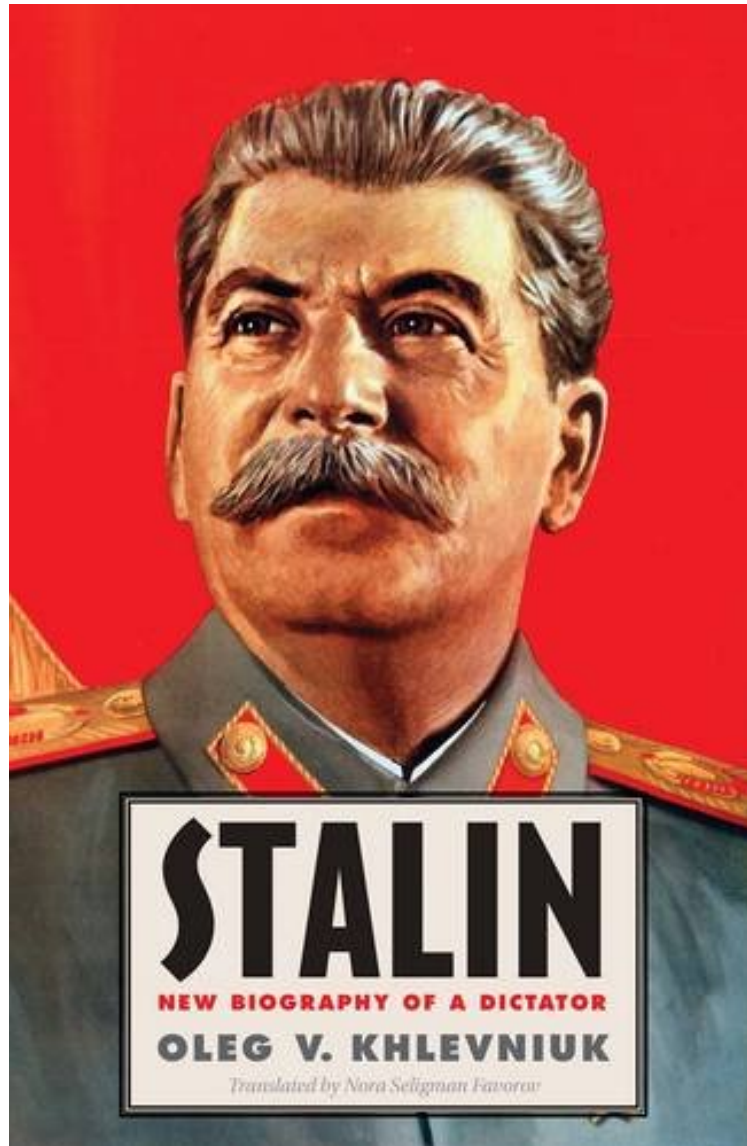


Stalin: New Biography of a Dictator

Oleg V. Khlevniuk

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Oleg V. Khlevniuk : Stalin: New Biography of a Dictator before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Stalin: New Biography of a Dictator:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Pretty Good worth what I paidBy Brian BunceI read the book through and through and I will give it 5 stars.The most memorable part for me. And it's well know Stalin was a general tyrant.That when Israel started pointing more towards the US Stalin started to not like Molotovs wife's freindship with the Israeli ambassador. So Stalin had his wife fired from her high end government job then told Molotov to divorce her

