



Koba the Dread: Laughter and the Twenty Million (Vintage International)

Martin Amis

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A brilliant weave of personal involvement, vivid biography and political insight, *Koba the Dread* is the successor to Martin Amis's award-winning memoir, *Experience*.

Koba the Dread captures the appeal of one of the most powerful belief systems of the 20th century — one that spread through the world, both captivating it and staining it red. It addresses itself to the central lacuna of 20th-century thought: the indulgence of Communism by the intellectuals of the West. In between the personal beginnings and the personal ending, Amis gives us perhaps the best one-hundred pages ever written about Stalin: Koba the Dread, Iosif the Terrible.

The author's father, Kingsley Amis, though later reactionary in tendency, was a "Comintern dogsbody" (as he would come to put it) from 1941 to 1956. His second-closest, and then his closest friend (after the death of the poet Philip Larkin), was Robert Conquest, our leading Sovietologist whose book of 1968, *The Great Terror*, was second only to Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* in undermining the USSR. The present memoir explores these connections.

Stalin said that the death of one person was tragic, the death of a million a mere "statistic." *Koba the Dread*, during whose course the author absorbs a particular, a familial death, is a rebuttal of Stalin's aphorism.

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