

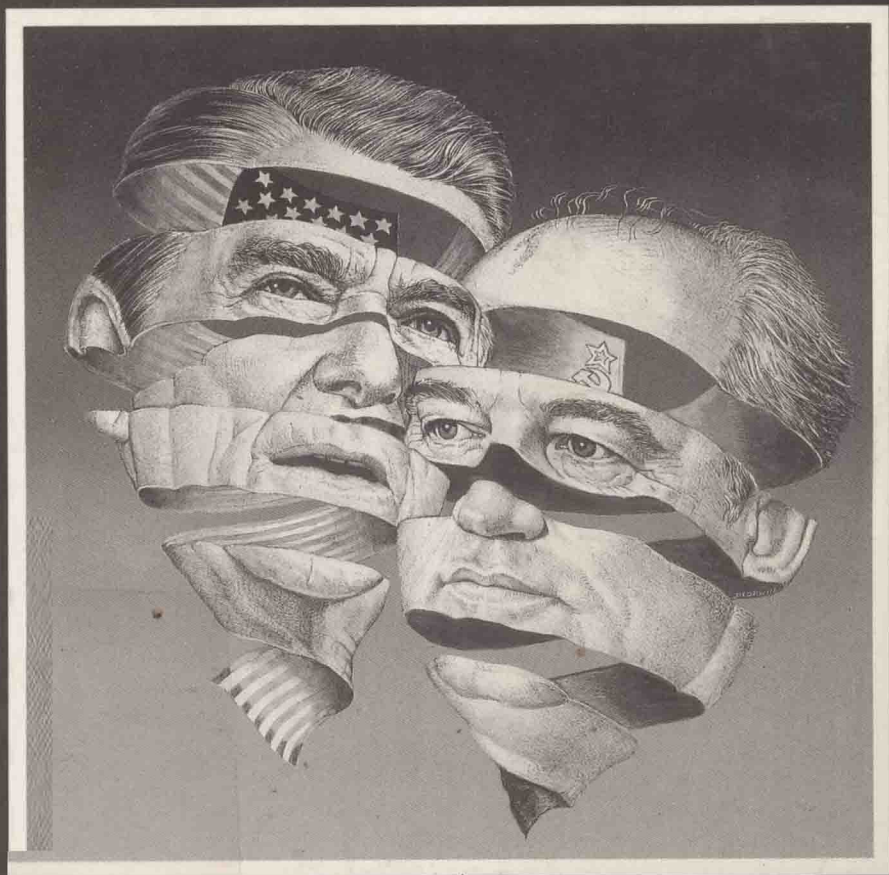
S E C O N D E D I T I O N

The American History Series

The Cold War

1945–1987

Ralph B. Levering



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The Cold War

1945–1987

SECOND EDITION

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The American History Series

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To my sisters and brother
Lois, Betsy, Montague, Merry, Frank—
Examples and friends

FOREWORD

Every generation writes its own history, for the reason that it sees the past in the foreshortened perspective of its own experience. This has certainly been true of the writing of American history. The practical aim of our historiography is to offer us a more certain sense of where we are going by helping us understand the road we took in getting where we are. If the substance and nature of our historical writing is changing, it is precisely because our own generation is redefining its direction, much as the generation that preceded us redefined theirs. We are seeking a newer direction, because we are facing new problems, changing our values and premises, and shaping new institutions to meet new needs. Thus, the vitality of the present inspires the vitality of our writing about our past. Today's scholars are hard at work reconsidering every major field of our history: its politics, diplomacy, economy, society, mores, values, sexuality, and status, ethnic, and race relations. No less significantly, our scholars are using newer modes of investigation to probe the ever-expanding domain of the American past.

Our aim, in this American History Series, is to offer the reader a survey of what scholars are saying about the central themes and issues of American history. To present these themes and issues, we have invited scholars who have made notable contributions to the respective fields in which they are writing.

Each volume offers the reader a sufficient factual and narrative account for perceiving the larger dimensions of its particular subject. Addressing their respective themes, our authors have undertaken, moreover, to present the conclusions derived by the principal writers on these themes. Beyond that, the authors present their own conclusions about those aspects of their respective subjects that have been matters of difference and controversy. In effect, they have written not only about where the subject stands in today's historiography but also about where they stand on their subject. Each volume closes with an extensive critical essay on the writings of the major authorities on its particular theme.

