

Memories of a Strained Alliance: A Survey of American and Soviet Veterans

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Shortly after the 50th anniversary of the battle for Moscow, I passed out a survey to veterans of the Red Army in that city. I re-formulated the questions to make them fit the American side and passed out the same survey to American veterans visiting their former battlefields during anniversary ceremonies in France and Holland in 1994. The following year, I visited with American and Soviet veterans in Torgau, Germany, where they were celebrating the 50th anniversary of the link-up of American and Soviet troops in that town.

I have not yet put the data together into a publishable article, but I can offer the following summary tables of the data on several of the questions which were on the survey.

Basic Survey Data

	Total surveys distributed	Answers received	Answer rate	Surveys distributed in Torgau	Answers from Torgau:	Answer rate Torgau:
USA	234	44	18,8%	74	15	20,27%
UdSSR	235	91	38,7%	35	13	37,1%

Question 5 (Soviet veterans only):

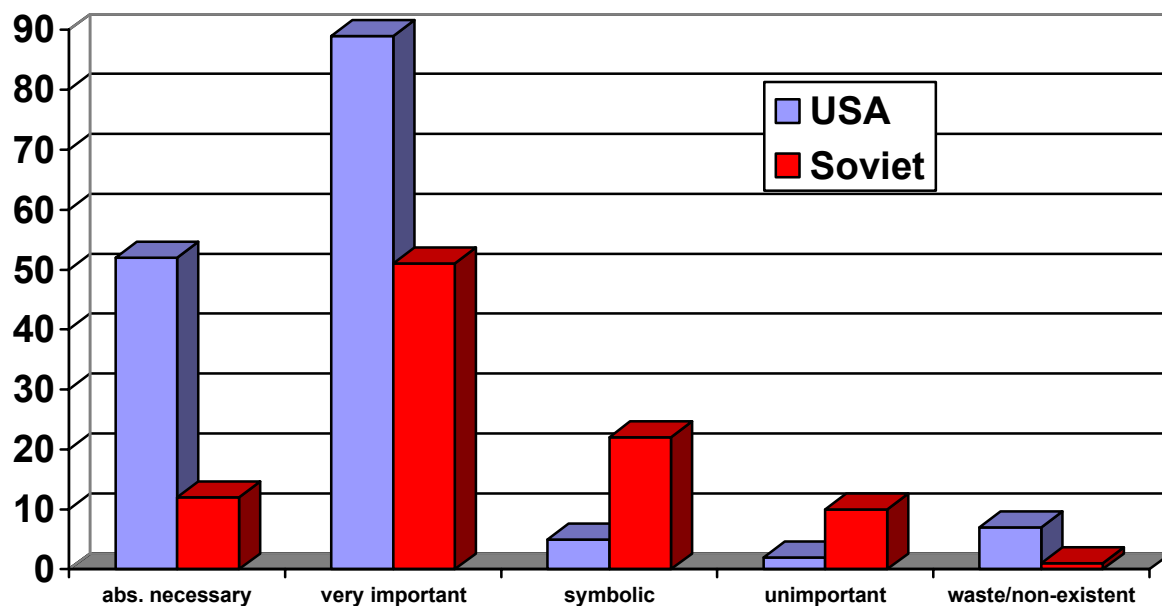
Whether Soviet veterans had actually seen Lend-Lease goods during the war

Yes 64 70%

No 16 18% of whom at least 10% (63% of these 18%) were either women or did not fight at the front

