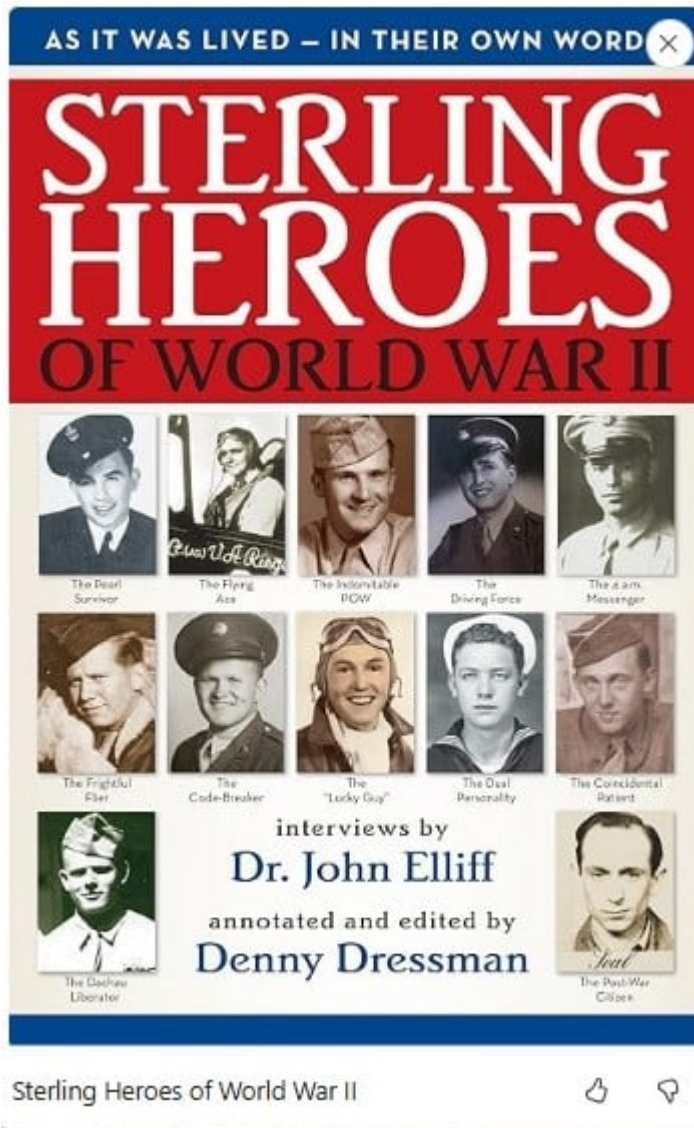


# Some Brief Reviews of History Books in Time for Christmas

By Armando Simón

**The Commissar Vanishes** by David King

1984 did exist. In Communist countries, the mutilation of history, science, and art is commonplace and well documented (the same has been taking place in this country). This thin book documents the historical-pictorial mutilations that took place during the Stalin era. This book is primarily a collection of photographs before and after they were doctored to conform to the shifting alliances and ideological details. As the paranoid dictator got rid of his former colleagues, one by one, photographs and paintings that had previously been taken and that showed them as colleagues of Lenin or Stalin were either reworked or destroyed.



## Sterling Heroes of World War II by Dr. John Elliff

This is an overlooked gem.

Thousands of books have been written about World War II. Almost all have focused on the broad, strategic, narratives on the one hand, and on the other hand on biographies of the major players. *Sterling Heroes* is a huge book that compiled interviews of the common soldier, marine, sailor, pilot, and as such, contains much more historical information, not to mention that it describes the *zeitgeist*. In fact, in some ways their accounts are more detailed and accurate than the usual omniscient accounts (these accounts also help to discount some of the usual Hollywood crap).

The title is an inside joke in that the writer focused solely on the vets of a rural Colorado county whose county seat is

the town of Sterling (in fact, the publishing company is also set in Sterling). At first, I was surprised that the county had so many WWII vets until I remembered that, with the exception of the much hated Frank Sinatra, the entire male population of the United States was in uniform.

Among some of the nuggets:

- some American servicemen were shipped overseas without even basic training

- some were shifted from one branch of the service to another

- many German soldiers in the Western front were eager to surrender

- in one instance, a Wehrmacht officer obstructed an SS officer from executing American POWs during the Battle of the Bulge

- a German woman felt sorry for American POWs and surreptitiously brought them a pile of precious apples in her apron

- a captured Japanese soldier was actually an American forced into the Imperial army at bayonet point when he visited his family in Japan just before Pearl Harbor; upon his capture by his fellow Americans, his first question was who had won the 40th Rose Bowl game

- during the Japanese surrender ceremony on the USS Missouri, two kamikazes tried to disrupt the event, but were shot down

This book is very readable.

