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Stalin and Stalinism

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which describes the persistent dumping of radioactive waste in the Arctic region. To the authors' credit, this material comes from the comprehensive Russian report by Alexei V. Yablokov et al., "Facts and Problems Connected with the Disposal of Radioactive Waste in the Seas Adjacent to Our Territory," published in February 1993.

Although it is an important addition to our knowledge of activities in the former Soviet Union and the six appendices and extensive footnotes are invaluable, *Making the Russian Bomb* is a specialist's book. It is recommended for libraries and as a reference for scholars of nuclear weapons, nuclear waste, and the environment.

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McCauley, Martin. *Stalin and Stalinism.* London: Longman, 1995. 142pp. (No price given)

McCauley, Martin. *The Origins of the Cold War, 1941–1949.* London: Longman, 1995. 152pp. (No price given)

The serious reader will read perhaps three thousand books in a lifetime. This is not a great number, so every single volume matters. Especially on important issues, each book should enhance understanding rather than confuse. It follows, then, that there will be books to skip over. These, I submit, are two.

It is truly surprising that in the wake of the Soviet Union's demise—when even the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* now feel it safe to acknowledge that the USSR was a "totalitarian" state—there continue to be published histories that downplay what few now dispute: the monstrous nature of the Soviet regime. If you wish to avoid such works, a few general rules of the road might help. You might, for example, simply stay away from authors who refer (unless with irony) to "legitimate Soviet security needs." You can safely steer clear of historians who describe the Soviet Union as an "extraordinary experiment." You would also do well to avoid works that purport to be "objective"—meaning that they will not stoop to "moral judgment." On all these counts, McCauley's books are guilty.

One hesitates to criticize the work of a historian who has worked as hard as Martin McCauley to synthesize an impressive amount of scholarship into two slim volumes. But I will overcome my reticence, as the flaws in these histories of Stalin's Russia and the beginnings of the Cold War greatly outweigh their virtues.

McCauley, who teaches at the University of London, is a frequent and cogent commentator on the current economic and social problems of the countries that emerged from the dissolution of the USSR and the Warsaw Pact. However, his historical treatments are quirky, and the quirkiness seems to be all in one direction—one that tends to muddle rather than illuminate the reader's understanding of the essence of Stalinism or of how the Cold War came about.

Both volumes are part of an ambitious series being published by Longman that covers British and world history from medieval times to the present. Both books have their good points. In *Stalin and Stalinism*, McCauley weaves together in a very small space much of the political, economic, and cultural histories of the Soviet Union under Stalin. In *The Origins of the Cold War* he attempts, with general success, to synthesize most of the historical inter-

pretations of that lengthy ideological conflict. Both volumes have, by way of appendices, useful and eclectic lists of pertinent documents. But for an understanding of the events encompassed in these works, one would be better off reading the appendices and jettisoning the text.

In both books, McCauley takes an ostensibly (and ostentatiously) "neutral" stance that professes to reveal "complexities" rather than, heaven forbid, pass judgment. The fact is that McCauley, while trying to maintain what he would call "objectivity," leaves out critical facts, interpretations, and emphases that are all key to understanding Soviet totalitarianism—a word McCauley, not surprisingly, does not seem to like.

The author, then, is not nearly as balanced in his approach as he professes. For example, his bibliography in *The Origins of the Cold War* includes a seemingly calculated equivalency in the number of books of traditional interpretation (i.e., the Cold War is mostly or wholly the fault of the Soviets) versus the revisionist viewpoint that largely blames the United States. McCauley's text, however, leans decidedly toward the revisionist interpretation. In *Stalin and Stalinism*, there does not seem to be much balance at all: references to works identifying Stalin as one who continued and intensified (rather than invented) the Soviet totalitarian regime, such as recent histories by Martin Malia and Richard Pipes, are inexplicably absent.

Consequently, a major problem in the scene-setting chapters of both books is McCauley's diminution of Lenin's responsibility for what followed under Stalin. Lenin's creation of the Soviet totalitarian state, including establishing very early the secret police and the Gulag, initiating terror against the Church, closing down newspapers, forcing grain requisitions, and so forth, is downplayed, not mentioned at all, or blamed entirely on Stalin. Meanwhile, the ideological differences between Lenin and Stalin are inflated in a way that would have surprised both men.

