

*Churchill and Stalin: Comrades-in-Arms during the Second World War*, edited by Martin Folly, Geoffrey Roberts and Oleg Rzeheshevsky, Barnsley, Pen and Sword, 2019, 325pp. + XIV + maps + photographs, £20.00 (hardback), ISBN: 9781781590492

Interest in the 'Grand Alliance' of the Second World War shows no sign of abating, shown by the publication in 2018 of David Reynolds' and Vladimir Pechatnov's, *The Kremlin Letters: Stalin's Wartime Correspondence with Churchill and Roosevelt*, and now by a valuable collection of Soviet documents about the Churchill-Stalin relationship. The editors of the collection note that the relationship was one of frequent interaction, with a 500-message correspondence, three Churchill visits to Moscow, and meetings at the trilateral summits in Tehran (1943), Yalta (1945) and Potsdam (1945). Churchill and Stalin also maintained their connection through intermediaries such as ambassadors and special envoys. Although power in the Grand Alliance lay with Stalin and Roosevelt, who between them commanded most of the resources required for victory, personal relationships between all three leaders shaped the alliance. Churchill and Stalin spent more time together in fact than did Stalin and Roosevelt, so providing greater scope for the development of the relationship. As suggested by the subtitle of the book, Folly, Roberts and Rzeheshevsky emphasise that the two leaders established a successful working relationship, overcoming differences over ideology, and over policy matters such as the western powers' delay in launching a cross-Channel invasion until 1944, and the Soviet failure to assist the Polish forces behind the Warsaw Rising that year. The editors of the book also note that Stalin even hoped that Churchill would be re-elected in 1945 to enable peace time collaboration over matters of common interest such as the future of Germany. Even in his 'Sinews of Peace' address in Missouri the following year – long considered a declaration of Cold War - Churchill expressed respect for his 'wartime comrade' in Moscow and advocated talks to ease the developing tensions.

The 131 documents, which consist of meeting transcripts and correspondence, are the end products of policymaking and do not reflect policymaking itself. They are very useful nonetheless. Folly, Roberts and Rzeheshevsky point out that Moscow's records of the meetings provide a fresh 'and often less dramatic perspective than the British ones that have been the standard fare for assessing Churchill's interactions with Stalin' (8). It is suggested in relation to the correspondence that Churchill and Stalin tried 'to manipulate and persuade the other on paper ... with limited success' (23). Stalin could be caustic, and Churchill tended to dispense 'guff', that is, flowery talk designed to mask inactivity. Generally, though, the Churchill-Stalin

messages were more candid and direct than those between Stalin and Roosevelt, as the editors point out.

The book contains an extensive analysis of the Churchill-Stalin relationship to set the primary records in context. It makes a change to see the Soviet-German treaty of August 1939 referred to properly as such, and not judgmentally as a *pact*. Folly, Roberts and Rzeshevesky avoid the temptation of reading Cold War developments into the wartime alliance, which after all fulfilled its objective of defeating Germany. It is suggested in relation to the Yalta conference, which has generated controversy over the years, that while Churchill and Stalin appeased Stalin, Stalin also tried to appease them. It was not a case of the Americans and British betraying Poland; they could do little to shape Soviet policies there. Furthermore, 'While both Soviets and Westerners interpreted the Yalta agreements in ways which suited their interests, the two sides continued to see the continent's future in pan-European terms and within the framework of a peacetime Grand Alliance' (252). It is argued that the Potsdam conference did not signal the beginning of the Cold War, because only in 1947 could the Grand Alliance be declared dead. At times the analysis of Soviet policy can be a little too sanguine. We hear that the thousands of Polish army officers and other prominent Poles murdered in the Katyn Forest in 1940 by the NKVD during the Soviet occupation of eastern Poland 'were killed because they were seen as anti-Soviet and as a security threat' (151). The victims could not have been anything other than anti-Soviet, but they could scarcely have posed a threat while incarcerated. In any case, it was a testimony to Churchill's pragmatism that regardless of his personal disquiet about the Soviet atrocity, which German forces discovered and publicised in 1943, he sought to play the matter down to maintain the Anglo-Soviet alliance.

The appendix includes an interesting essay by Ged Martin on Churchill's wartime travels. There is no bibliography in this volume, but there are ample references. Five maps and eight pages of photographs are provided, although the reproduction of some of the former could be sharper. Overall, the book, which is modestly priced for a hardback, provides an important resource for studying one of the most important facets of Second World War diplomacy, and conveys the abiding message that national leaders can transcend their differences to work towards a common goal.