

**RUSSIA'S**

From the October Revolution

**COLD**

to the Fall of the Wall

**WAR**

**JONATHAN HASLAM**

# RUSSIA'S COLD WAR

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*From the October Revolution to the Fall of the Wall*

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Jonathan Haslam



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RUSSIA'S  
COLD WAR

*For Karina and Timothy*

When Napoleon I conducted war under the slogan liberation from serfdom, he found support, had allies and was successful.

When Napoleon I shifted to wars of conquest, he multiplied his enemies and met with defeat.

—Stalin, 5 May 1941

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## PREFACE

The term “Cold War” was coined by George Orwell in describing the impact of the atom bomb on world politics in October 1945, at a time of tension with Russia. “We may be heading not for general breakdown but for an epoch as horribly stable as the slave empires of antiquity,” he wrote. The Soviet Union was “a state . . . at once unconquerable and in a permanent state of ‘cold war’ with its neighbours.”<sup>1</sup> Of course, those relations were never good since the foundation of the Bolshevik regime. Thus our story properly begins in 1917.

Any serious account of foreign policy conducted beyond American shores is above all concerned with high politics, attenuated or enhanced, of course, by macroeconomic, domestic political, social, ideological, and cultural determinants that either confine or motivate policy in one direction or another. In this sense the USSR was little different from its European neighbors whose foreign policies were traditionally “crown prerogative,” of which France under the Fifth Republic is a prime example. Moreover, although the Bolsheviks did not believe in reasons of state as such — because Marxism-Leninism dictated goals that stood above and beyond merely the state — they did practice *realpolitik*: they were realists in terms of means, though utopians in terms of ends.<sup>2</sup> From the outset Soviet foreign policy was tightly controlled at the center, initially by Lenin and subsequently by the senior Party secretary, but always — excepting the years of extreme terror under Stalin (1936–41 and 1948–53) — within a broad consensus forged among dominant figures in the Politburo on the basis of the Leninist inheritance.

At one level below, Party and state organs with access to classified documents and the foreign press could propose but not dispose. The numbers of Soviet missiles and other armaments were, for example, pencilled into the documents at the Party’s Military-Industrial Sector, information available to no one other

than a handful of officials serving the leading secretary of the Party. Even someone as high up as Alexander Yakovlev was given the wrong figures, and Margaret Thatcher had occasion to correct Mikhail Gorbachev on the data he had been given.

Moreover — and this is crucial — it is hard for those in the West to understand without direct experience the degree to which the most privileged Soviet citizen in the metropolis was almost totally cut off from all objective information and alternative viewpoints from abroad, even after the Helsinki Final Act (1975) and well into the Gorbachev era. The Westerner visiting and living in Russia even for brief periods suffered sensory deprivation, particularly acute when the authorities were jamming broadcasts from outside. Information is power. And without it no amount of democratization — and there was none until spring 1988 with partially representative elections and finally the release of “troublemakers” from special psychiatric hospitals — could seriously affect the conduct of foreign policy. One cannot therefore sensibly find among the Russian people an explanation of foreign policy under Soviet rule, let alone the end of the Cold War. It is for these reasons that the Cold War could draw to an end as the direct result of decisions essentially by one man, Gorbachev.

Understanding events at the time they occurred was hard enough. But even historians with the inestimable advantage of hindsight have found it difficult. Parallel to the Cold War we have also faced a historiographical Cold War, not so much between East and West — since what we would regard as scholarly history was impermissible in Russia until 1992 due to the most rigorous censorship and punishment for “anti-Soviet” activity in any form — as between academics within the West. The war in Vietnam broke a social contract within the US elite in the most painful manner. Thereafter few fields of historical inquiry as Cold War history have been so beset by political dispute in open and covert form. Moreover, resolution of factual accuracy even about Western policy was hindered by the fact that archives in the West were combed by the authorities to remove items which were not merely those vital to state security but also those that exposed the hypocrisy of government or embarrassed allied regimes.

Much undoubtedly still remains hidden. For these and no doubt other reasons, we are unlikely for many years to see the kind of objective history one has learned to expect for World War I. But official censorship should never be allowed to determine the writing of history.

So what of Soviet sources? A complaint commonly levied with justification against histories of the Cold War is that the scholars concerned neither read nor speak Russian.<sup>3</sup> It was once plausible to plead that records were closed. But this excuse no longer stands since much has been released following German reunification (1990) and the collapse of the Soviet Union (1991). Relying solely



on Western sources amounts to taking testimony from one side only in an unpleasant divorce. Under the rule of law no court would seriously allow such a practice.

Non-Russian speakers have partial access to archival documents. A great deal is available translated by the Cold War International History Project, in the National Security Archive, and from the Parallel History Project. Invaluable though it may be, the material is uneven. Little is offered on the earliest phase of the Cold War. And the focus is on dramatic episodes rather than policy over time. It excludes most memoirs and all secondary works, which — given continued censorship in Moscow — are critical on military matters.

