



Operation Pike: Britain Versus the Soviet Union, 1939-1941 (Contributions in Military Studies)

Patrick Osborn

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This groundbreaking study reveals the extent of British military planning against the Soviet Union during the first two years of the Second World War. These plans, formulated on the widespread belief that Soviet Russia was an active and willing partner in Adolf Hitler's war of conquest, were designed to bring the Soviets to their knees and deprive Nazi Germany of vital raw materials, especially oil. Churchill himself was one of the leading proponents of action that would have led to an Anglo-Soviet conflict even as the war with Germany raged on. Utilizing many never-before published documents, Osborn challenges conventional wisdom that Allied hopes were pinned on a Soviet entry into the war against Germany and proposes instead that, had the Nazis not successfully invaded France in May 1940, the Allies might well have launched their own offensive against the Soviet Union.

Anti-Soviet rumblings began shortly after the Red Army seized eastern Poland in September 1939, and became more strident after Joseph Stalin invaded Finland later that year. Truly serious planning did not take place, however, until after Stalin's disastrous war with Finland ended in March 1940. Immediately following the abrupt end of that conflict the Red Army sent substantial reinforcements to the Black Sea region, the area most threatened by Allied attack. In March-April 1940, the British undertook secret reconnaissance flights to obtain photographs of important targets inside the Soviet Union. The swift collapse of France in May 1940 insured that British bombers were not launched against these targets, but suspicion lingered between Britain and the USSR throughout the war, contributing to Stalin's refusal to believe Winston Churchill's warnings that Hitler was preparing to invade the USSR in 1941.

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