Book Reviews

Giles Milton, *The Stalin Affair, The Impossible Alliance That Won the War,* New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2022, 315 pp. Index. $29.99. Hardcover.

Much has been written about the turbulent relationship between the Soviet Union and the United States yet for a brief time during the period of World War II, there was a necessary sudden alliance among the Soviet Union, Britain, and the United States. This alliance was in response to Germany's surprise invasion of the Soviet Union's cities. Stalin may have been able to boast that his country's Red Army was a mighty force, yet nothing could prepare him and his country for the might of the Nazi forces that were steamrolling into Russia. Stalin was so beside himself that he disappeared from site for a few days leaving his government officials to handle the escalating situation. Stalin all along had been reassuring his government and people that Hitler would never attack the Soviet Union as he had wrongly believed that Germany was a true ally of the Russian people.

What is crucial in this period of the war was the decision by Britain and the United States (namely Churchill and Roosevelt) to join forces with Stalin to defeat Hitler and the Nazi invasion. While Stalin was considered to be one brand of evil, for Churchill especially he saw that Hitler was the greater of the two evils and if the Soviet Union were to fall it would mean dire consequences for the rest of the world. Milton delves into the particulars of the conversations that took place to bring about the plan for both Britain and the United States to bring about military support for the Soviet Union. One of the main players in bringing about this alliance over the span of a four-year period was Averell Harriman who was a wealthy chairperson of the Union Pacific railroad as well as an investor in banking and shipping (p. 18). Averell's acumen in diplomatic relations brought about meetings among Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin as well as mission planning for food and supplies to be transported into the Soviet Union. Great Britain also provided a diplomatic expert who became the ambassador to the Soviet Union and part of the four-year alliance mission, Archie Clark Kerr. Milton describes in vivid detail the meetings that both Averell and Archie had with the three leaders, Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin. Meetings that included many tense moments as well as some successful actionable outcomes.

Milton's conclusions about this alliance of three was it worked for what was necessary to ensure Hitler was defeated yet pointed to the sobering reality that as Churchill proclaimed the world in 1946, "Stalin can no longer be trusted." (p. 273). Once World War II was over, the Soviet Union would continue to be at odds with the West as the Cold War only deepened in the 1950's. Milton did follow through on the aftermath for both Harriman and Kerr as how their careers were impacted after the alliance of three ended. "The Stalin Affair," does successfully add a different historical perspective for the alliance that did ensure an end to Hitler's power.

Kelly Evans
Eastern Washington University

Dariusz Tolczyk. *Blissful Blindness: Soviet Crimes Under Western Eyes.* Translated by Jarek Garlinski. Indiana University Press, 2023. 340 pp. Bibliography and Index. $50.00. Paperback.

Students in undergraduate history classes are often surprised to learn of the crimes of Joseph Stalin and the Soviet Union, overshadowed as they usually are by the horrors of the Holocaust. This reality of what the West knew and acknowledged and what it chooses to forget is at the center of Dariusz Tolczyk's study, Blissful Blindness: Soviet Crimes Under Western Eyes. Tolczyk's question is this: how do we explain the dismissal, obfuscation, and disbelief of Soviet crimes by Western nations (primarily the United States, Great Britain, and France) in the twentieth century? The answer to this question can be found in the various fluctuations in world economies, diplomacy, and international affairs during the period in question. Simply put, the degree to which Western actors were willing to ignore or reject information about Stalin's crimes usually had more to do with what was happening in their own countries rather than what was occurring in the Soviet Union.

From the earliest days of the new Bolshevik-led government, evidence of violence was "shrouded in the haze of ambiguity," though it was at the core of the Soviet regime from its very beginning. (33) The hunt for class enemies and the construction of concentration/prison camps was a central feature of the system, eliminating opposition and supporting the needs of the economy. For the men and women in the West who had been disillusioned by the devastation of World War One and attracted by the promises of communism and the proletariat state, Soviet violence had to be hidden or downplayed; any admission of abuse could be used to discredit socialism. Meanwhile, Western businessmen saw economic potential in post-tsarist Russia and were hesitant to look too closely at the evidence of violence for their own reasons. The Bolsheviks took advantage of these realities, censoring information and manipulating the press. Western journalists often played along with the fiction in order to gain access to their subject.

