population. It would develop both a five-year peacetime defense plan and yearly budget estimates. Along with determining which functionaries should be shielded from wartime conscription, it would protect vital trucks and automobiles from requisition. It would explore surrogates for scarce or imported raw materials. It would manage questions of foreign trade, including the evacuation of foreign workers from sensitive regions. It would manage relations with foreign firms during wartime, and administer trade with "Eastern countries and other neutral states" (a formulation which accepted the Red Army's understanding that its next war would be with its western border states). Finally, it would develop a competent group of mobilization workers for Trade, audit and inspect Trade's defense preparations, and run drill mobilizations.⁴⁴

At least on paper, the new Mobilization and Defense Sector was given the necessary authority to force Trade's other sections to devote scarce time, manpower, and resources to preparations for a war that might not come. The Director of the new sector ranked as a Deputy People's Commissar and sat in the commissariat's collective collegium. The Director had the right to demand information from any section of the commissariat, issue orders in his own name, and exert jurisdiction over defense anywhere in Narkomtorg. In addition, the

⁴² Khinchuk (Deputy People's Commissar of Trade) to Mobilization-Planning Directorate of Vesenkha, Defense Sector of Gosplan, NKVM, Finance, and Transport with attached statute, 10 February 1930, RGVA f. 7, op. 10, d. 987, ll. 2–4.

⁴³ People's Commissariat of Foreign and Domestic Trade order #1151ss and statute over signature of Deputy People's Commissar Kisis and Director of Mobilization and Defense Sector Loos, 15 August 1930, *ibid.*, ll. 19–26.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, ll. 20–21.

Director was given explicit power to implement all defense-related directives from the government. The statute also set up the Mobilization and Defense Sector's organization, including a Planning-Organizational Group to handle preparations for war, and a Group for Provisions to the Red Army to run wartime military supply. The Reserves Group oversaw stockpiles and storage facilities, while the Transport Section determined wartime requirements for transportation.⁴⁵

Although the need for stockpiles was absolutely clear, both to support the armed forces during mobilization and to support industry during a cut-off of imports, in the short term this presented industrial managers with a dilemma. Given the frantic pace of Stalinist industrialization, Soviet industry faced chronic shortages of imported and domestic materials. The natural result was that Soviet managers would regularly "borrow" (*pozaimstvovat*) scarce materials from mobilization stockpiles. Central authorities, particularly the STO and its subcommittees, tried to regulate this by permitting only some requests and demanding immediate replenishment of mobilization stocks. Informal and unauthorized borrowing from mobilization stockpiles, while of course illegal, could only have been encouraged by governmental approval of massive levels of borrowing.

Soviet archival records are replete with the borrowing of raw materials from mobilization funds or "special reserve funds." Some central organization, typically but not always the RZ STO, would permit an economic agent – Vesenkha, an industrial trust, or an individual factory – to remove a specified quantity of material from mobilization stocks to be repaid by a fixed date: the 600 tons of rubber used on 16 April 1929 in the chart below had to be replenished by 1 June. In some instances, as in the 700 tons of rubber removed from mobilization stocks at the end of 1930, permission came directly from the Politburo. The Politburo in its 15 July 1929 defense decision had decided to "categorically forbid the expenditure of defense mobilization stockpiles for civil purposes, and also temporary borrowing from stockpiles,"⁴⁶ to little avail:

Table 1. Partial List of Materials Taken from Defense Stockpiles

18 September 1928	2,950 tons of copper
	430 tons of tin
	1,300 tons of lead
	495 tons of aluminum

⁴⁵ Ibid., ll. 21–26. For the Red Army's response, see Movchin memorandum, 24 September 1930, *ibid.*, l. 37; Movchin to Mobilization and Defense Sector, 18 October 1930, *ibid.*, l. 39.

⁴⁶ RZ STO protocol #32, pt. 3, 16 April 1929, RGVA f. 4, op. 17, d. 62, ll. 129–30; Politburo decision, 15 July 1929, GARF f. 5446, op. 55, d. 1966, l. 31.