A further charge is that historians focus excessively on Soviet-American relations to the exclusion of Europe.<sup>4</sup> The assumption all too often holds that the Cold War was generated and sustained by Washington and Moscow alone. It is perhaps inevitable that history has been tilted in this direction because by far the greater number of specialists — with such notable exceptions at the senior level as Marc Trachtenberg and William Hitchcock — are Americans with little direct experience of Europe or knowledge of European languages. And even respected scholars born and bred in Europe have dismissed its role in the emergence (Vojtech Mastny) and continuation (Arne Westad) of the Cold War. Yet how can one understand the *grand peur* of 1947 or the furore over the SS-20 without direct access to West European archives? And the archives of at least one key Communist Party — that of Italy — are completely open to research.

This work is thus intended to fill both lacunae by highlighting Russia while giving Europe its due. No consecutive narrative yet exists that uses Russian-language archives throughout from 1945 to 1989. The most recent works present only isolated episodes in Cold War history and do so with a broad brush. They undoubtedly contribute greatly to our understanding but they are ultimately unsatisfactory because consecutive narrative is critical to causal explanation in the writing of history. Moreover, detailed research at firsthand in the original language does matter. *Fingerspitzengefühl* is hard enough to acquire even when directly immersed in the primary sources of one's own country, let alone in alien archives. This was hitherto impossible without selective opening of documents in Moscow; the rich array of top secret Soviet documents held by the Bundesarchiv (notably the SED archive in Berlin); and the extraordinary Russian collections at the Hoover Institution archive at Stanford (the Kataev Papers on military matters, for instance); the Volkogonov Papers in the Library of Congress; and the National Security Archive in Washington DC.

The specialist reader will immediately note that references to secondary sources are few and far between. This is because I have tried to rely as far as possible on declassified documents and interviews. To do this would have been

impossible if required to weave through the narrative a running commentary on all prior interpretations of Soviet policy. So readers will have to bear with me, assume that I am familiar with what has gone before, and judge my interpretation against existing knowledge of events derived from my predecessors. Moreover, aggrieved historians should recall that the mass of pioneering research conducted by such political scientists as Alex Dallin and Adam Ulam years before any archive was open has largely been neglected by historians of the Cold War, as has much of the pioneering work in any language other than English where not available in translation.

Archives were critical to this book: Birmingham University Library Archive; Churchill College Archives (Cambridge); CIA Electronic Reading Room (Internet); Eisenhower Library and Archive (Abilene, Kansas); Quai d'Orsay archive (Paris); Fondazione Gramsci (PCI) archive (Rome); Hoover Institution archive (Stanford, California); Library of Congress (Washington DC); Liddell Hart Archive (King's College, London); National Security Archive (Washington DC); Kennedy Library and Archive (Boston, Massachusetts); Labour Party Archives (Manchester University); Lyndon Johnson Library and Archive (Austin, Texas); National Archives (Kew); Library of Congress Manuscripts Division (Washington DC); Firestone Memorial Library (Princeton University); Russian Centre for the Preservation and Study of Documents of Contemporary History (RTsKhIDNI), now the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI); Russian Foreign Ministry Archive (AVPRF, Moscow); SAPMO (Bundesarchiv, Berlin); Truman Library and Archive (Independence, Missouri); US National Archives (College Park, Maryland); the Widener Library (Harvard University).

Without direct access to some of those involved in policy making and execution, however, it would have been difficult to make full sense of events so distant from us now. I would therefore like to acknowledge crucial assistance from the following on key points of detail over the past twenty years, some befriended and some now unfortunately deceased (in italics): Egon Bahr, Lucius Battle, Tony Bishop, Sir Rodric Braithwaite, Harold Brown, Mary Acheson Bundy, Sir Bryan Cartledge, Anatoly Chernyaev, Vyacheslav Dashichev, Vladimir Erofeev, Dr. Stefan Halper, *Sir Nicholas Henderson*, John Hines, Viktor Israelyan, *the Kennans*, *Sir John Killick*, Tatyana Litvinova, *Paul Nitze*, *William ("Bill") Odom*, *Baroness Park of Monmouth*, Phillip Petersen, Lord Powell of Bayswater, James Schlesinger, Brent Scowcroft, *Georgii Shakhnazarov*, Sir John Thomson, George Walden, and others who have preferred to remain anonymous.

