

German power' to attack Hitler's heartland on the ground." But Russia needed supplies, and only America and Britain were capable of providing them. What resulted, of course, was another war that would last nearly five decades, a cold war between the U.S. and Soviet Union perhaps best characterized as little more than taking turns flexing muscles.

The heart of this paradox, Fenby suggests, is that "The alliance had been for war, not peace." This is especially ironic for Roosevelt considering his frequent claim that his objective was for America's peace. He was the man who initiated and helped develop the United Nations, after all. On the other hand he was also the man who, upon first hearing of Britain's atomic research, "expressed great interest and, soon afterwards, secretly approved an atomic project submitted to him by a U.S. team." Until the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the President had been aloof concerning his position on the war, delaying involvement even after much pressure from his fellow allies. After the attack, he suddenly seemed excited about America's involvement, what he then called, "the long known and long expected." Americans now had his trust after being led to believe he had no interest in fighting and every interest in preserving national peace and spirit. "He saw his country's best interest and the best hope of winning the war as lying in the alliance," Fenby writes. "Preserving that association would, therefore, become his fundamental purpose, with fundamental repercussions on the world to come."

The outcome of this or any war, Fenby suggests, our present one included, can not end pleasantly even if the goal is peace. But Fenby's account reminds us that history writing can be effective enough to change lives, opinions and ideas. When I was in high school, still frightened of the impending need to focus on something in college, I briefly considered pursuing history. What was not to love? So many stories of valiant men and women fighting for something: their country, family, race, religion, heritage, voice, freedom. Action was implicit, I realized; something exciting had always been happening somewhere. But it somehow wasn't enough for me. I chose literature instead, for similar reasons concerning lives and stories, but what made the difference was that most history textbooks felt lifeless. The stories we read in literature *were* the textbook; they spoke for themselves. Why shouldn't good history writing be expected to do the same? The alliance of the Big Three is a story rich in character and drama, one Fenby recognized as having many implications for our current war situation, thus being in need of a good storyteller. The story finally seems to have found its author.

Alliance is a harrowing, inside look at the chronological events of World War II from a close-up view of the major players; and in the manner of good storytelling, Fenby focuses on the characters, revealing their actions as a product of their motives. Early in the book, for instance, we are informed of each man's vices and faults, their sins and infidelities, their physical, social, and emotional failings. All three men were drinkers, all "confirmed smokers... All had health problems which were exacerbated by the pressures of running a total war." The President mixed cocktails; when Stalin was drunk, "he enjoyed raw white salmon from Siberia"; and Churchill was a known alcoholic, whose "colleagues insisted that his drinks were much watered, that he nursed them, and that he was never under the influence." Where some critics may find fault with what they consider to be superfluous detail, I found the character sketches to be the heart of Fenby's intent, the essential aspect of how we are to re-imagine these events: that no leader is perfect, no plan ideal, and sometimes we must side with the enemy to accomplish our goals. The story is told as if Fenby had been there all along, watching without interfering and without taking sides. He draws from a number of intimate sources, including Churchill's memoirs, Roosevelt's son Elliott's memoirs, and various other letters and recordings, incorporating dialogue to further bring the Big Three to life.

Having written numerous books on various international topics, the former editor of Britain's *Observer* and Hong Kong's *South China Morning Post*, and former senior editor at the *Economist*, the *Guardian*, and the *Independent*, is just the person to recount these events. What Fenby offers in *Alliance* is not new information, but a new perspective of three men who worked together in spite of great differences, something we've desperately needed in our present state of global warfare. His prose is often astonishing, intense and surprising with the delight of a good thriller. But it goes much beyond that. It is history writing at its finest, and as in an effective thriller, we are drawn in by the characters, who paint unforgettable images of the times, the necessity to trust one's allies, the uncertainty of international relations. Perhaps with *Alliance* our countries' leaders may finally understand the vast nature of war and the long road to peace in a fresh light, that the road may be a little longer than we had hoped.

Alliance: The Inside Story of How Roosevelt, Stalin & Churchill Won One War & Began Another by Jonathan Fenby
MacAdam/Cage
ISBN: 1596922532