	750 tons of refined zinc
	65 tons of nickel
24 November 1928	200 tons of saltpeter
30 December 1928	200 tons of copper
	150 tons of zinc
12 February 1929	850 tons of saltpeter
15 March 1929	1,100 tons of copper
16 April 1929	600 tons of rubber
22 April 1929	2,000 tons of lead
2 July 1929	2,500 tons of tanning chemicals
4 August 1930	1,000 tons of rubber
17 August 1930	150 tons of copper
21 August 1930	1,000 tons of baling wire
22 September 1930	20 tons of ferro-tungsten alloys
1 October 1930	84 tons of zinc
	65 tons of aluminum
21 October 1930	3,000 tons of saltpeter
14 December 1930	50 tons of ferro-chromium alloys
	15 tons of ferro-tungsten alloys
	3 tons of ferro-vanadium alloys
	20 tons of nickel
25 December 1930	700 tons of rubber
18 August 1931	2,000 tons of non-ferrous metals
8 January 1932	48 tons of nickel

Certainly not exhaustive, this list illustrates the scale of dipping into mobilization stocks. It also suggests an interesting pattern. Clusters of borrowing appear before the end of the 1927–28 fiscal year (30 September), the 1929–30 fiscal year (30 September), and the October–December 1930 “Special Quarter” marking the transition to a fiscal year coinciding with the calendar year and having its own intense production targets. Borrowing appears to have been a standard tool of last-minute storming to meet difficult production targets.

The People's Commissariat of Finance had less well-attested military institutions, at least judging by Red Army records. As early as March 1928, People's Commissar of Finance Nikolai Petrovich Briukhanov reported to the RZ STO

that a Mobilization Section (*otdel*) was being developed in Finance.⁴⁷ Nearly two years later, on 30 January 1930, the RZ STO went further and ordered Finance to form a Defense Directorate (*Upravlenie oborony*). This did not mark the creation of a wholly new body responsible for military issues, rather the systematization of existing, uncoordinated efforts. In addition to absorbing the war preparation functions of the Mobilization Section, the new Defense Directorate would finance the Red Army's expenditures, defense-related outlays of civil people's commissariats, and capital construction associated with mobilization. Besides the old Mobilization Section, the Defense Directorate took over the Military-Naval Section (*otdel*) of the Budget Directorate and the military functions of the Administration for Financing the National Economy. All other branches of Finance apart from the new Defense Directorate would have a liaison, a "special consultant for mobilization questions," attached to handle defense policy.⁴⁸

The People's Commissariat of Labor of the Russian Republic also had defense responsibilities, duties which it carried out unsatisfactorily. In January 1930 the defense subgroup of the Russian Republic's Council of People's Commissars urged increased training in specific skills useful for military production in the civil education programs located near concentrations of military industry. At the same time, it found there was no plan for dealing with labor in the collectivized sector of Russian agriculture: the Red Army, in war as in peace, would be dominated by peasant conscripts and create a manpower crunch in the countryside. The fault did not lie entirely with the Labor Commissariat. Its parent all-union Commissariat of Labor had been weak in displaying leadership over defense questions. Vesenkha was also remiss in aiding the Russian Labor Commissariat, declaring its needs without providing plans for covering them.⁴⁹

But what do all these efforts ultimately mean? The foregoing litany of endless organizational chaos, mind-numbing shuffling of titles and offices, unceasing Red Army complaints at civilians' inability to prepare for war, and continual exhortations from above to improve defense planning may leave the reader at a loss as to the final significance of the Red Army's struggle to improve preparedness. When looked at as a whole, however, these bureaucratic measures do display a marked trend. Throughout the late 1920s, defense cells inside Soviet civil administration grew steadily in their number, scope, and expertise. Disorder, chaos, incompetence, and vacillations do not detract from what the Red Army slowly

⁴⁷ Nikolai Petrovich Briukhanov to RZ STO, received 28 March 1928, RGVA f. 4, op. 2, d. 253, ll. 14–21.

⁴⁸ RZ STO decision, 30 January 1930, RGAE f. 3429, op. 16, d. 77, l. 73.

