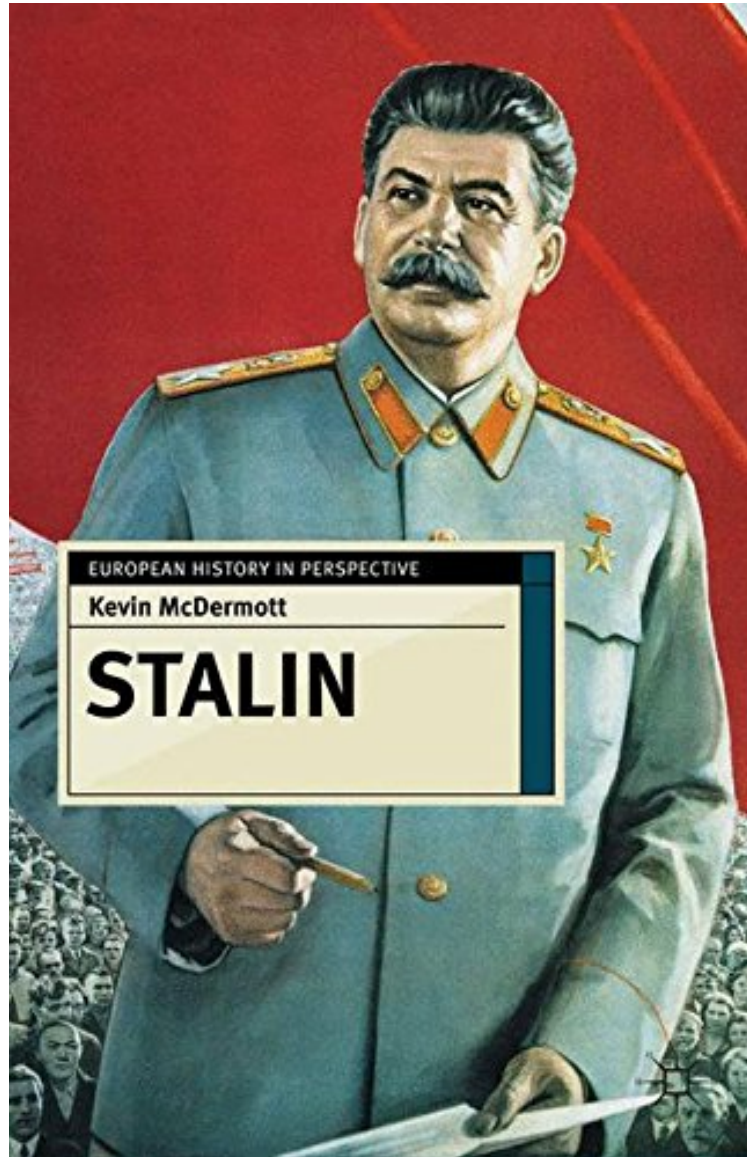


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Stalin: Revolutionary in an Era of War (European History in Perspective)

Kevin McDermott

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#1831435 in Books Kevin McDermott 2006-09-04 2006-01-24Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.50 x .54 x 5.50l, .67 #File Name: 033371122X240 pagesStalin | File size: 43.Mb

Kevin McDermott : Stalin: Revolutionary in an Era of War (European History in Perspective) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Stalin: Revolutionary in an Era of War (European History in Perspective):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy SpencerFantastic Product!1 of 1 people found the

following review helpful. Five StarsBy IngridExcellent book10 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Excellent overview of the scholarship on StalinBy M. A. KrulKevin McDermott's book on Stalin, in a general introductory series called "European History in Perspective", is probably the best short overview of all the issues in historical scholarship relating to Stalin and Stalinism in print at this time. Eminently readable, McDermott analyzes the person and policies of Stalin as well as his social context and the international politics of the time, and does so in a particularly balanced manner which takes all the controversy into account. Stalin is one of the most controversial politicians of all time perhaps, and the many different currents in both historical and political discussions about his person and legacy range from the absolutely adoring to frothing hatred, so it is by no means a small feat to have succeeded in giving a good impression of the controversy over the most important issues in Stalin scholarship as well as giving a balanced summary of the weight of evidence.McDermott is certainly no fan of Stalin, but is not a rabid Cold Warrior either. Contrary to some authors, he does not diminish the achievements of the USSR during Stalin's reign, while at the same time always acknowledging the effects, mostly deleterious, his policies had on the workers and peasants on whose behalf they were (at least nominally) undertaken. McDermott correctly analyzes Stalin's policies as demanding huge sacrifices of his people in exchange for extremely rapid industrialization and modernization, combined with a despotic personal tyranny of Stalin which could bear no disagreement or dissent of any kind. Of course the question whether Stalin, overall, was historically 'worth it' as well as the question what a different leader, say Trotsky or Bukharin, would have done can never be wholly answered, but McDermott certainly gives an excellent overview of all the things one would need to consider to give an opinion on those questions. And the questions are of crucial importance, especially to socialists.The book's organization is thematic, such that every chapter discusses an 'aspect' of Stalin: Stalin as modernizer, Stalin as leader in wartime, Stalin as follower of Lenin (or not), Stalin as dictator, and so on. But he maintains a broad chronological order both within and through these chapters as well, making the whole of Stalin's reign quite easy to grasp, especially for the interested layman. Of course one can have differing opinions on some of McDermott's conclusions, such as the degree to which he (following Service) considers Stalin to be a 'mainstream' Leninist, but McDermott relies in every topic mainly on the modern scholarship of people like Fitzpatrick, Lewin, and Khlevniuk, which greatly enhances the value of this work. Some might complain that he still gives too much credence to people like Courtois and Conquest, but since their Cold War professional anti-communism has strongly shaped popular views of Stalin, this is probably a good decision for an introductory work. Of special interest is also McDermott's chapter on Stalin's relations with the Comintern, which is regrettably short; very little has been written on this subject of great importance to the history of socialism. Fortunately, McDermott has written a monograph on the subject: Comintern, The: History of International Communism from Lenin to Stalin. I can much recommend this book to people who are interested in learning who Stalin was and what he did, without wanting to read anything too specialized or inaccessible.

Stalin's massive impact on Soviet history is often explained in terms of his inherent evil, personality defects and power lust. While not rejecting these notions, Kevin McDermott argues that Stalin's thoughts and actions are best contextualised in the inter-relationship between war and revolution in the first half of the twentieth century. The author presents the case for taking the Soviet dictator seriously as a Marxist revolutionary whose fundamental beliefs and modus operandi were forged in the cauldron of civil and international wars, ideologically driven class wars and revolutionary upheavals associated with the 'age of catastrophe', 1914-45. Only by so doing can the complex motivations for such cataclysmic events as the Great Terror be adequately addressed.Incorporating recently declassified materials from the former Soviet Party archives, this new appraisal of Stalin also provides a critical review of the latest western and Russian historiography. It is essential reading for anyone studying the debates on one of the leading figures of Soviet history.

"McDermott offers us a well-written and judicious consideration of the most prominent historical debates about the personality of Stalin, his contributions to the demise of NEP and the evolution of the Five-Year Plans, his role in the elaboration of Terror, his statesmanship during World War II, and the development of Soviet foreign policies during the Cold War." -Choi Chatterjee, California State University, Los Angeles