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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ABM	Antiballistic Missile (System)
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BMEWS	Ballistic Missile Early Warning System
BRUSA	Britain–United States of America Agreement
Cab	British Cabinet papers
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
Cheka	Chrezvychainaya Komissiya
CDU	Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands
CGT	Confédération National de Travail
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
Cominform	Communist Information Bureau
Comintern	Communist International
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CSCE	Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe
CSU	Christlich Soziale Union
DDR	Deutsche Demokratische Republik
DIA	Defense Intelligence Agency
DRV	Democratic Republic of (North) Vietnam
DST	Direction de la Surveillance Territoire
EAM	Ethnikón Apeleftherotikón Métopon
EDC	European Defence Community
EEC	European Economic Community
ELAS	Ethnikón Laïkós Apeleftherotikós Strátos
FBS	(US) Forward-Based Systems
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FDP	Freie Demokratische Partei

FNLA	Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola
FO	Foreign Office
FRG	Federal Republic of (West) Germany
FSLN	Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional
GCHQ	Government Communications Headquarters (UK)
GDR	(East) German Democratic Republic
GLCM	Ground-Launched Cruise Missile
GRU	Glavnoe Razvedyvatel'noe Upravlenie
IBM	International Business Machines Corporation
ICBM	Intercontinental Ballistic Missile
IEMSS	Institut Ekonomiki Mirovoi Sotsialisticheskoi Sistemy
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INF	Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces
INR	(US Bureau of) Intelligence and Research
IRBM	Intermediate-Range Ballistic Missile
KGB	Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti
KKE	Kommounistikó Kómma Elládes
KMT	Kuomintang
MCP	Malayan Communist Party
MFA	Movimento do Forças Armadas
MI5	British secret service (domestic)
MI6	British secret service (overseas); otherwise SIS
MPLA	Movimiento Popular de Libertação de Angola
MVD	Ministerstvo Vnutrennykh del
Narkomindel	Narodnyi Komissariat Inostrannykh Del
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NKGB	Narodnyi Komissariat Gosudarstvennoi Bezpasnosti
NKVD	Narodnyi Komissariat Vnutrennykh del
NSA	National Security Agency
NSC	National Security Council
NSDD	National Security Decision Directives
NSDM	National Security Decision Memorandum
PCF	Parti Communiste Français
PCF	Partito Comunista Italiano
PCP	Partido Comunista Português
PKI	Partai Komunis Indonesia
Politburo	Political Bureau of the Central Committee
PPR	Polska Partia Robotnicza (Communist)
PRC	People's Republic of China

Prem	British Prime Minister's papers
PSF	Parti Socialiste Français
PSI	Partito Socialista Italiano
PUWP	Polish United Workers' Party (Communist)
Razvedupr	Razvedyvatel'noe Upravlenie, forerunner to GRU
RYAN	Raketno-Yadernoe Napadenie
SALT	Strategic Arms Limitation Talks
SAM	Surface-to-Air Missile
SDI	Strategic Defense Initiative
SED	Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (Communist)
SIOP	Single Integrated Operational Plan (US)
SLBM	Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile
SPD	Sozialistische Partei Deutschlands
SSBN	Ship Submersible Ballistic Nuclear (Submarine)
TASS	Telegrafnoe Agenstvo Sovetskogo Soyuza
UAR	Egypt
UKUSA	UK-USA Agreement
UN	United Nations
UNEF	United Nations Emergency Force
UNITA	União Nacional para Independência Total de Angola
USA	United States of America
USAF	US Air Force
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VPK	Voenno-Promyshlennyi Komitet

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## CONTENTS

Preface	ix
List of Acronyms and Abbreviations	xv
ONE Underlying Antagonisms	1
TWO Ideology Triumphant	29
THREE Cominformity	77
FOUR On the Offensive in Asia	112
FIVE Thaw	133
SIX Sudden Frost	164
SEVEN Taking the World to the Brink	175
EIGHT Détente	214
NINE The Impact of Vietnam	270
TEN Détente Fails	295
ELEVEN The Reagan Presidency	328
TWELVE Down Comes the Wall	364
Conclusions	393

Notes 401

Bibliography 489

Index 509



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## UNDERLYING ANTAGONISMS

Without international revolution neither the Soviet Union nor any other [socialist] country can triumph. Without international revolution no one can triumph. We have to increase the number of our friends.

—Molotov, 26 August 1979

The Cold War did not, of course, burst in suddenly onto an entirely harmonious world. But there was something peculiar about it—and not merely the fact that nuclear weapons deterred open warfare between Superpowers. The conflict had deep-seated ideological foundations that outlasted leaders who differed in the degree of attachment to fundamental principle in the conduct of foreign policy. On the grand scale of history the Cold War stemmed directly from a thoroughgoing revolt against Western values established since the Enlightenment, a wholesale rejection of an entire way of life and its economic underpinnings increasingly dominant since the seventeenth century, and the substitution of something new and entirely alien in terms of culture and experience. That revolt began with the October Revolution in 1917.

It was largely because of a recent history of deep suspicion and mutual hostility that common cause was never recognized in confronting Hitler before the war and that the United States never actually signed an alliance with the USSR during World War II. Indeed, a veritable cold war prevailed between Britain and Russia through most of the 1920s. George Kennan attacked the view that the “state of sharp conflict and tension” between East and West began only in 1945 as “erroneous.” “Never were American relations with Russia at a lower ebb than in the first sixteen years after the Bolshevik seizure of power in 1917.”<sup>1</sup> Thus even when German aggression temporarily brought the two camps together in joint opposition to Hitler’s bid for global supremacy in 1941, those relations were never as good in private as they were represented in public.