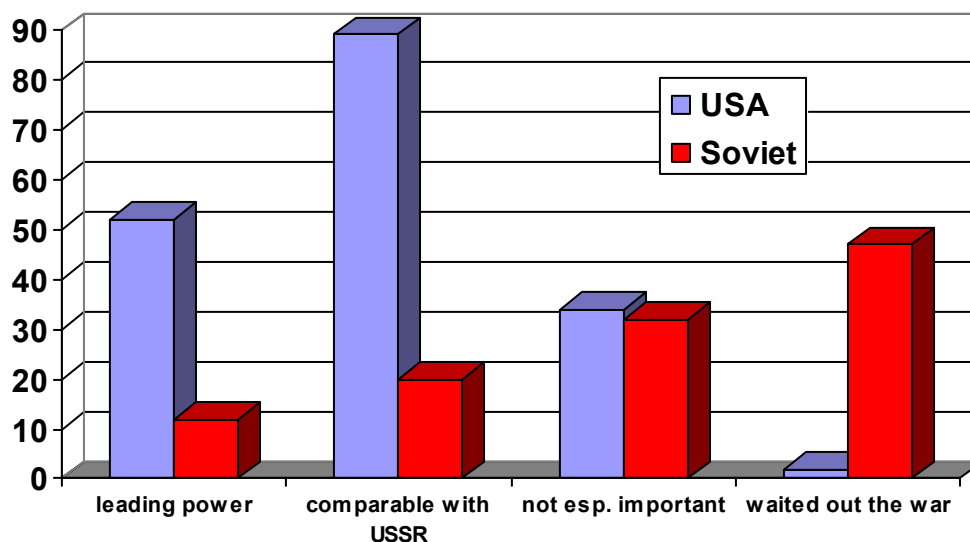
Questions 5/6: The Meaning of Lend-Lease for Victory

This was a multiple-choice question. Veterans were allowed to pick more than one answer. Totals are in percentage. Blue indicates the answers given by American veterans; red answers are from Red Army veterans.



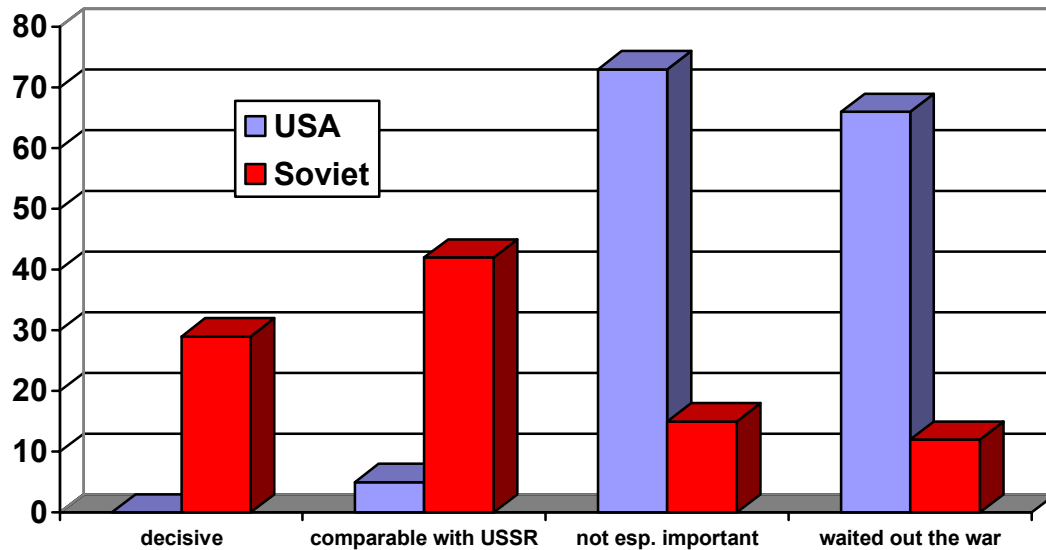
Question 6/7: The Importance of the USA in the Victory Over Nazi Germany

This was a multiple-choice question. Veterans were allowed to pick more than one answer. Totals are in percentage. Blue indicates the answers given by American veterans; red answers are from Red Army veterans.



