



Double Lives: Spies and Writers in the Secret Soviet War of Ideas Against the West

By Stephen Koch

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As part of its plan to achieve a worldwide communist revolution, the USSR employed a German communist and publisher to recruit Western intellectuals - among them Gide, Hemingway, Malraux, Dos Passos, Brecht, Dorothy Parker and Lillian Hellman. Koch examines the role played by these writers in the covert and propaganda operations carried out by the USSR between the 1930s and the 1960s. He shows how many idealistic sympathizers, motivated by anti-fascist feelings, became embroiled in a web of terror and deceit and found themselves party to the most debased of Soviet actions, such as the collaboration between Hitler and Stalin in the elimination of their political enemies (a secret clause of the Nazi-Soviet pact).

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Brimming with revelations, Koch's astonishing and riveting exposé focuses on Willi Munzenberg (c. 1888-1940), a German Communist, founding Bolshevik, Stalin henchman and director of Soviet covert propaganda operations aimed at the West's intelligentsia. Operating out of Paris, where he lived until his murder or suicide, he ran a vast network of controlling newspapers, film companies, magazines and political groups. Munzenberg's propaganda machine, by this account, orchestrated the worldwide campaign on behalf of convicted Italian-American anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti, bolstered Soviet movie director Sergey Eisenstein's reputation in the West, infiltrated England's Bloomsbury coterie and forged links with the infamous Cambridge spy ring of Anthony Blunt, Guy Burgess and associates. Koch, who heads the writing division at Columbia University's School of the Arts, presents persuasive evidence that Munzenberg's apparatus funded painter Georg Grosz and movie director Erwin Piscator and manipulated a host of writers, artist, journalists, Hollywood performers and public figures, among them Ernest Hemingway, John Dos Passos, Andre Gide, Dorothy Parker, Andre Malraux, Felix Frankfurter and Bertolt Brecht. We're shown that many of those targeted did not even suspect they had been singled out by Stalin's operatives. Drawing on Russian archives, interviews and U.S. dossiers obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, Koch builds a plausible case that Munzenberg's "anti-fascist campaign" served as a cover for a collaboration between the German and Soviet secret services--a collaboration that began years before the 1939 Nazi-Soviet Pact and helped each dictatorship wipe out its domestic enemies. This real-life spy thriller unveils a major chapter in Soviet espionage.

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From Library Journal

Koch probes the purposefully hidden war of ideas between East and West, fascism and democracy to expose the links between propaganda and espionage. His accessible account focuses on the nefarious career of Willi Munzenberg, a German communist and master of disinformation, from his beginnings in the 1920s Comintern to his still mysterious death during the early days of World War II. Koch draws upon secondary sources, recently opened Communist Party archives in the former Soviet Union, and personal interviews to examine Nazi-Soviet cooperation during the 1930s, the recruitment and management of "fellow travelers," and the impact of the "apparat" in America. Recommended.

- James R. Kuhlman, Univ. of Alabama Lib., Tuscaloosa

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From Booklist

By examining the life of Willi M{•}unzenberg, Communist Reichstag deputy and antifascist press baron, Koch studies how the Comintern conducted its white propaganda during its existence from 1919 to 1943. He shows how this putatively independent journalist, as Stalin's legatee for opinion molding, manipulated Western writers. Malraux and Gide, Hemingway and Hellman--and others of equal fames all, at one time or another, wrote positive articles about communism or lent their names to "ad hoc committees for causes numberless," most passionately, for Spain. Much of such behavior now seems spectacularly stupid for people so smart, but there were murky reasons for these self-deceptions. Many of the anti-Nazi fronts and events that galvanized intellectual opinion in the 1930s--like the show trial of the Reichstag arsonists--appeared to be progressive and truly independent, but it was M{•}unzenburg's task to hide Moscow's hand. (He got little thanks for it; he was rubbed out under suspicious circumstances in 1940.) An interesting book, although Koch leaves open a lot of questions from this dramatic era of espionage, and other writers may want to

investigate further. *Gilbert Taylor*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Ruth Lynch:

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