



BookNotes Author's Reply

Susan Butler, ed. *My Dear Mr. Stalin: The Complete Correspondence Between Franklin D. Roosevelt and Joseph V. Stalin*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005. xix + 361 pp. Introduction by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., appendix, notes, bibliography, index.

Author's Response to **Warren F. Kimball's** review posted on H-Diplo on 3 November 2006

By Susan Butler

Published by H-Diplo on 6 November 2006; reissued on 31 January 2007

Since I respect Warren Kimball's scholarship, I want to thank him for conceding that *My Dear Mr. Stalin* "is a complete, well edited collection of the wartime correspondence between FDR and Stalin" and that the "editor and publisher have done a favor to countless graduate and researchers by making the material available." That was my aim.

As I say in the introduction, this is the first book to include all the messages as Roosevelt wrote them, and all of Stalin's messages in the form he read them. This is Roosevelt's book; it is focused on the view from Washington. When Kimball criticizes lack of inclusion of Russian texts on the grounds that possible Russian nuances are lost he misses the point that these are the words that Roosevelt read and responded to. Even more important, when he states "scholars will still have to go to the library to locate the equally important other half – Stalin's Correspondence with Churchill and Attlee" it means to me he has missed the reason to publish the correspondence. (It also brings up the question, is Kimball's work, *Churchill and Roosevelt*, equally flawed in his eyes because it is missing Stalin's correspondence?)

This is the history of how Roosevelt began, how he pushed, how he influenced Stalin, and by so doing created the United Nations with as powerful a Security Council as he had dared to hope for, and Russian presence at the international conferences that, as Arthur Schlesinger notes in his foreword, established a framework for the world after the war. Much has been made of Roosevelt's relationship with Churchill; little has been concerned with his relationship with Stalin. The title, *My Dear Mr. Stalin*, should be the giveaway to the contents. As Kimball notes, historians are beginning to see the Cold War as starting on Roosevelt's watch; *My Dear Mr. Stalin* is the first accurate history as seen through the eyes of the two original Cold Warriors. Our remembrance has become skewed; it is for this reason that I dedicated *My Dear Mr. Stalin* to the 405,000 Americans and the 27,000,000 Russians who died in the war.

Kimball is in error that the Russian publication of the correspondence "is complete if one assumes that correspondence means written, formal exchanges," because missing from that publication are the written, formal exchanges that were entrusted to emissaries. Is Kimball asserting that a message is any less "formal" for being carried by, for example, Harry Hopkins? Ambassador Standley? Only cabled messages count?

I did not, as Kimball asserts, forget to include Stalin's commitment to Hull to enter the war against Japan. It is message # 143. Stalin asked Hull to transmit it to Roosevelt "as our official position."

When Kimball writes that "marketing is part of publishing, but this is a bit over the top," what marketing he is referring to? Yale University Press doesn't do marketing. Nowhere in the book is there a claim that it purports to contain more than it delivers. I do know that Democratic presidential libraries look upon it kindly. The Franklin D. Roosevelt Library in Hyde Park, NY, and the Jimmy Carter Library in Atlanta, Georgia, both requested that I give readings (which of course I was delighted to do).

As for Kimball's discussion of unconditional surrender, I want to thank Kimball for offering Stalin's thoughts while at Tehran on Roosevelt's use of the term in his review which I indeed did miss. There has been a great deal written about Roosevelt's original announcement regarding unconditional surrender, which was made at Casablanca in January, 1943 – whether or whether not Churchill knew he was going to make it, and whether Churchill agreed with it – he didn't – he wanted it to include only Germany and Japan.

But the basic fact (no spin) is that at the Moscow Conference in October, 1943, a month before Tehran, the opening paragraphs of the joint four nation declaration read as follows:

"The governments of the United States of America, United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, and China; United in their determination, in accordance with the declaration by the United Nations of January, 1942, and subsequent declarations, to continue hostilities against those Axis powers with which they respectively are at war until such powers have laid down their arms on the basis of unconditional surrender;....."

Copyright (c) 2006-2007 by *Diplomatic History* and H-Diplo, all rights reserved. For additional uses contact the H-Diplo editorial staff at h-diplo@h-net.msu.edu.
