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The Invention of Russia: From Gorbachev's Freedom to Putin's War

Arkady Ostrovsky

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A highly original narrative history by *The Economist's* Moscow bureau chief that does for modern Russia what Evan Osnos did for China in *Age of Ambition*

The end of communism and breakup of the Soviet Union was a time of euphoria around the world, but Russia today is violently anti-American and dangerously nationalistic. So how did we go from the promise of those heady days to the autocratic police state of Putin's new Russia?

The Invention of Russia is a breathtakingly ambitious book that reaches back to the darkest days of the cold war to tell the story of the fight for the soul of a nation. With the deep insight only possible of a native son, Ostrovsky introduces us to the propagandists, oligarchs, and fixers who have set Russia's course since the collapse of the Soviet Union, inventing a new and more ominous identity for a country where ideas are all too often wielded like a cudgel.

The Soviet Union yoked together dreamers and strongmen—those who believed in an egalitarian ideal and those who pushed for an even more powerful state. The new Russia is a cynical operation, where perpetual fear and war are fueled by a web of lies, as television presenters peddle the invasion of Ukraine and goad Putin to go nuclear. Twenty-five years after the Soviet flag came down over the Kremlin, Russia and America are again heading toward a confrontation—but this course was far from inevitable. With this riveting account of how we got here—of the many mistakes and false promises—Ostrovsky emerges as Russia's most gifted chronicler.

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