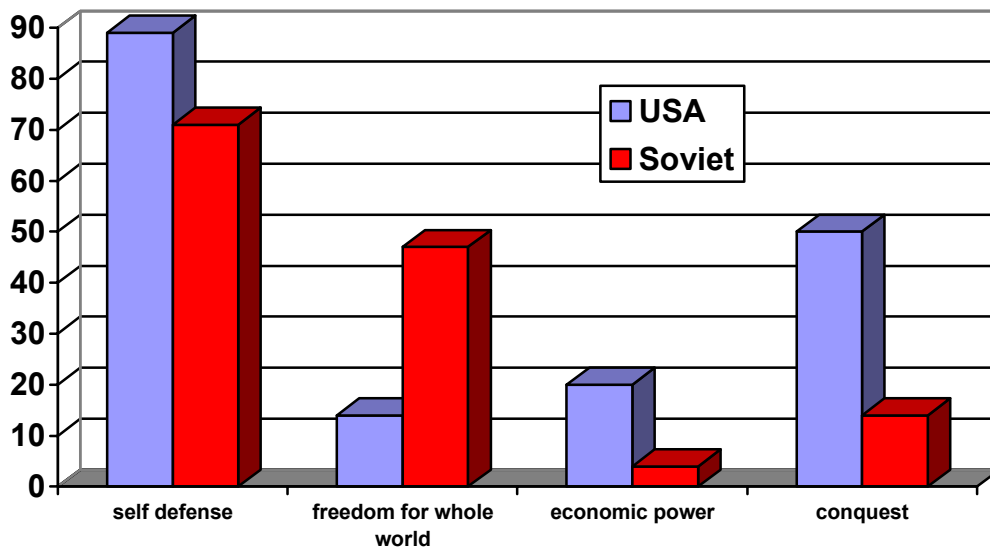
Question 7/8: The Importance of the Soviet Union for the Victory Over Japan

This was a multiple-choice question. Veterans were allowed to pick more than one answer. Totals are in percentage. Blue indicates the answers given by American veterans; red answers are from Red Army veterans.



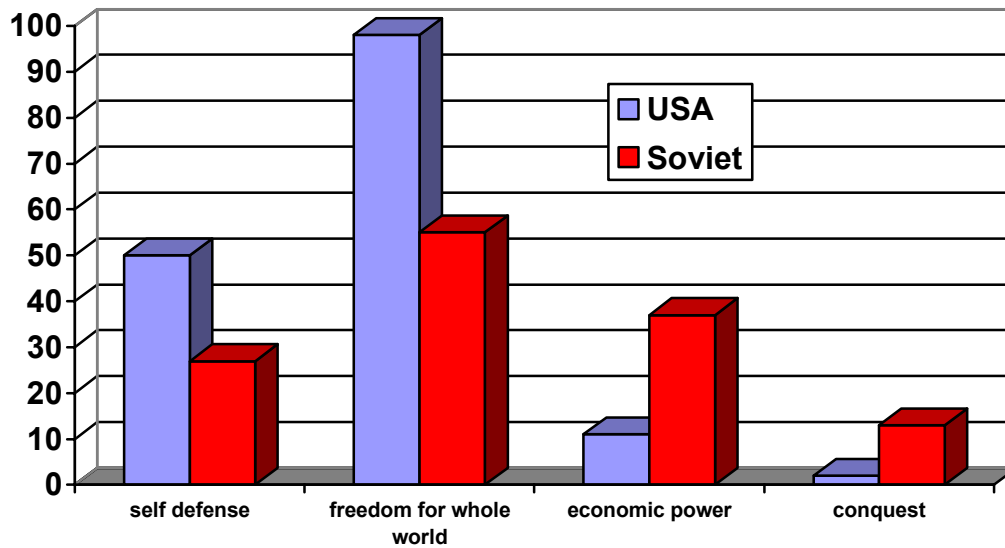
Question 9a/11a: What did the Soviet Union fight for?

This was a multiple-choice question. Veterans were allowed to pick more than one answer. Totals are in percentage. Blue indicates the answers given by American veterans; red answers are from Red Army veterans.