⁴⁹ Protocol #29 of Russian Federation Sovnarkom's committee for defense, 10 January 1930, RGVA f. 7, op. 10, d. 964, ll. 1–2; Decision of Russian Federation Sovnarkom, 7 February 1930, *ibid.*, ll. 5–7.

and painfully achieved: a growing ability to compel and foster the comprehensive organization of the Soviet state for war. In this sense, the Red Army's quest was much like the better-known Stalinist revolutions of collectivization and industrialization. In both cases, a detailed picture reveals a staggering level of mismanagement, incompetence, and active and passive resistance; in Merle Fainsod's words, "a totalitarian facade concealed a host of inner contradictions."⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the Soviet peasantry *was* collectivized, and the Soviet economy *was* industrialized. In the same way, the obstacles to preparing Soviet society for war did not halt the preparation of Soviet society for war.

Of the obstacles the Red Army faced in preparing the Soviet Union for the next war, institutional inertia and passive resistance by managers with better ways to spend their time and resources could be and finally were overcome by the wholehearted support of the highest levels of party and state authority. Lack of trained and qualified personnel to man defense cells was an equally serious problem, but one the Red Army could solve itself. While military officers could assist civil institutions, the Red Army was itself desperately short of competent commanders.⁵¹ To meet the growing need for knowledgeable mobilization planners, in early 1929 the Red Army itself began training bureaucrats in the skills needed to prepare the Soviet Union for war. In special schools, the Red Army Staff taught hundreds of mid-career mobilization workers from all branches of the Soviet state how to think about and plan for war the Soviet way.

The idea for a special school for mobilization planning did not come from the military, but instead from Briukhanov, People's Commissar of Finance, who showed a great deal of sympathy for the Red Army's needs. In June 1928 he wrote to Voroshilov to report that a Finance investigation had unearthed a whole series of disasters in mobilization planning. Most importantly, Finance's defense personnel lacked any concept of the greater scheme of economic mobilization in which they participated. Briukhanov suggested that the Red Army create a short course in economic mobilization, and stressed the importance of the military's running the program, not civil commissariats. Voroshilov relayed Briukhanov's suggestion to the Staff for further development.⁵² The Red Army's training program would ultimately retain the features proposed by Briukhanov: Staff control and broad exposure to all sorts of mobilization work.

Preparations consumed six months, but by December 1928 the Staff's N. A. Efimov announced the formation of a Military-Economic Division under KUVNAS (Finishing Courses for the High Command) within the Frunze Mili-

⁵⁰ Merle Fainsod, *Smolensk under Soviet Rule* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), 454.

⁵¹ See Roger Reese, *Stalin's Reluctant Soldiers: A Social History of the Red Army, 1925–1941* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1996), 108ff.

⁵² Briukhanov to Voroshilov, 1 June 1928, RGVA f. 7, op. 10, d. 659, l. 1.

tary Academy, and solicited students for the school. The Military-Economic Division would run a three-month course at Red Army expense beginning in February 1929 for special training of mobilization workers. The initial aim was to include 30 students from the Red Army and 70 from civil institutions.⁵³ After delays, Voroshilov approved a three-month course beginning no later than 1 April 1929 and including 70 students, ten from the Red Army. The RZ STO ordered civil institutions to cooperate fully.⁵⁴

Response to the Red Army's initiative was quick. Some were puzzled by the concept and requested more information.⁵⁵ Others demanded the lion's share of the instructional time and a say in running the program, with the People's Commissar of Transportation most insistent on running and staffing the course himself. Transportation's mobilization director suggested that 125 of 298 hours of instruction be devoted to railroads, and requested 12 slots for his own personnel.⁵⁶ After the end of the first session, Zvonarev of Post and Telegraph would similarly complain about his specialty's short shrift: a mere four hours of seminars.⁵⁷ Red Army Chief of Staff Boris Shaposhnikov, overseeing the school, dutifully ignored most of these petitions except for, significantly, suggestions from Ernest Fritsevich Appoga, powerful secretary of the RZ STO.⁵⁸

Most institutions were eager to dispatch students, generally asking for more places for their personnel in the current session or a promise of future slots. The candidates themselves likely looked forward to three expense-paid months in Moscow. Some organizations were irked by the three-month forced loss of a senior employee, still owed a regular salary and a guaranteed return to previous employment. Those who felt their time too important for the course were rudely corrected. Aleksandr Mikhailovich Postnikov, coordinating mobilization for Vesenkha, complained that with his Five-Year Plan and budgetary control figures for the next year to complete, he could not possibly spare people for the first session. Voroshilov, without sympathy, brooked no excuses.⁵⁹

⁵³ Efimov to various institutions, 24 December 1928, *ibid.*, I. 4. KUVNAS is an abbreviation for "*Kursy usovershenstvovaniia Vysshego Nachsostava*."

