

Telling the Truth About Stalin

In discussions of World War II, much emphasis and critical attention has been conferred on German forces and actions. What is often overlooked, however, are the Soviet deeds during the same time period.

Author Sean McMeekin, a historical studies professor at Bard College, seeks to slay this sacred cow of the historical profession and American journalism in his recent book, [*Stalin's War*](#). An independent-minded and immensely learned historian, McMeekin demonstrates the extent of Soviet brutality and treachery before and during WWII.

This idea is not new, for even U.S. leaders—including then-Sen. President Harry Truman—stressed the moral equivalence of Stalin's regime and Nazi Germany in 1941, after Hitler turned on his Soviet allies and invaded Russia. As it turns out, Truman and his cohorts would be proved right by historical events.

The U.S. may have been justified in extending Lend-Lease aid to Stalin's tyranny for the explicit purpose of pushing Hitler's army out of Russia, yet this support became counterproductive once Russian armies moved into neighboring countries. American aid—which totaled over \$180 billion dollars in today's currency—was used to exterminate non-Communist Polish resistance fighters and even landed up in the hands of Yugoslavian leader Tito's Stalinist Partisans to murder the royalist Chetniks in Yugoslavia, who were effectively fighting the German invaders.

Continued aid to the Soviets and territorial concessions to the Soviet armies as they advanced through in Eastern Europe by the summer of 1943 were made possible partly by Soviet

agents planted in Franklin D. Roosevelt's government. The charge of Communist infiltration of the American government during the War has been amply confirmed by the discovery of the Venona Papers and other evidence of Soviet influence on American war strategy and statecraft. Not incidentally, the trusted adviser of Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau, Harry Dexter White, was a Soviet asset who reported to Stalin's agents. McMeekin also notes that White was far from the only Soviet instrument in FDR's administration.

Although it was possible to arrange for German surrenders to Anglo-American forces in the West, which would have excluded the Soviets, who were then rampaging through Eastern Europe, the Western Allies refused to end the war without giving the Soviets their demanded share of war booty. This attitude was fueled both by a desire to leave the German enemy in a totally devastated state and by the pro-Soviet counsels of Roosevelt's advisers. The deaths of millions of Soviet victims were the price that we paid for this lamentable mistake.

McMeekin depicts the situation in which FDR went to the Allied conference in Yalta in February 1945, because Stalin insisted that his Anglo-American partners meet with him on Russian soil. After a nearly day-long flight, during which time FDR might well have died of his fatally high blood pressure, he arrived at the Crimean resort. Stalin by then had killed or deported large numbers of the residents of the Crimea who had been there during the previous German occupation. Once the conference was underway, the Soviet leader was able to dominate the failing American leader and had no trouble winning Anglo-American support for Soviet control over postwar Poland and much of the rest of Eastern Europe.

McMeekin's book has been attacked for not sufficiently dwelling on Nazi crimes and because he is supposedly nurturing hatred for the Russian people. Such censures are profoundly misleading. McMeekin leaves no doubt that Russians were among the worst victims of Stalin's unspeakable crimes. Moreover,

nowhere in his book does he depict Nazi Germany as anything other than villainous. But McMeekin does make clear that the Soviet apologists and Stalinophiles, whom I've encountered professionally for more than half a century, are as mendacious as Holocaust-deniers. These deniers or trivializers of Stalin's crimes and aggressions have tried to depict their critics as anti-Communist fanatics for daring to bring up what seems to be forbidden subjects.

We may also assume from reading McMeekin's work that the U.S. might have ended what seems to have been a justified war against Nazi Germany without making shameful concessions to Soviet mass murderers. Replacing the Nazi government with a civilized one rather than handing over half of Europe to Soviet butchers should have been our aim in WWII.

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