and then she was sent to prison. And Molotov was one of Stalin's closest relationships! After Stalin died Lavrenty Beria went to the prison and got Molotov's wife. When they reunited she asked "How is Comrad Stalin" they told her that Stalin died of a stroke. She then fainted! Probably not out of happiness but an insane level of loyalty to the man that put her in prison. Hopefully I wrote that accurately. Another part of the book that I found interesting is how quickly after his death they reversed his decisions, released prisoners, and returned a lot of the wealth to the countryside where Stalin historically plundered the resources for a lot of his grand projects. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Newer insights into Stalin. By MORRIS M. WELLS It is a major rehash of Stalin's years in office except for one major point.... Stalin's actions in the 1930 decade while abhorrent to most people may have been driven by information he had that the population was close to a counter revolution. Also the purge of the Army in the late 1930s was focused in large part in the new armored corps officer Corp many of whom were trained in Germany. I read this in another book about the tank warfare in 1941 on the Eastern Front. Also another interesting point is that the Russian Army was concentrated right up on the border... No defense in depth. Maybe an offensive against Germany was planned?? Maybe as more documents are declassified in Russia.... Yes many are still to be declassified.... Will lead to greater insight. 3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. King Koba. By Keith A. Comess Evil is endlessly fascinating. Explaining and contextualizing it preoccupies legions of theologians and historians. Two of the worst of the bad bunch inflicted themselves on millions of hapless people in the near-term past: Hitler and Stalin. These two seem to be the epitomes of ruthless and rationalized mass murder and their acolytes are still active and, in some cases, gaining traction. Shortly after the demise of the USSR, ripples of nostalgia for Comrade Stalin and the earth-shaking power of the "Evil Empire" have, under Putin, become small waves. So, this is a source of concern for many who worry that "history repeats itself" and they'd best "know the enemy" by reading about him. Likely, there's no better starting point than Khlevniuk's brief biography. The space between heavy academic tomes and fluffy overviews of historical figures oftentimes isn't too big. In the case of Stalin, there are plenty of both the former and the latter generally aren't worth bothering to read. Historical novels convey some useful impressions, but the fictionalized aspects tend to be judgemental or sensational or simple fantasy. The real beauty of Khlevniuk's work is its brevity. As the author acknowledges in the informative introductory section, many editorial decisions were required on what to include, what to omit and how much detail to provide. He seems to have found the perfect balance. The author employs an interesting structure, using the framework of Stalin's death in 1953 as the touch-point for the narrative. Stalin's life and career unfold in detail but Khlevniuk avoids the pitfall of psychological analysis ("Why did Stalin turn out that way?") because that crucial question can never really be answered any more than a categorical explanation of "Why did Hitler turn out that way?" can be found. There were certain influences and contemporary events for context, but there were others in similar circumstances that didn't "turn out that way", too. Stalin's legacy is thoroughly polluted by his crimes, but what of his accomplishments? He did rocket the near-feudal Russia of the tsars into the ranks of advanced industrialized countries in a very short time span. He created one of the most sophisticated and accomplished militaries in the world and expanded the Empire to cover a significant part of Europe and Asia. His ideology attracted sympathizers worldwide. He beat the Nazi war machine into dust. However, the accompanying crimes, the needless and grotesque waste of human lives and profligate squandering of resources coupled with the totalitarian police state he helmed tarnish all these accomplishments, as Khlevniuk carefully documents. One cannot detract from Stalin's brilliance as a dictator. He eliminated all rivals (real and imagined) and cemented his hold to the point where even his most trusted acolytes cowered at his death bed. More dubious were his skills as a military leader. Initially, Stalin handicapped the Red Army by destroying its founder (Trotsky), decapitating its leadership, decimating its ranks of experienced soldiers and ignoring capable professional advice. Thus, the debacle of the Nazi invasion was amplified by his incompetence (previously demonstrated during the Civil War), his arrogance and his loss of equilibrium in face of the Wehrmacht onslaught added to the disaster. Yet, as the war progressed, the soon-to-be Marshal of the Soviet Union gained confidence, experience and understanding... though he did not let up on his murderous proclivities visited on his own people: internal exile, deportations, arrests for captured soldiers, death for those who retreated and so on. As to Stalin's legacy, it's not a good one for his comrades (only Kaganovitch lived to see the near demise of the Bolshevik enterprise), his people or the subjugated nations. Maybe, like Mao, techniques like those used in Russia were needed to create the modern USSR. Maybe not, but this book helps the open-minded reader with the knowledge and context needed to establish his/her own judgement on the matter. Koba (as he was known to his closest comrades) remained King until the end. This is the "Goldilocks" of biographies: not too long, not too short... just right! I doubt there is a better balanced and more trenchantly presented biography of Comrade Marshal Stalin than this one.

The most authoritative and engrossing biography of the notorious dictator ever written Josef Stalin exercised supreme power in the Soviet Union from 1929 until his death in 1953. During that quarter-century, by Oleg Khlevniuk's estimate, he caused the imprisonment and execution of no fewer than a million Soviet citizens per year. Millions more were victims of famine directly resulting from Stalin's policies. What drove him toward such ruthlessness? This essential biography, by the author most deeply familiar with the vast archives of the Soviet era, offers an unprecedented, fine-grained portrait of Stalin the man and dictator. Without mythologizing Stalin as either benevolent

or an evil genius, Khlevniuk resolves numerous controversies about specific events in the dictator's life while assembling many hundreds of previously unknown letters, memos, reports, and diaries into a comprehensive, compelling narrative of a life that altered the course of world history. In brief, revealing prologues to each chapter, Khlevniuk takes his reader into Stalin's favorite dacha, where the innermost circle of Soviet leadership gathered as their *vozhd* lay dying. Chronological chapters then illuminate major themes: Stalin's childhood, his involvement in the Revolution and the early Bolshevik government under Lenin, his assumption of undivided power and mandate for industrialization and collectivization, the Terror, World War II, and the postwar period. At the book's conclusion, the author presents a cogent warning against nostalgia for the Stalinist era.

“Authoritative, fluently written. . . . The pinnacle of current scholarship on its subject.”—Charlotte Hobson, *Spectator*