



## The Commissar Vanishes: The Falsification of Photographs and Art in Stalin's Russia

*By David King*

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The Commissar Vanishes offers a unique and chilling look at how one man-- Joseph Stalin--manipulated the science of photography to advance his own political career and erase the memory of his victims. Over the past 30 years, author and photohistorian David King has assembled the world's largest archive of doctored photos from the Soviet era, the best of which are featured here.

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

In Stalinist Russia, it was commonplace for Soviet history to be rewritten with inconvenient participants removed--often men or women who had aided the Communist Revolution in the early days and then had somehow fallen afoul of Stalin himself. In *The Commissar Vanishes*, English art historian David King assembles an impressive body of photographs and artwork that shows the process whereby a hero could overnight be made into villain. "The physical eradication of Stalin's political opponents at the hands of the secret police was swiftly followed by their obliteration from all forms of pictorial existence," King rightly notes: in one noteworthy sequence reproduced on the cover, a photograph of Stalin with three revolutionary leaders is airbrushed and cropped and clipped until, one by one, those leaders disappear and only Stalin is left--conveying the message that Stalin carried the Russian Revolution by himself. Another photograph from the 1920s depicts a meeting of dozens of trade-union and Bolshevik leaders; by the late 1930s, all but a handful of them had been murdered at Stalin's orders. King's work restores some of these men and women to history and illustrates the essential inhumanity of totalitarian thought.

#### From Kirkus Reviews

The doctoring of photographs didn't begin with the advent of computers in magazine production departments. "So much falsification took place during the Stalin years that it is possible to tell the story of the Soviet era through retouched photographs," writes King. For Joseph Stalin, photo retouching was a technique for controlling public perception and memory. People who vanished in real life--whether banished to the farthest reaches of the Soviet Union or eliminated by the secret police--vanished as well from photos, and even paintings. In many cases they were airbrushed out completely, in others their faces were clumsily blacked out with ink. This creepy visual rewriting of history is documented here by King, who has been collecting such revised images since 1970, when he found Leon Trotsky completely expunged from official Soviet archives. Placing original photos alongside the altered ones, King also explains in lengthy captions who has vanished and why. A disturbing testament to the destruction wrought when a megalomaniac becomes a dictator. (History Book Club selection) -- *Copyright ©1997, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

#### Review

#### A New York Times Notable Book

"This lush volume by David King is a fascinating and sobering account of the rewriting of history and the willful creation of myths through the falsification of images in the Soviet Union during the Stalin era. A priceless collection." -The New York Times

"The Commissar Vanishes provides vivid, tragic, and at times comic evidence of the dictator's determination to manipulate even his country's memory." -The Wall Street Journal

### Users Review

#### From reader reviews:

**Nicholas Walsh:**

The experience that you get from *The Commissar Vanishes: The Falsification of Photographs and Art in Stalin's Russia* is the more deep you looking the information that hide inside the words the more you get enthusiastic about reading it. It doesn't mean that this book is hard to recognise but *The Commissar Vanishes: The Falsification of Photographs and Art in Stalin's Russia* giving you buzz feeling of reading. The article author conveys their point in specific way that can be understood through anyone who read this because the author of this e-book is well-known enough. This particular book also makes your own vocabulary increase well. It is therefore easy to understand then can go together with you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We suggest you for having this *The Commissar Vanishes: The Falsification of Photographs and Art in Stalin's Russia* instantly.

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