The books in this series are designed for use in both basic and advanced courses in American history. Such a series has a particular utility in times such as these, when the traditional format of our American history courses is being altered to accommodate a greater diversity of texts and reading materials. The series offers a number of distinct advantages. It extends and deepens the dimensions of course work in American history. In proceeding beyond the confines of the traditional textbook, it makes clear that the study of our past is, more than the student might otherwise infer, at once complex, sophisticated, and profound. It presents American history as a subject of continuing vitality and fresh investigation. The work of experts in their respective fields, it opens up to the student the rich findings of historical inquiry. It invites the student to join, in major fields of research, the many groups of scholars who are pondering anew the central themes and problems of our past. It challenges the student to participate actively in exploring American history and to collaborate in the creative and rigorous adventure of seeking out its wider reaches.

John Hope Franklin
Abraham S. Eisenstadt

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The primary goal of the second edition is to expand the book through the Carter and Reagan years. The harsh words and confrontational deeds of the late 1970s and early 1980s made it clear that the Cold War had not ended a decade earlier, as some political leaders and commentators had hoped during the halcyon days of *détente*. Recurring patterns in Soviet-American relations were again visible: competition in weaponry, with each nation claiming to be behind and accusing the other of striving for superiority; conflict in the Third World, with each side insisting that it favored local self-determination while the other was seeking domination; and a wide range of ideological and economic competition that poisoned the atmosphere and increased the difficulty of resolving specific issues as they arose. Studying the recent period in Soviet-American relations not only increases one's knowledge of contemporary history; it also can lead, through comparisons and contrasts with earlier periods, to a deeper understanding of the Cold War as a whole.

Chapter 4, covering the years 1973–1987, is entirely new to this edition; the epilogue has been largely rewritten; and the bibliography, while necessarily selective, has been expanded and brought up-to-date. I was tempted to make changes in the earlier chapters as well: to present more information on economic aspects of U.S. and Soviet foreign policy, for example,

or to go into detail on U.S. interventions in Latin America and Africa in the 1950s and 1960s. But then I realized that all such changes would increase the book's length beyond what already was occurring through the addition of a new chapter. Thus, in order to keep the book relatively short and accessible to a wide range of students, the earlier chapters remain virtually unchanged. I trust my fellow teachers to give lectures to fill the gaps that they consider most important, and I hope that they will encourage students interested in learning more about particular topics to consult the works cited in the bibliographical essay.

I wish to thank those who have read and criticized either the entire book or specific chapters: Aleine Austin, Robert A. Divine, John Lewis Gaddis, Maureen Hewitt, Wallace Irwin, Jr., Walter LaFeber, Patricia W. Levering, Arthur S. Link, Elizabeth Morgan, Thomas R. Maddux, Louis Ortmeyer, David Patterson, Jack Perry, Harry Stegmaier, Jr., Samuel Walker, Robert Williams, and, of course, the editors of this series. I also am grateful to my students during the past fifteen years at Davidson College, Earlham College, and Western Maryland College. They have helped me to keep learning about the past and caring about our common future.

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PROLOGUE

Yalta and Other Cold War Myths

At least in the European theater, the end of World War II was in sight by the time President Franklin D. Roosevelt prepared to attend the important meeting of “Big Three” Allied leaders at Yalta from February 4 to 11, 1945. Leaving Washington by battleship shortly after his inauguration on January 20 for an unprecedented fourth term, Roosevelt arrived on the island of Malta in the Mediterranean on February 2. He then proceeded

by plane to Yalta, a resort town in southern Russia¹ which still showed clear signs of the devastation inflicted by the invading German armies earlier in the war. Roosevelt was suffering from the serious circulatory problems that sapped his strength during the last year of his life; but according to Charles Bohlen and other American officials who accompanied him to Yalta, the president's illness did not affect significantly his conduct of diplomacy.

Roosevelt was under substantial domestic pressure to obtain at Yalta a commitment to a postwar world based on such high-minded ideals as self-determination for all peoples and trust in a new international organization to keep the peace. More precisely, according to a growing chorus of criticism in the press and in Congress, the president needed to insure that Russia would participate in the war against Japan after Germany was defeated, that it would not try to dominate Poland and other East European nations, and that it would participate enthusiastically in the proposed United Nations.

