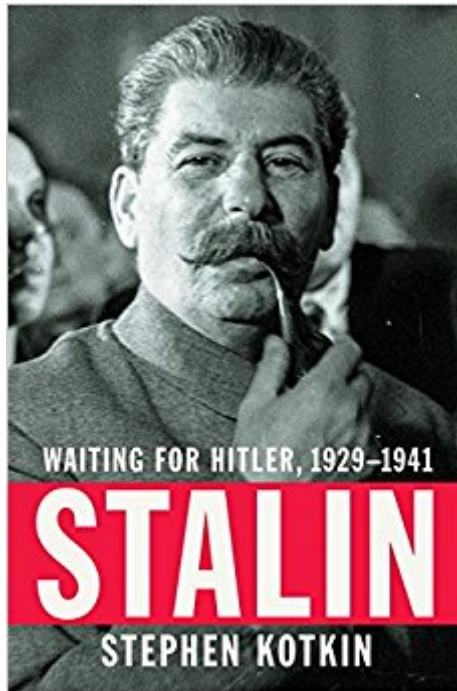




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Stalin: Waiting For Hitler, 1929-1941



Synopsis

Pulitzer Prize-finalist Stephen Kotkin has written the definitive biography of Joseph Stalin, from collectivization and the Great Terror to the conflict with Hitler's Germany that is the signal event of modern world history. In 1929, Joseph Stalin, having already achieved dictatorial power over the vast Soviet Empire, formally ordered the systematic conversion of the world's largest peasant economy into "socialist modernity," otherwise known as collectivization, regardless of the cost. What it cost, and what Stalin ruthlessly enacted, transformed the country and its ruler in profound and enduring ways. Building and running a dictatorship, with life and death power over hundreds of millions, made Stalin into the uncanny figure he became. Stephen Kotkin's *Stalin: Waiting for Hitler, 1929-1941* is the story of how a political system forged an unparalleled personality and vice versa. The wholesale collectivization of some 120 million peasants necessitated levels of coercion that were extreme even for Russia, and the resulting mass starvation elicited criticism inside the party even from those Communists committed to the eradication of capitalism. But Stalin did not flinch. By 1934, when the Soviet Union had stabilized and socialism had been implanted in the countryside, praise for his stunning anti-capitalist success came from all quarters. Stalin, however, never forgave and never forgot, with shocking consequences as he strove to consolidate the state with a brand new elite of young strivers like himself. Stalin's obsessions drove him to execute nearly a million people, including the military leadership, diplomatic and intelligence officials, and innumerable leading lights in culture. While Stalin revived a great power, building a formidable industrialized military, the Soviet Union was effectively alone and surrounded by perceived enemies. The quest for security would bring Soviet Communism to a shocking and improbable pact with Nazi Germany. But that bargain would not unfold as envisioned. The lives of Stalin and Hitler, and the fates of their respective dictatorships, drew ever closer to collision, as the world hung in the balance. *Stalin: Waiting for Hitler, 1929-1941* is a history of the world during the build-up to its most fateful hour, from the vantage point of Stalin's seat of power. It is a landmark achievement in the annals of historical scholarship, and in the art of biography.

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Customer Reviews

“A well-written, finely detailed installment in a definitive biography—sure to receive many prize nominations this year.” —Kirkus Starred review
Praise for Stephen Kotkin’s *Stalin: Paradoxes of Power, 1878-1928* “Masterly.” Kotkin offers the sweeping context so often missing from all but the best biographies. In his introductory chapter he makes the lofty assertion that a history of Stalin is akin to “a history of the world” and he delivers not only a history of the late imperial Russia and of the revolution and early Soviet state, but also frequent commentary on the global geopolitics at play. [Stalin] presents a riveting tale, written with pace and aplomb. Kotkin has given us a textured, gripping examination of the foundational years of the man most responsible for the construction of the Soviet state in all its brutal glory. The first volume leaves the reader longing for the story still to come. —The New York Times Book Review “Superb.” Mr. Kotkin’s volume joins an impressive shelf of books on Stalin. Only Mr. Kotkin’s book approaches the highest standard of scholarly rigor and general-interest readability. —The Wall Street Journal “This is a very serious biography that is likely to well stand the test of time.” —Richard Pipes, *The New York Review of Books* “An exceptionally ambitious biography.” Kotkin builds the case for quite a different interpretation of Stalin—and for quite a few other things, too. The book’s signature achievement is its vast scope: Kotkin has set out to write not only the definitive life of Stalin but also the definitive history of the collapse of the Russian empire and the creation of the new Soviet empire in its place. —Anne Applebaum, *The Atlantic*

Stephen Kotkin is the John P. Birkelund Professor in History and International Affairs at Princeton University. He is also a fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University. He directs Princeton’s Institute for International and Regional Studies and co-directs its Program in the History and

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