⁵⁴ Shaposhnikov (Staff) proposal, confirmed 19 February 1929, *ibid.*, I. 108; RZ STO decision, 25 February 1929, RGAE f. 3429, op. 16, d. 6, I. 87.

⁵⁵ See, for example, the People's Commissariat of Labor's inquiry of 31 December 1928, RGVA f. 7, op. 10, d. 659, I. 18.

⁵⁶ Director of Central Mobilization Division of People's Commissariat of Transport to NKVM, 18 January 1929, *ibid.*, II. 27–28.

⁵⁷ Zvonarev to Staff, 11 June 1929, *ibid.*, I. 248.

⁵⁸ Appoga to Shaposhnikov, 25 March 1929, *ibid.*, I. 82.

⁵⁹ MPU to Staff and return telegram, 20 March 1929, *ibid.*, II. 86–87.

The makeup of the student body was the subject of endless wranglings over the exact distribution of slots. The early students were as a group quite similar to the elite of Soviet society, of which they were a small sample. While the records on individual students are sketchy, the Staff did study the overall make-up of its student body. Like the Red Army officer corps, or the higher-level bureaucrats of the people's commissariats, the students were mostly but not all Russian, and mostly but not all Communists. In the first group, 63 of 73 of the students were party members, with no distinction made among youth, candidate, and full members. The institution with the lowest percentage of party membership among its students was the Red Army (four of eight).⁶⁰ Little attention was paid to class origin. Despite the focus on security (as discussed below), all these students were senior mobilization workers and so, as Shaposhnikov explained to Voroshilov, had already been thoroughly vetted by the OGPU. The politically unreliable were unlikely to make it into the course.⁶¹ Twenty of the students in the initial class came from central government bodies, 55 from the union republics. The People's Commissariats of Transportation and of Military and Naval Affairs were most heavily represented with eight students each, followed by seven each for Trade and for Post and Telegraph.⁶²

Once preparations had been underway for four months, and two months after the original start date, the Red Army's High Command formally recognized a new Military-Economic Division under KUVNAS on 4 April 1929. The course itself was organized around general lectures for all students, together with more focused laboratories and seminars on particular subjects more closely related to individual specialties. Finance, for example, took up four hours of lecture time, but financial specialists would receive 80 hours of "theoretical-historical" training and an additional 50 hours applying that to the USSR.⁶³

Lack of qualified faculty limited the number of seminars, but the program spared no effort in drawing lecturers, stressing administrators over academics. As the start date grew closer, Shaposhnikov invited many of the leading lights of the Soviet military to serve as lecturers. While he himself would participate, he also extended invitations to, among others, Ian Ianovich Alksnis, later head of the Red Air Force; Elizaveta Leonidovna Khmel'nitskaia, the interwar Soviet Union's only woman military theorist; Konstantin Mekhonoshin, chair of Gosplan's Defense Sector; and Stanislav Gustavovich Strumilin, noted economist.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Chart of information on students, not dated, presumably c. March 1929, *ibid.*, I. 150.

⁶¹ Shaposhnikov to Voroshilov, 23 April 1929, RGVA *ibid.*, I. 102ob.

⁶² Chart of information on students, not dated, presumably c. March 1929, *ibid.*, I. 150.

⁶³ See "Program of Study" for finance, 9 April 1929, *ibid.*, II. 132–39.

⁶⁴ See March 1929 invitations, *ibid.*, II. 65ff.

