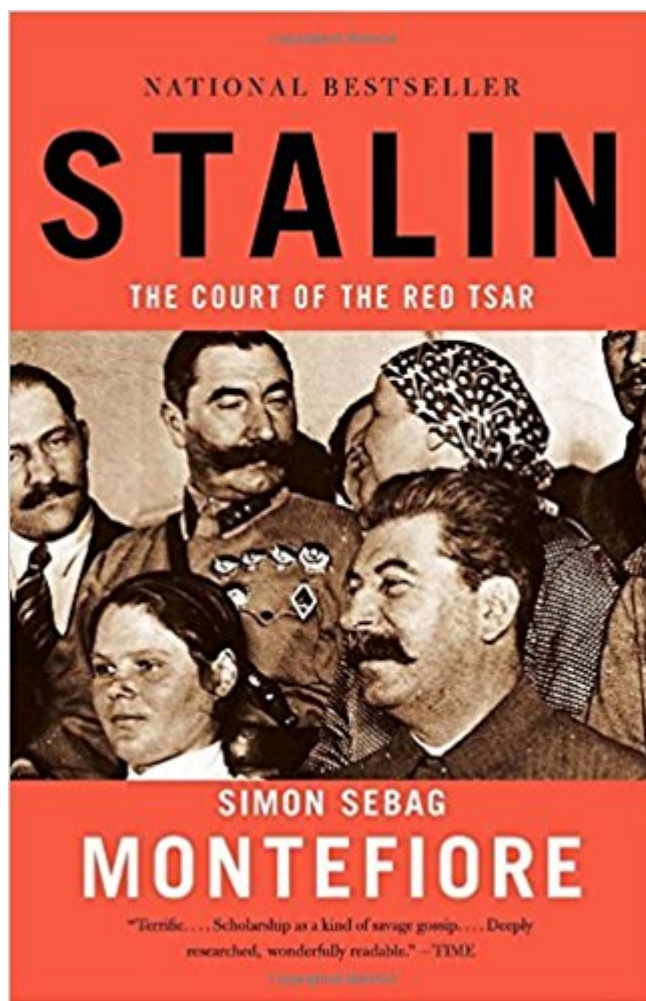


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Stalin: The Court Of The Red Tsar



Synopsis

This widely acclaimed biography of Stalin and his entourage during the terrifying decades of his supreme power transforms our understanding of Stalin as Soviet dictator, Marxist leader, and Russian tsar. Based on groundbreaking research, Simon Sebag Montefiore reveals the fear and betrayal, privilege and debauchery, family life and murderous cruelty of this secret world. Written with bracing narrative verve, this feat of scholarly research has become a classic of modern history writing. Showing how Stalin's triumphs and crimes were the product of his fanatical Marxism and his gifted but flawed character, this is an intimate portrait of a man as complicated and human as he was brutal and chilling.

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Customer Reviews

Montefiore (*The Prince of Princes: The Life of Potemkin*) is more interested in life at the top than at the bottom, so he includes hundreds of pages on Stalin's purges of top Communists, while devoting much less space to the forced collectivization of Soviet peasants that led to millions of deaths. In lively prose, he intersperses his mammoth account of Stalin's often-deadly political decisions with the personal lives of the Soviet dictator and those around him. As a result, the reader learns about sexual peccadilloes of the top Communists: Stalin's secret police chief Lavrenti Beria, for one, "craved athletic women, haunting the locker rooms of Soviet swimmers and basketball players." Stalin's own escapades after the death of his wife are also noted. There's also much detail about the food at parties and other meetings of Stalin's henchmen. The effect is paradoxical: Stalin and