The text is generally skewed toward a revisionist apology for Soviet totalitarianism. Contrary to McCauley's assertions, Lenin was not forced by circumstances into creating his dictatorship; Stalin did not invent party discipline; Soviet Russia certainly did pose a threat to the West prior to 1941; Moscow did not begin its own atomic bomb project only in August 1945; in 1953 the United States was by no means convinced it would win the Cold War; Marxist-Leninists are not bound by ideology always to seize the initiative; and the Marshall Plan was not to blame for dividing the continent.

Numerous omissions, moreover, confirm the author's tendentiousness. Britain did break off Soviet relations in 1927, but there is no mention of Soviet subversion among British workers or in the army. When McCauley explains that the Poles and the German's "blamed the Soviets" for the Katyn forest massacre of fifteen thousand Polish officers, the reader waits in vain for the statement (in an aside, in a footnote, anywhere) that, by the way, the Soviets *did* do it, that Moscow confessed to the slaughter in 1992. In his discussion of Stalin's February 1946 speech, McCauley omits the fact that in it Stalin declared that war with the capitalist West was inevitable.

There are certain bizarre statements, specific word choices, and uses of the passive voice that show McCauley's true colors. For example, regarding the 1936

constitution, he states that "the Soviet Union appeared to be moving in the right direction and made a refreshing contrast to the rest of Europe where fascism was on the march." *Refreshing?* McCauley is apparently unaware that in the 1930s many in the West were making comparisons between the USSR and Nazi Germany. According to McCauley, following World War II, Poland and Czechoslovakia needed a powerful ally to protect them against a possible resurgent Germany, and "it was believed that the USSR fit the bill very well." *It was believed?* Soviets also initiated "democratization" in the eastern zone of Germany, created "people's democracies" throughout Eastern Europe, and introduced "reforms." Any untoward Soviet conduct in the region is described as merely "insensitive"!

Most tellingly, McCauley states that the Soviets, *like the Americans in Japan*, were "imposing their own agenda" in Eastern Europe. This last statement, which demonstrates a 1960s-style moral relativism, is by no means atypical. McCauley opines that "in 1947 the United States had to face the reality that there was an adversary which also had a universalist dream for mankind, and the two could not be reconciled." To McCauley, the communist vision—what led Lenin to create and Stalin to strengthen the world's first totalitarian state, imprisoning and killing millions of human beings in the process—is just another "universalist dream."

In McCauley's view, the Cold War came about largely through a U.S. misunderstanding of Moscow's "legitimate security needs," exaggerated Western views of Soviet military capabilities, and American and British attempts to turn back the clock, too late, in Eastern Europe. The Soviets, McCauley states, really did want a "working relationship" with the United States. Unfortunately, the Americans "misread" Soviet "security interest" in Eastern Europe as (who would have thought it?) expansionism! Washington's problem was that it "never tried to see the problems from Moscow's point of view," although McCauley does admit that its sources of information were "poor." Of course they were! Washington was dealing with a totalitarian state, while "Moscow . . . was swimming in information." But remember, it was the Soviets who were misunderstood. Go figure.

McCauley is truly a historian for our politically correct times. Because the Soviet Union suffered from low self-esteem, it was the victim of a sensitivity deficit due to its background (for which it cannot be held responsible), and it was generally misunderstood with respect to its needs and feelings. The essential truth that McCauley misses is that the USSR was indeed an "evil empire." It was ultimately by treating it as such that the West won the Cold War, not by agonizing over whether we were hurting the feelings of Marxist-Leninists.

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Glantz, David M., and Jonathan House. *When Titans Clashed: How the Red Army Stopped Hitler*. Lawrence: Univ. Press of Kansas, 1995. 414pp. $29.95

Spahr, William J. *Zhukov: The Rise and Fall of a Great Captain*. Novato, Calif.: Presidio, 1995. 290pp. $14.95

Readers interested in the Second World War have had all too few trustworthy views