The school's leadership was obsessed with security of the information presented. While much of the course material was from open sources, and many lecturers had published books or articles similar to their lectures, strict precautions were still taken. KUVNAS asked the Staff for special lockers for the students' course materials and texts, since they could not be taken safely back to the students' hotels.⁶⁵ Extraordinary precautions were taken not only with physical security of the texts, but with the information they contained. Although the students involved were all mobilization workers involved in highly secret activities, the lectures were kept as much as possible to open topics and data. As Shaposhnikov explained to Voroshilov, "for the sake of caution, all questions of readiness are illuminated in general terms without indicating actual factors, real figures, or our special measures characterizing our achievements in this area." The lecturers themselves, already vetted by the OGPU before taking up their own mobilization work, were investigated *again*, and Shaposhnikov personally checked their presentations. All lecture notes taken by the students were kept in a safe.⁶⁶

Even before the end of the first session, results seemed so promising that plans were already underway for a second.⁶⁷ There was some rethinking based on evaluations of the first run of the course. In particular, several observers commented on excessive reliance on lectures and an insufficient number of seminars, given a lack of qualified leaders.⁶⁸ Projected schedules cut seminar hours substantially, due in all likelihood to continuing lack of instructors, by boosting lecture hours at the expense of general and specialized seminars.⁶⁹

KUVNAS was not the only educational venue for preparing the militarization of the Soviet economy. The Red Army and Vesenkha alike subsequently opened other schools to meet the burgeoning need for mobilization workers. On 28 January 1930, Valerian Vladimirovich Kuibyshev, chair of Vesenkha, ordered the creation of a section to study the economics of war in the Institute of Industrial-Economic Research under the leadership of N. I. Vagranskii. To continue and expand on KUVNAS's mission, the RZ STO ordered the Red Army to create a military-economic department within the Frunze Academy. Part of this department's mission was explicitly to train civil bureaucrats and industrial managers in economic mobilization. At the end of November 1931, the Soviet gov-

⁶⁵ Deputy Director of KUVNAS to Director of Second Directorate of Red Army Staff, 27 February 1929, *ibid.*, l. 48.

⁶⁶ Shaposhnikov to Voroshilov, 23 April 1929, *ibid.*, l. 102, 102ob.

⁶⁷ "Proposal," 28 May 1929, *ibid.*, l. 223.

⁶⁸ See Draft letter of Karpushin-Zorin (Staff), 13 June 1929, *ibid.*, ll. 239–40; also Zorin (Post and Telegraph) to Staff, 11 June 1929, *ibid.*, l. 248.

⁶⁹ Compare proposals in *ibid.*, l. 384, l. 428.

ernment established a department of military economics in the All-Union Planning Academy.⁷⁰

Did these bureaucrats end their training convinced of the need to put a high priority on military goals? It is impossible to say with certainty, and to a large degree the question is simply irrelevant. Red Army planners fulminated as much about civil and industrial managers' inability to carry out their duties effectively as they did about active resistance to military initiatives. Certainly, many cases of incompetence concealed passive resistance to Red Army demands, but many were what they seemed: the chaos that inevitably resulted from rapid industrial expansion with a woefully undereducated population. Training civil administrators in the mechanics of mobilization at least made them more capable of carrying out orders from above, orders that increasingly put defense at the forefront of economic policy and made defense concerns the chief priority of the Soviet state.

It is no shock to find Soviet policymakers constrained by an undereducated population; the Red Army was hardly alone in scrambling to educate those with whom it worked.⁷¹ What is different here is the effect this remedy had. The Red Army's school for mobilization created a cadre to implement in practice what military and civil leadership agreed was theoretically necessary: the comprehensive organization of society for war. Mark von Hagen has used the term "militarized socialism" to refer to the Soviet Union's brand of militarization, tying comprehensive military goals and priorities to a socialist state.⁷² The Red Army's efforts, undertaken with the enthusiastic backing of Stalin's regime, established an infrastructure for wartime that grew steadily in scope and power. Despite the concrete difficulties of creating that infrastructure, the Soviet Union found itself far ahead of its capitalist rivals in militarizing its state and society.