The situation worsened in the 1930s. The Great Depression, the initiation of Stalin's plans for industrialization and collectivization, the Soviet political purges, and the rise of Hitler all coincided roughly over a period of five years, forcing the nations of the West to make choices between conflicting values. The obfuscation and minimizing of Soviet violence once again emerged from different motives, a phenomenon Tolczyk labels the "politicization of truth." (113) Both the United States and Great Britain, for example, needed to trade with the Soviet Union for the sake of their own economies, but struggled with how to reconcile the Soviet use of slave labor. At the same time, there were those who saw the Great Depression as proof that capitalism had failed and that socialism promised the prosperity of the future. These anti-capitalist voices, of all types, were reluctant to highlight evidence of atrocities in the first socialist model. Finally, with Hitler's appointment as chancellor in 1933, a new potential threat emerged and there were those in the West who saw the Soviet Union as a counterweight to Nazi Germany.

The Soviet government recognized that they could not completely hide their slave labor system so they used propaganda to reshape how people viewed it. The emphasis was on creating a new order, and to do so, "criminals" (really, political prisoners and kulaks) were subjected to "humanitarian resocialization and reeducation." (93) The propaganda campaign utilized everything and everyone

in its reach, including literature and film. The Soviets invited celebrities, social activists, intellectuals, and journalists to visit, showing carefully orchestrated displays at showcase factories, schools, hospitals, and farms. Prisons and labor camps were presented as educational facilities. Many Westerners were persuaded by these artificial presentations of success and prosperity, and those who were not often remained silent. Despite these efforts, there were many firsthand accounts from the Soviet Union that provided evidence of what was really going on. There were also some Western visitors who saw through the façade of Soviet theater, but they were fewer than those who were willing to accept the Big Lie that all was well.

One other point about Western denial that bears mentioning is simply the enormity of Stalin's atrocities, which strained credulity. The sheer numbers, the massive scope of supposed conspiracies, and the abundance of confessions during public trials all made it difficult to comprehend. On the one hand, the numbers seemed to large to be true; on the other hand, the numbers seemed to large to be fake. As Tolczyk puts it, "Many pragmatic Westerners reasoned that no leader of a country, even a brutal dictator, would engage in an unwarranted destruction of the nation's elites." (161)

World War Two, of course, challenged the Western powers to set aside their differences and work with Stalin to defeat Hitler. Now, ironically, it was the Nazis who were eager to expose Stalin's crimes. Needless to say, the nations of the West were unwilling to trust these Nazi accusations, the most famous of which was the Katyn Forest Massacre, the slaughter of approximately 22,000 Polish intellectuals and officers. Tolczyk argues, "In effect, instead of persuading the world, Nazi exposures of Stalin's crimes severely undermined many genuine witnesses to these crimes in Western eyes." (177) The Allied governments needed to work with Stalin and tried to present the Soviet Union in a positive light. Even Western writers felt the pinch: George Orwell tried and failed to publish Animal Farm in the 1940s, rejected because it too pointedly criticized Russia.

Once the war was over and the Cold War began, the West were ready to acknowledge Stalin's atrocities. But years of vacillation and changing narratives had undermined their credibility and western anticommunist crusades like McCarthyism only made things worse. Those who did not want to believe the worst about the Soviet Union, or who wanted to frame the crimes as those of individuals, not the system, could blame Cold War politics. The tide shifted, at last, with the publication of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich. Though witnesses to Soviet crimes and those labeled as dissidents would continue to be persecuted and silenced, now through institutionalization rather than execution, the door had been opened and the West could no longer ignore the evidence that emerged in the coming decades.

Tolczyk's book is well-researched and persuasive. His argument is backed up by an abundance of evidence and examples, and his writing style is clear and engaging. This book is a welcome addition to the literature on Stalin and the crimes of the Soviet Union.