**Alexander Hamilton** by Ron Chernow

As with so many other people, I picked up the book because of the hoopla about the Broadway musical since it was based on the book and I am so glad I did. Decades ago, I had always stupidly considered the history of the beginning of America as

being boring. Instead, it was highly dramatic. Additionally, I had complete misconceptions about Hamilton and Jefferson, the latter being pure and idealistic and broadminded while the former was aristocratic and aiming for the imposition of monarchy on the US. According to the author, this latter part was propaganda by the hateful anti-Hamiltonians, which has lasted to this day. For the author, Jefferson, rather than being heroic, was a backstabbing, hypocritical and cowardly. This assessment of Jefferson, the writer of the Declaration of Independence may sound extremely insulting and heretical, but Chernow made use of a lot of hitherto overlooked documents to make this biography and he is pro-Hamilton all the way.

### **Hollywood Traitors: Blacklisted Screenwriters Agents of Stalin, Allies of Hitler** by Allan H. Ryskind

*Hollywood Traitors* was written by an insider is a treasure trove of highly detailed, hidden, information going all the way back to the 1930s that details—with names, dates, and very specifics—how Communists infiltrated Hollywood to crank out propaganda, and, much more importantly, (their very effective) tactics. Tactics which they still use to this very day. Even after the collapse of the Soviet Union they are still very active! This book provides very specific data and it is eye opening. Even if you think you know their insidious machinations to gain control of a potentially gigantic propaganda outlet, believe me, you don't know as much as you think you do. If you have ever wondered with frustration as to how is it that the Politically Correct fanatics have gained so many followers this book will provide you with the answer. Mind you, this is not a polemic, it is a history book, a history book on a subject that up to now has been distorted by the Communists themselves in colleges, news media, and the film industry. But if you think that this is just a history book, keep in mind that Hollywood is still cranking out Communist propaganda—just look at the recent films, *The Purge*, *Trumbo*, *Frida*, *The Majestic* not to mention the countless *Che*

films.

And when you pick up the book, you might be puzzled by the swastika on the director's chair instead of the red star. This is because the book addresses a topic that is part of *That Which Must Never Be Mentioned*, which is that during the first half of the Second World War, the Communists were allied with the Nazis, and the American Communists—many of them being Jews—made common cause with the Third Reich.

### **Tale of Bali** by Vicki Baum

This is one of those books that have been forgotten, though it should be kept alive. It is a narrative of the events leading up to the subjugation of the few remaining areas in Bali not under Dutch control. What is unique is that almost the entire book is written from the natives' perspective, which I suspect was very groundbreaking at the time that the book was written. Now it has become commonplace not only in books, but also in films (from *Avatar* to *Dances with Wolves*). It is also unique in that, although sympathetic to the Balinese, it does not fall into the trap—so common nowadays!—of representing the natives as being faultless and a two-dimensional caricature of Victimhood. The author, like I said, is totally sympathetic to the Balinese, but presents events to show that they were human beings, with both good and bad traits (compare that position with present-day depictions of Native Americans, who are invariably portrayed as innocent, benevolent, two-dimensional hippies). The Europeans are not portrayed as the opposite caricature: dripping poison from fangs and the like. Also good is that all strata of the Balinese society are represented, from the Raja to the farmers and slaves. If anything, it is a Chinese merchant that is shown in a bad light as being the manipulator of the Dutch to invade the remaining free areas for his own financial gain.

### **Lincoln and the Decision for War: The Northern Response to Secession** by Russell McClintock

This book details the agonizing that went on from the months of November through May as to how to respond to the South's arrogant dismissal of Lincoln's election, which they rejected out of hand in a hysterical manner (mmm, sounds very familiar), and the subsequent anarchistic impulse to secede from the Union. Many individuals wanted to, once more, appease the South and avoid a war, while others wanted to call the South's bluff, or what they thought was a bluff, while still others wanted to wage war once the South began to attack Federal fortifications and property.

It is interesting to read the mental foundations of people at the time, such as the idea that a state could decide to leave the Union. After all, the United States, was originally conceived as the union of semi-independent states, so logically they could leave the union at any time they saw fit.

The book's emphasis is on the North during these months. Reading it, I kept wishing to know what the South's counterview was. Just out of curiosity.

The book is very detailed, which might put off some readers as being tedious. Depends on one's temperament.