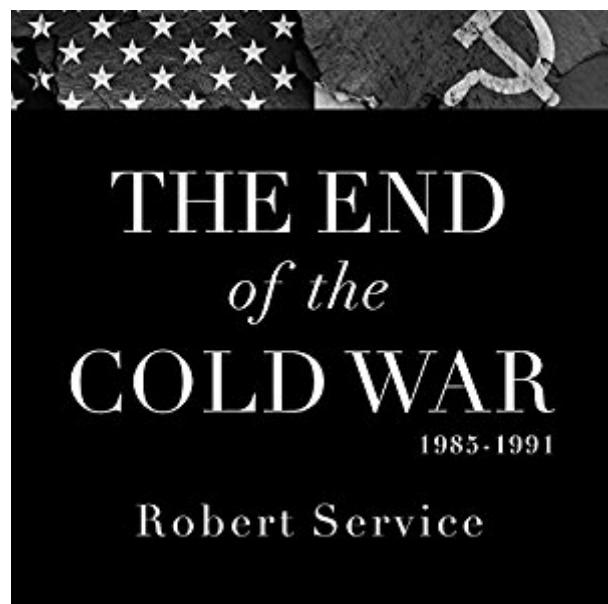


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The End Of The Cold War 1985-1991



Synopsis

The Cold War had seemed like a permanent fixture in global politics, and until its denouement no Western or Soviet politician had foreseen that an epoch defined by games of irreconcilable one-upmanship between the world's most heavily armed superpowers would end in their lifetimes. Under the long, forbidding shadow of the Cold War, even the smallest miscalculation from either side could result in catastrophe. Everything changed in March 1985, when Mikhail Gorbachev became the leader of the Soviet Union. Just four years later, the Cold War and the arms competition was over. The USSR and the US had peacefully and abruptly achieved an astonishing political settlement. But it was not preordained that a global crisis of unprecedented scale could and would be averted peaceably. Drawing on new archival research, Robert Service's gripping new investigation of the final years of the Cold War - the first to give equal attention to the internal deliberations from both sides of the Iron Curtain - opens a window onto the dramatic years that would irrevocably alter the world's geopolitical landscape and the men at their fore.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a diplomatic history of the end of the Cold War. It is not an analysis of geostrategic or economic realities that made the end of the Cold war possible. It is simply a story, based on a careful in-depth study of the newly available documents and literature, of how it happened. The story focuses on personalities, and (reflecting, no doubt, the specialty of the author), on the Soviet side more than on the American side. Both focuses are welcome. The focus on personalities makes

the story alive and immensely readable. The focus on the Russian side not only corrects the prevailing focus of the American literature, but offers unusual insights, unavailable elsewhere. The book is meticulously researched. While many books on Russia suffer from factual mistakes so numerous as to make the book unreadable (books by Marshal Goldman, Edward Lucas and Anne Applebaum come to mind), this one has the reliability of a forensic evidence. The specificity of the story, however, does not make the book conceptually uninteresting. For me, the main value of the book is the light it sheds on the current international politics. One cannot hope to understand the policies of the current Russian government without understanding that it is, in a good measure, a reaction to the style of diplomacy practiced by Gorbachev. His foreign policy, although not without serious merits (as Service makes abundantly clear), was dysfunctional, determined by structural weaknesses and was pursued in a desultory manner. Putin's diplomacy, no doubt, is consciously shaped by a constantly renewed pledge of "Niemehr". Never again what? The manner of diplomacy practiced by Gorbachev and Shevardnadze as described by Service.

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