Lee A. Farrow
Auburn University at Montgomery

Anna Reid, *A Nasty Little War: The Western Intervention into the Russian Civil War.* New York: Basic Books, 2024. Xvii, 366. $32.00.

A former Kyiv correspondent for the Economist and Daily Telegraph, Anna Reid has a knack for pithy judgments and a keen eye for colorful quotations. As a result, *A Nasty Little War* is a vivid and engaging account of foreign (mainly British and American) intervention in Russia from 1917 to 1920. Although the book is based primarily on effective use of published sources, Reid also draws on research in several archives, and she skillfully uses the diaries of soldiers to incorporate striking details in her story. This popular history is also illustrated by 18 photographs and several well-drawn maps.

For Reid, "intervention" has the conventional meaning of the military expeditions to northern Russia, southern Russia, and the Russian Far East that involved 180,000 Allied troops from 15 countries. She barely mentions the propaganda campaigns to try to keep Russia in the war and the Bolsheviks out of power in 1917. Although she very briefly acknowledges President Woodrow Wilson's approval of funds for the Volunteer Army in December 1917, she does not refer to the much more extensive covert arming of White forces through the Russian embassy in Washington. Foreign intelligence gathering and plotting are noted only in passing. The efforts of the American Relief Administration (which is wrongly called "the American Relief Association"), to use food as a weapon against Bolshevism are only briefly touched (228).

Reid depicts the foreign military interventions as "quixotic" and "tragic" adventures (1). Endorsing British diplomat Robert Bruce Lockhart's advice to intervene at proper scale or abandon it, she argues that the West should have pulled out of Russia sooner "since all it was doing was prolonging the Civil War" (10). Disputing Soviet depictions of intervention as a colonial war, Reid claims "the hey-day of imperialism was over" (62) – an odd assertion, given British and French postwar conduct in the Middle East.

Having earlier written *Borderland: A Journey through the History of Ukraine,* Reid discusses developments there with authority. In contrast to Ukrainian nationalist claims that the Allies missed a great opportunity to support the Ukrainian People's Republic, Reid concludes that "the scoffers were probably right" that Ukrainian governments "did not have the leadership or unity to win power, even with outside military aid" (135-6). Yet when Reid turns to contemporary developments, she is less sure-footed. Writing in the spring of 2023, Reid called the cause of supporting Ukraine against Russian aggression "both good and viable," and confidently predicted that "Putin will fail for the same reason that the Whites did: because he underestimates the desire for freedom of the non-Russian nations" (10). Reading her book a year later, that prediction seems at least premature: the Russian economy rebounded from Western sanctions, the reorganized Russian Army resumed the offensive, and Ukraine has struggled to replace its many fallen soldiers. At the end, Reid also speculates that Russia's "violence and lunacy" in the war against Ukraine "could be the Putin regime's death-throes" (308), thereby joining many other journalists who have predicted Putin's demise for twenty years.

Although *A Nasty Little War* is generally reliable, there are some unfortunate errors. Reid calls the foreign interventions "Britain, France and America's attempt to reverse the 1917 Russian Revolution" (1). (Indeed, the subtitle of the British edition of the book is "The West's Fight to Reverse the Russian Revolution.")

That obscures the dramatic difference between the enthusiastic approval of the February Revolution (especially in the United States) and the adamant opposition to the Bolshevik-led seizure of power in October Revolution. Although President Woodrow Wilson approved of support for anti-Bolshevik forces that included monarchist officers, he definitely did not want to restore the "despotic Tsar," as Reid indicates (3). Reid's discussion of the impact of foreign intervention on Soviet Russia is muddled. She claims that George F. Kennan argued "it sowed the seeds of Soviet anti-Westernism" (304). Yet Kennan actually wrote that the Bolsheviks' "violent ideological preconceptions," along with "their hatred of the capitalist world," would have bedeviled American diplomacy even if the United States had not sent soldiers into Russia.[1] Reid's similar view that relations between Soviet Russia and the West would not have been much better if the Allies had not intervened (304) disregards the initial hopes of Bolsheviks like Mikhail Borodin to cooperate with the United States and their subsequent bitter disillusionment. Moreover, Reid's assertion that "the Bolsheviks used political violence from the start" ignores the huge difference in the scale of Red violence after the spring of 1918 (304). While Reid dismisses a draft deal for Soviet-American trade in 1918 as a cynical effort by Vladimir Lenin to play unofficial representative Raymond Robins, Lenin was actually seriously and persistently interested in economic relations with the most advanced capitalist country.