his cronies are humanized at the same time as their cruel misdeeds are recounted. Montefiore offers little help in answering some of the unsettled questions surrounding Stalin: how involved was he in the 1934 murder of rising official Sergei Kirov, for example. He also seems to leave open the question of Stalin's paranoia: he argues that the Georgian-born ruler was a charming man who used his people skills to get whatever he wanted. Montefiore mainly skirts the paranoia issue, noting that only after WWII, when Stalin launched his anti-Semitic campaigns, did he "become a vicious and obsessional anti-Semite." There are many Stalin biographies out there, but this fascinating work distinguishes itself by its extensive use of fresh archival material and its focus on Stalin's ever-changing coterie. Maps and 24 pages of photos not seen by PW. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Any biography of a tyrant runs the risk of humanizing its subject to the point of appearing to mitigate his crimes. But Montefiore's intimate portrait actually throws the coldhearted murderousness with which Stalin pursued and defended power into sharper relief. The book—much of it based on fresh archival material—moves smoothly between detailed sketches of everyday life at the Kremlin and accounts of the paranoid and sanguinary scheming that determined Soviet politics. This juxtaposition captures the vertiginous quality of life in Stalin's court, where no allegiance was permanent. Just as strikingly, Montefiore shows how Stalin, a "master of friendships," used charm to win the support of members of the Party's inner circle (many of whom ended up regretting it). This haunting book gets us as close as we are likely to come to the man who believed that "the solution to every human problem was death." Copyright © 2005 The New Yorker --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

One of the best detailed accounts of Stalin and his circle. The author poignantly writes about the fear and terror even amongst his closest comrades. He also captures how both revered and feared he was by his people. So many naive Americans merely portray Hitler and Stalin simplistically both as these crazy monsters who terrorized their people. They did terrorize their people but both were worshipped by many millions. And contrary to what many say, he was no insane megalomaniac. Rather he was an astute politician and yes statesman who built a society with him as its unquestionable dictator. This book does a marvelous account at portraying those around him including his family. I have read this book twice, and thoroughly enjoyed it both times. No book has given such a lucid, descriptive, and fascinating account of the man, his closest so circle and the

country at the time. I also like the fact that unlike many other biographies it does not preach or lecture on the negatives of socialism ad nauseum. It merely tells the facts

Interesting but somewhat dragging in details. Also a bit repetitive on some subjects. Very good showing what Stalin the man and Stalin the Dictator were like. Shocking to be reminded of what he and his henchman got away with in loss of innocent lives. Worth reading to get a good refresher.

Got this as a gift for my mother who loved it. She has read many Russian history books and said this one had a perspective she had never heard before.

I will never be communist, ever, better dead than Red, etc. That doesn't change the fact that Stalin has fascinated me since I first learned about him. A fascinating read, luminating indeed. I feel this is the best look into Stalin's Russia since *The Great Terror*. Please read this book and take lessons from it.

Incredible read. An insider's look at possible (with Mao) the twentieth century's most prolific mass murderer of state-the true creator of Soviet Communism. Though exploring Stalin's notorious Kremlin court of "magnates" from every angle and from a diversity of the most intimate insiders, and this lasting over 600 pages the narrative never flags, but remorselessly carries the reader's attention across the vast sweep of nearly twenty five years of utter hell for Russia's people. Though superficially "gossip", this book's quite lively prose is redeemed by the monumental figure of the Vozhd at the center of the narrative, and the reader gets an inside look at what made a monster so monstrous, and also what made his character so maddeningly fascinating and memorable.

Gruesome, tawdry, depressing, violent, twisted bunch of psychopaths. The crimes of the Bolsheviks under Stalin (and Lenin) are not nearly well-enough known about. I have Russian friends who do not understand that era. These people were the first mass murderers in modern Europe, easily as bad and probably worse than Hitler. Montefiore does a very good job telling the story of this vile group of maniacs. Well-worth reading and is probably mandatory reading if you want to fully grasp 20th century European and world history.

Well written book but depressing. I had to put it down 2/3rds of the way though. Mr. Montefiore obviously put a great deal of time and effort in researching Stalin. For this thank you and well done.

You simply cannot have an idea of real life communism without reading this book. The only misses of this great book are why the only politician, up to date, who has officially, clearly, and publicly renounced communism, Arvo Tuominen (his book *The Bells off Kremlin*) and Otto Ville Kuusinen (Stalin's private secretary) are not mentioned in the book. One can only ask, what truly happened, why the clearest, the only true critic of communism (Arvo Tuominen) was left out? There is not a single word about him or Kuusinen, in this book. This major flaw just suggests what else was left untouched?

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