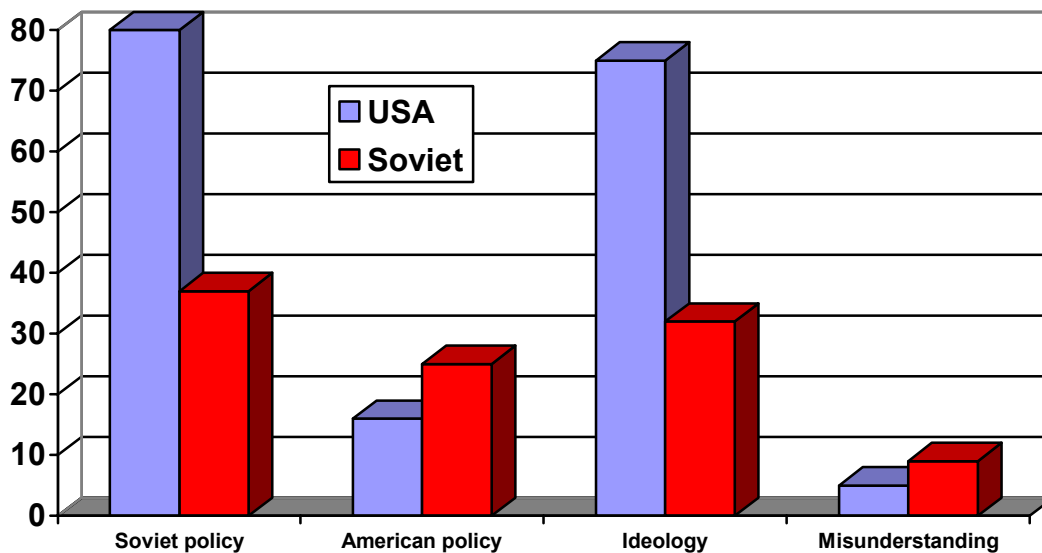
Question 9b/11b: What did the United States fight for?

This was a multiple-choice question. Veterans were allowed to pick more than one answer. Totals are in percentage. Blue indicates the answers given by American veterans; red answers are from Red Army veterans.



Question 10/12: What was the cause of the "Cold War"?

This was a multiple-choice question. Veterans were allowed to pick more than one answer. Totals are in percentage. Blue indicates the answers given by American veterans; red answers are from Red Army veterans.



Question 8/10: Resentment, American wartime policy, casualties

At the close of the survey, I left a large blank space and asked the veterans of both countries to comment on the horrendous disparity in casualties taken by the two states during the war. Soviet veterans were asked to indicate whether or not they felt resentment toward the United States; Americans were asked whether they would expect the Soviet people to feel resentment toward the United States. Primarily on the Soviet side, I wanted to measure the effects of Soviet wartime press and postwar historiography which strongly suggested that American delays in opening a second front were intended to purposely weaken the Soviet Union. But I did not drop the hint words, "second front".

"Resentiments"

USSR: Only three veterans (3%) indicated feeling "Resentment" (*obidy*) toward the United States. One noted that he had felt that during the war, but no longer did. None of the Torgau veterans were among these four.

USA: 26 U.S. answered this question. Five (19%) indicated that they would expect the Soviet people to feel resentment, 21 said they did not.

American military strategy

None of the Americans indicated that low American casualties reflect badly on their country. Eight indicated explicitly that low casualties give a favorable impression of America.

Reasons given by veterans for the disparity in casualties:

Soviet Veterans

Answer:	Number of answers:
Geography (the war was in Russia)	13
Stalin	11
the government of the USSR	9
poor preparation of the Red Army	8
late opening of the second front	8
the Americans	5
heroism of the Soviet people	3
blood purges in the army in late 1930s	2
German occupation policy	1
communism	1

American Veterans:

Answer:	Number of answers:
Geography (the war was in Russia)	23
no U.S. civilians killed	8
poor Soviet strategy	8
Nazi atrocities	4
Stalin	4
the weather	4
length of the war	3
Soviet policy toward human life	3
late entry of U.S. into war	3
communism and the Soviet system	3

A few other answers were given once or twice: German resistance to Russia, American efficiency, the Vlasov Army, hunger.