Roosevelt was well aware by the beginning of 1945 that these and other demands could not be achieved completely and would require compromises, but he limited his public statements in 1944 and early 1945 to optimistic generalities. Although this approach may well have lessened public disillusionment with Allied relations during wartime, it added to the pressure on the president to maintain at least the appearance of unity between the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union.

To Roosevelt's liberal supporters, the possible collapse of the Grand Alliance was a horrid nightmare. If the Big Three did not find a way to maintain amicable relations, victory in the war might well be jeopardized. But even if victory occurred, animosity between the two most powerful nations in history might well lead to a new arms race, to a new system of alliances, and ulti-

¹ The terms "Russia" and "Soviet Union" are used in this book as synonyms, both referring to the nation officially called the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Similarly, "America" and "United States" refer to the United States of America.

mately to a third and even more devastating world war. It also would debilitate the new United Nations even before it got off the ground. "I am convinced that we can no longer afford the drawing room or editorial room pleasure of asking ourselves, 'Can we get along with Russia?'" journalist Richard Lauterbach wrote in a typical plea for friendship in 1944. "We must and can get along with the Soviet Union." As his supporters saw it, it was Roosevelt's responsibility at Yalta to ensure that the conference was a step toward the kind of peace they desired.

The president's conservative critics—Senator Burton K. Wheeler (Dem., Montana), writer William Henry Chamberlin, and others—long had doubted that cooperation with Russia after the war would prove either possible or desirable. Many right-wing Republicans, Catholic and ethnic leaders, and conservative journalists did not want communist, Godless Russia to receive any of the fruits of victory; indeed, some of them would have been just as happy if Hitler had succeeded in destroying the Soviet state. But now that the Soviets and the Western allies clearly were moving toward military victory, Roosevelt was obliged, in their view, to do everything he could to limit Russia's influence outside its borders.

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill also faced domestic pressures, especially in regard to the future of Poland, in whose defense Britain and France had declared war on Germany 5 1/2 years before. But Churchill had the advantage of having presented to his nation a more concrete, realistic portrait of postwar world politics than American leaders had conveyed to theirs; and he also did not have as constituents millions of fairly recent immigrants from Poland and other East European nations, many of whom vehemently opposed Russian domination of the region. In addition to seeking an acceptable compromise on Poland, Churchill wanted to insure at Yalta that England's chief European ally, France, would have a zone of occupation in Germany after the war.

Marshal Josef Stalin, who had feared three years earlier that the potent German army might well conquer Russia, was in a strong position by the time of Yalta. His army, aided by U.S.

arms shipments and, since June 1944, by the Allied second front in the West, had driven the Germans all the way back from the streets of Stalingrad to the suburbs of Berlin. In the process, the Red Army had liberated Poland and other East European nations from brutal Nazi rule, and it had won for Russia the gratitude of much of the Western world. Earlier in the war, Stalin had pleaded for a large-scale second front to lessen German pressure on Russia. Now, at Yalta, it was Roosevelt who was anxious to nail down the details of Soviet assistance against Japan, and it was the president and the prime minister who were requesting Soviet concessions on Poland.

Stalin preferred the "arithmetic" of specific agreements to the "algebra" of declarations of principle, and he also believed that international relations were grounded in self-interest and the balance of power rather than in expressions of good faith or the authority of international organizations. To use the more recent language of accounting, Stalin primarily focused on the bottom line in great power politics. Although hopeful that the Grand Alliance could remain intact as long as he, Roosevelt, and Churchill remained in power, Stalin was determined that the Soviet Union would protect itself, unilaterally if necessary, against the possibility of a hostile Poland and especially against renewed German militarism. As the war neared its end, Stalin increasingly displayed what historian Vojtech Mastny² has called "rising aspirations" to expand Soviet power.

Contrary to the various myths about Yalta which began to develop as soon as the joint communiqué was issued on February 12, the conference itself proceeded much as one would have expected under the circumstances. The three leaders and their associates were generally cordial, as befitted successful and powerful allies who still needed each other's help to assure final victory. But they naturally bargained hard and long over dif-

² The titles, places, and dates of publication of the books of most of the historians and political scientists quoted in the text can be found in the bibliographic essay beginning on page 146.