Although *A Nasty Little War* offers a highly readable narrative of Anglo-American military involvement in revolutionary Russia, it does not offer a fresh interpretive approach. A wider view of "intervention" is needed to encompass not only the small military expeditions, but also the ambitious propaganda campaigns, the covert equipping of anti-Bolshevik forces, and the use of "humanitarian" relief to try to influence the outcome of the civil war. A new approach to the interventions should also be fully multilateral, telling the story not solely or primarily from the vantage of English speakers but from the perspective of all major participants, including the bloody Bolsheviks. They appear only sporadically in Reid's book, mainly as the enemy. Yet Bolsheviks actively struggled against foreign intervention, not only by fighting on dispersed battlefields but also by appealing to sympathizers in Europe and North America, encouraging public opposition to the often furtive military interventions.

David S. Foglesong
Rutgers University

Jean-Louis Cohen, Christina E. Crawford, and Claire Zimmerman, eds., *Detroit-Moscow-Detroit: An Architecture for Industrialization, 1917-1945*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2023, 9. 425pp. Index. Photographs. Other Images. $50.00, Hardbound.

In the edited volume, *Detroit-Moscow-Detroit: An Architecture for Industrialization, 1917-1945,* Jean-Louis Cohen, Christina E. Crawford, and Claire Zim-

[1] George F. Kennan, *Soviet-American Relations, 1917-1920, Volume II: The Decision to Intervene* (Princeton, 1956), 470-1.

merman present a series of fourteen chapters by various scholars who examine industrial and architectural exchanges between American firms and the Soviet Union. These essays focus mainly upon events during the Interwar era with many authors noting that the height of these exchanges occurred during the Soviet Union's First Five-Year Plan. The volume emphasizes that the exchange of ideas flowed from the United States to the Soviet Union, where architects and engineers needed to adapt American architectural standardization efforts based upon local conditions and available materials. The Soviets' flexibility in turn influenced American architects and engineers. Overall, these chapters provide insight into the often-overlooked significant influence of Western architectural styles and industrial mass production upon Soviet leaders who sought to industrialize rapidly and thus create a modern state.

In the first essay set, the authors investigate various exchanges and Amerikanizm, which was the Soviets' profound interest in American industrial strength and the inclination to adopt various American creations. Lewis H. Siegelbaum explains that Bolshevik Valerian Osinskii, who, impressed by the American reliance on the automobile, became convinced that the automobile would modernize the Soviet Union and enable socialism's development. His efforts led to the Politburo entering into various endeavors with Ford and General Motors that resulted in the Gorkii Automobile Factory (GAZ) production site in Nizhnii Novgorod. An interest in American architectural processes informs the next essay by Richard Anderson. In this essay, Anderson concentrates on the architect Andrei Burov, who lamented that in America, the architect had become subsumed into a production system that compartmentalized the design process, and yet, Burov praised American firms' standardization of building components. Oksana Chabanyuk explores the theme of architectural designs in Soviet Ukraine. Her research findings included the collaboration between the Detroit firm of Albert Kahn, Inc., and the Soviet Union's State Design and Construction Institute (Gosproektstroi-1) to design more than five hundred sites, including the Azov Metallurgical Plant (Azovstal). The section's final essay by Katherine Zubovich describes cooperative efforts by Soviet engineers and the American firm Moran & Proctor (New York City) in analyzing the foundational materials on the proposed site for the Palace of the Soviets. These same foundational studies continued to be used in the early twenty-first century when Mueser Rutledge Consulting Engineers (previously Moran & Proctor) used this information in constructing a Moscow skyscraper.