Put in comparative context, the Red Army's achievements in organizing society for war are even more striking. As stressed above, the lessons of World War I were clear to military planners around the world. Nonetheless, relative geographic isolation gave the United States and the United Kingdom the apparent freedom to slash defense budgets and neglect military preparedness. Germany, by contrast, had been forcibly disarmed by the Treaty of Versailles. Barred from developing a substantial military in peacetime, the German military's leadership had no alternative but to create the infrastructure for rapid expansion in the event of war – institutions similar in many ways to their Soviet counterparts, al-

⁷⁰ Vesenkha order 55s (Kuibyshev), 28 January 1930, RGVA f. 7, op. 10, d. 1103, l. 14; RZ STO decision, 26 April 1930, RGASPI f. 3, op. 17, d. 63, l. 158; Sovnarkom decision 242s, 17 November 1931, RGVA f. 4, op. 17, d. 64, l. 301.

⁷¹ See Moshe Lewin, "The Social Background of Stalinism," in *The Making of the Soviet System* (New York: Pantheon, 1985), esp. 262–63, 266–67.

⁷² Von Hagen, *Soldiers*, 1–9.

though the Soviets would build *both* a massive military force and means to expand it further. Barred from expending resources on a large standing army, Germany instead focused on mechanisms for expansion.⁷³ France is left as the best comparative case, as a continental power anticipating a continental war. There was, however, a deep divide between the French military's sense of how the next war ought to be fought and the willingness of French society to accept the necessary measures. While the French military planned to win the next war through a slow, methodical struggle of attrition, French legislators repeatedly refused to authorize the manpower policies and peacetime organizational measures necessary to create and manage a society capable of that sort of war.⁷⁴

The French comparison highlights the features that make Soviet militarized socialism so striking. In France, it was the Left, fearing militarism, which proved the greatest obstacle to the organization of French society for war. Ironically, in the Soviet Union, the *ne plus ultra* of leftism, the party, state, and army saw no contradiction between a socialist society and all-encompassing organization for war. In France, the military leadership kept itself aloof from civilian government, and failed to lobby successfully for the policies it thought desperately needed; in the Soviet Union, military and civil leadership were closely intertwined and possessed a common understanding of their shared interests. This consensus lies at the heart of militarized socialism. The Soviet party and state leadership had fought a bitter civil war to stay in power, and many had seen front-line combat. The Red Army's high command included some newly-minted officers whose Marxist backgrounds led them to embrace a conception of war that saw it as intimately tied to economy and society. Imperial officers had experienced firsthand how economic and social collapse had doomed Russia in World War I. All – party, state, and military elites alike – saw a centrally planned economy and comprehensively organized society as the keys to victory in the war they felt certain would come.

Finally, this organization for war may have had its final payoff in 1941. While thorough archival research has not yet been done on the Soviet response to invasion and subsequent evacuation, it is certainly noteworthy that the Soviet state was able to absorb the loss of so great a proportion of its territory, popula-

⁷³ For an excellent brief discussion, see James S. Corum, "A Comprehensive Approach to Change: Reform in the German Army in the Interwar Period," in *The Challenge of Change: Military Institutions and New Realities, 1918–1941*, ed. Harold R. Winton and David R. Mets (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 35–73.

⁷⁴ Eugenia C. Kiesling, *Arming Against Hitler: France and the Limits of Military Planning* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1996), esp. chap. 1; idem, "Resting Uncomfortably on Its Laurels: The Army of Interwar France," in *The Challenge of Change*, ed. Winton and Mets, 1–34.

tion, infrastructure, industry, and resources, and still function effectively.⁷⁵ By comparison with France's utter collapse in 1940, or even Nazi Germany's recurring difficulties in efficiently mobilizing all its economic resources for the war effort, the Soviet Union's ability to endure such a loss is especially striking. While there are certainly many reasons for such resilience, it seems likely that prewar efforts to organize all branches of the state for war played a major part. To that degree, the Soviet Union learned and profited from the disastrous wartime experience of its imperial predecessor.

Dept. of History
208 Eisenhower Hall
Kansas State University
Manhattan, KS 66506 USA
stone@ksu.edu

⁷⁵ John Barber and Mark Harrison, *The Soviet Home Front, 1941–1945* (New York: Longman, 1991), 123–42.