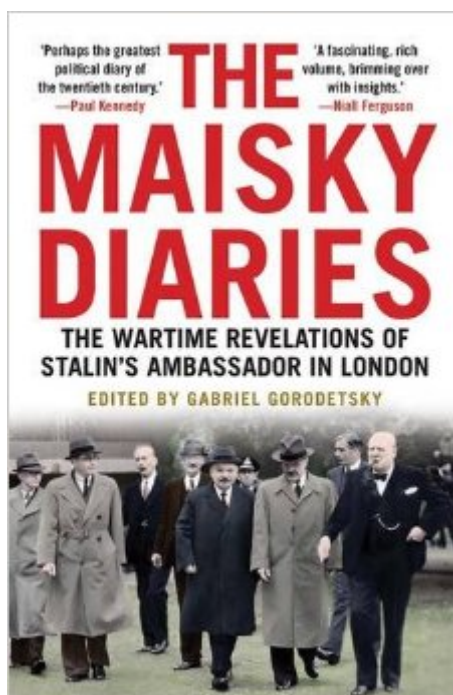


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The Maisky Diaries: The Wartime Revelations Of Stalin's Ambassador In London



Synopsis

Highlights of the extraordinary wartime diaries of Ivan Maisky, Soviet ambassador to London. The terror and purges of Stalin's Russia in the 1930s discouraged Soviet officials from leaving documentary records let alone keeping personal diaries. A remarkable exception is the unique diary assiduously kept by Ivan Maisky, the Soviet ambassador to London between 1932 and 1943. This selection from Maisky's diary, never before published in English, grippingly documents Britain's drift to war during the 1930s, appeasement in the Munich era, negotiations leading to the signature of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, Churchill's rise to power, the German invasion of Russia, and the intense debate over the opening of the second front. Maisky was distinguished by his great sociability and access to the key players in British public life. Among his range of regular contacts were politicians (including Churchill, Chamberlain, Eden, and Halifax), press barons (Beaverbrook), ambassadors (Joseph Kennedy), intellectuals (Keynes, Sidney and Beatrice Webb), writers (George Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells), and indeed royalty. His diary further reveals the role personal rivalries within the Kremlin played in the formulation of Soviet policy at the time. Scrupulously edited and checked against a vast range of Russian and Western archival evidence, this extraordinary narrative diary offers a fascinating revision of the events surrounding the Second World War.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gabriel Gorodetsky has done an enormous public service in editing the diaries of Ivan Maisky,

Stalin's ambassador to London from 1932-43. The diaries bring to life the interwar diplomacy of Britain and Russia as they attempt to deal with the rise of Nazi Germany. It will be referenced in all future books on foreign policy of the interwar years. However, for the lay reader it is a very long book (633 pages in the print edition). Maisky working under Soviet Foreign Minister Maxim Litvinov became one of the architects of Moscow's policy of "collective security" to contain the Nazi menace. Unfortunately that policy failed and after Munich when Stalin turned towards Germany to make a separate peace. He highlights the degree of mistrust both Russia and Britain had for each other. Each feared, correctly as it turned out, that the other would make a separate deal with Hitler. What the diaries highlight is that Maisky was among the first of the modern ambassadors who dealt with more than official government to government relations. He established a broad range of contacts outside official channels. He was very close to the then backbencher Winston Churchill and Lord Beaverbrook. Those two contacts would become extremely important after the Nazi invasion of Russia in June 1941. He was also close to such Bloomsbury group personages as Sidney and Beatrice Webb, the Shaws and H.G. Wells. On an official basis he was very close to Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, perhaps too close in the sense he probably learned stuff that would normally have been more secure. Through his Marxist eyes he sees the rot of the British upper classes and their infatuation with appeasement and the Nazi sympathizers among more than a few of them.

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