In the second section, the authors concentrate on American ideas that were adapted and studied during the First Five-Year Plan. Evgeniia Konysheva outlines architect Ernst May's introduction of Fordist standardization to residential planning, which proved adaptable and enduring until the Soviet Union's collapse. Shifting from structures to social conditions, Christina Kiaer studies the 1931 Soviet film, *Black Skin* (also known as *Conveyor*), which aims to demonstrate that within the Soviet factory system, unlike the American system, there was no racial prejudice. American practices also could be presented in a positive manner as observed by Jean-Louis Cohen. In his essay, Cohen studies the American Trading Corporation's (Amtorg) publication, *American Technology and Industry,* (1929-1948), which was tailored to a Soviet audience and still serves as a chronicle of the Soviets' varied curiosity about American projects, such as dam construction

and aircraft design. Interactions between American firms and Soviet architects and engineers are the subject of the section's final two essays. Sonia Melnikova-Raich notes the extensive cooperation between Albert Kahn, Inc., which sent employees to work in Moscow with the State Design and Construction Trust (Gosproektstroi). This collaboration resulted in the construction of hundreds of sites, including the Stalingrad Tractor Factory. Mark G. Meerovich further investigates this relationship through the actions of the Soviet architect Anatolii Fisenko, who oversaw the rapid training of Soviet personnel at Gosproektstroi, so that they could learn Kahn's compartmentalized design approach.

In the third and final section, the authors' essays center on the theme of legacy. Christina E. Crawford discusses American specialists' writings, such as Raymond Stuck who worked at Magnitogorsk, and she draws a connection between these specialists' participation in large Soviet projects to their role in New Deal projects. Continuing a focus on the United States, Robert Fishman concludes that strikes in Detroit eventually led to a higher living standard in the Western world than socialism provided in Eastern Europe. Maria C. Taylor explores the Soviet government's attempts to obscure the American specialists' role through "greening" (278) to conceal structures' façades and to enhance socialist working conditions. Returning to earlier essays' emphasis upon Albert Kahn, Inc., Claire Zimmerman maintains that the firm's role in Soviet projects enabled it, during World War II, to undertake the construction of large buildings and plants, such as Chicago Dodge. Robert Bird, in the final essay, discusses two Soviet films, *Conquerors of the Night* (1927) and *Two Friends, a Model, and a Girl* (1927), and contends that these films sought to demonstrate that Soviet production creates new individuals.

Accompanying each section is a photographic essay showcasing industrialization either in the United States and/or in the Soviet Union, thereby further representing the book's premise. The volume, illustrated richly and with diverse topics, appeals to scholars with varied interests.

Cadra Peterson McDaniel
Texas A&M University-Central Texas

Marvin Kalb, *Assignment Russia: Becoming a Foreign Correspondent in the Crucible of the Cold War,* Washington, DC: Brookings Institute Press, 2021, x. 352pp. Index. $24.99, Hardcover.

The award-winning journalist's beautifully written memoir details his pursuit to become CBS's Russia specialist after the legendary Edward R. Murrow hired him in July 1957. Accordingly, Marvin Kalb's ultimate dream job, which he attained in May 1960, ten months before he ends *Assignment Russia*, was to serve as CBS's correspondent and bureau chief in Moscow. Soviet authorities closed the bureau in October 1958 because of the network's broadcast of *The Plot to Kill Stalin* a play that implicated Nikita Khrushchev as advocating against calling a doctor to ensure that Joseph Stalin would not recover. Kalb's impressive resume which earned him the assignment to reopen CBS's Moscow bureau included his doctoral study of Russian history at Harvard University, experience as a translator

of the Soviet press for the US Embassy in Moscow in 1956, 1958 publication of a critically-acclaimed memoir (*Eastern Exposure*) on the insights he gained about Soviet society from that experience, and the research trip he conducted in 1959 making thirteen different stops, ranging from Vienna and Warsaw to New Delhi and Hong Kong, to investigate the growing fractures in the Sino-Soviet alliance.

