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The Kremlin Letters: Stalin's Wartime Correspondence with Churchill and Roosevelt

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BOOK REVIEWS

"THE ART OF WAR IS SIMPLE ENOUGH"—U. S. GRANT

The Kremlin Letters: Stalin's Wartime Correspondence with Churchill and Roosevelt, ed. David Reynolds and Vladimir Pechatnov. New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 2018. 660 pages. \$35.

The distinguished Cambridge University professor of international history and specialist in twentieth-century history David Reynolds has joined with Vladimir Pechatnov of the Moscow State University of International Relations to produce this major contribution to the history of the Second World War. The volume is a carefully edited collection of documents embedded within an archival-based interpretive narrative analysis of Stalin's wartime correspondence with Prime Minister Winston Churchill and President Franklin Delano Roosevelt between 1941 and 1945.

Scholars have known the text of many of the letters for some time. Winston Churchill included some of Stalin's letters to him in his six-volume memoir *The Second World War*. U.S. State Department historians printed the texts of most of those addressed to Franklin Roosevelt in the volumes of the State Department's documentary series, *Foreign Relations of the United States*. In 1957, the Soviets published the Russian-language texts with an English translation, but without further contextual details. Interestingly, Stalin originally initiated the Soviet

project in 1950 as a means to counter what he considered Churchill's highly selective use of their correspondence and to serve as a rebuttal to what he called the Western "falsifiers of history." In 1951, the project fell into abeyance, but eventually reemerged in 1957 during Khrushchev's regime, with Soviet foreign minister Andrey Gromyko as editor.

In the mid-1970s, many Western archives began to open their collections of documents relating to the Second World War. Benefiting from this, the journalist and Eleanor Roosevelt biographer Joseph P. Lash underscored the importance of the Roosevelt-Churchill relationship with his book *Roosevelt and Churchill, 1939–1941: The Partnership That Saved the West* (1976). This was followed by Professor Warren F. Kimball of Rutgers University, a former instructor at the U.S. Naval Academy and rising academic expert on the Second World War, who published his meticulous, three-volume edition *Churchill & Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence* (1984). These works relied on archival research that allowed historians to understand the full context in which the Churchill-Roosevelt

correspondence took place, including information on the drafts and staff discussions related to some of the letters and the issues involved.

For many Western historians, the popular emphasis in the English-language literature on Churchill and Roosevelt obscured a full appreciation and understanding of Stalin's role in the Western alliance. Although West German scholars at the German Armed Forces Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt had begun their pioneer work in the analysis of the history of Germany's wartime eastern front during the Cold War, their work was not widely appreciated until the English translations appeared. The simultaneous events of the Cold War, during which these initial Western historical interpretations developed, by and large did not provide fertile ground for the growth of sympathetic appreciations of Stalin or of the Soviet role in the war, despite some efforts in that direction.

Between 22 June 1941, when Germany invaded the Soviet Union, and Roosevelt's death on 12 April 1945, Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin exchanged 682 messages in the form of secret enciphered telegrams. The messages normally were sent in the originator's language and translated into the recipient's language. The common practice of the time of changing the order of words in a sentence to make enemy decryption difficult led to misunderstandings and misinterpretations even beyond those presented by translation itself.

The project that produced this volume lasted a decade and involved careful research in British, American, and newly opened Russian archives. The editors and their team developed a database of more than five thousand documents that included all the surviving drafts and

records of staff discussion relating to the writing of the messages. The editors have presented in this volume about 75 percent of the total correspondence; they intend eventually to publish the full correspondence in an online edition. The editors have given here the English-language version of the letters that Roosevelt and Churchill received, including errors of translation and transmission, explaining in the accompanying text the issues involved. Reynolds and Pechatnov have selected documents that show the character of these leaders as illustrated in their exchanges with each other, their plans to meet each other in the wartime conferences at Tehran and Yalta, and all the principal issues they discussed.

This volume very successfully merges documentary scholarship with a clearly written and engaging history of the interrelationships between these three "unlikely musketeers." Practitioners and students of international relations, policy, and strategy as well as the general audience of readers interested in the Second World War will find this an invaluable contribution to their understanding of the complex relationships among these three important wartime leaders.

JOHN B. HATTENDORF



The Kill Chain: Defending America in the Future of High-Tech Warfare, by Christian Brose. New York: Hachette, 2020. 320 pages. \$28.

The author, Christian Brose, worked closely as an aide to Senator John McCain, and therefore is well situated to write knowledgeably about the current and future challenges facing the military forces of the United States. The result is a profoundly challenging and important