One of Kalb's most fascinating accounts of his time as a rookie CBS journalist is his interview of two of the first Soviet students who attended Columbia University for the academic year 1958-1959. One of these interviewees was the incredibly serious Alexander Yakovlev, the future architect of reform under Gorbachev. The other was the popular, incessantly smiling, Oleg Kalugin, who went on to become a high-ranking general in the KGB but moved to the United States in the 1990s and continues to serve as an authority on Soviet espionage. Kalb's recollections about his first several months as the CBS Moscow correspondent are particularly engrossing and include interviewing former Gulag inmates in the Metropol Hotel lobby and attending the unofficial funeral of writer Boris Pasternak. One especially remarkable experience occurred when Kalb, enroute to Moscow, joined Khrushchev in Paris for the Soviet leader's early morning walk ahead of the greatly anticipated peace summit set to open later that day. Khrushchev, who immediately recognized the six foot-three inches tall American, instructed his bodyguards to stand down since Kalb was a "friend," "he's Peter the Great" (209) a nickname he had given Kalb at the US Embassy's July 4th festivities in 1956. Khrushchev graciously agreed to this impromptu interview; he responded to the young journalist's questions regarding the summit and the U-2 spy plane incident, and Kalb treated the Soviet leader and his security detail to their first freshly baked croissants. As this encounter suggests, Kalb depicts Khrushchev as a very human, complex if not sympathetic figure whom he suspected, from analyzing Soviet press coverage, was facing intense backlash from hard-liners within the Soviet leadership. Kalb's criticism of Khrushchev's bombastic rhetoric, impulsive decision-making, and repressive policies is balanced by his fascination with and respect for the Soviet leader's ardent desire to advance the best interests of his people, which encouraged him, Kalb argues, to abandon initiatives once he perceived they could do greater harm than good.

Kalb complements his recollections of Soviet political developments with the everyday joys and struggles that he and his wife Mady (who was a PhD candidate in international studies at Columbia University with a focus on US-Soviet relations) navigated in Moscow. One of their initial challenges was the two incredibly small, austere, dark, unlivable rooms that they were assigned in the Metropol Hotel for his office and their apartment. As the young couple took advantage of the theater, ballet, and concerts that Moscow offered, they expended considerable energy trying to secure living space that could adequately accommodate them and their luggage. After numerous exasperating interactions with Intourist officials and the director of the press department in the Foreign Ministry the Kalbs were able to exchange their uninhabitable two rooms for one slightly larger, functional room but which still contained a bed that, at five feet ten inches in length, was too small for Kalb. Kalb's quest to gain a restful night's sleep was finally resolved in July 1960 when a high-ranking CBS foreign editor airmailed the Kalbs' double bed (with the linens and pillows) from South Orange, New Jersey to the Metropol in Moscow.

Kalb strategically closes *Assignment Russia* in March 1961 with his difficult decision to turn down the invitation of his mentor Murrow, who had by then left CBS, to serve as his advisor on Soviet affairs in President John F. Kennedy's United States Information Agency. Kalb emphasized to Murrow that his decision was motivated by a calling to continue as CBS's Moscow correspondent "in the Murrow 'tradition' of fairness, decency, and unafraid, honest journalism" (321) which he emphasizes throughout the memoir – out of grave concern regarding its status in contemporary politics – is imperative to democracy. Kalb served in this position until January 1963 placing him in a prime position to bear witness to momentous developments like Yuri Gagarin's flight into space and the Cuban Missile Crisis. Kalb promises in the preface (penned in October 2020) to share his insights on these and other key Cold War moments in his next memoir. Given the highly engaging, unpretentious nature of *Assignment Russia,* I hope that the ninety-four-year-old Kalb writes that memoir soon.

Meredith L. Roman
SUNY Brockport