



BOOK REVIEW:

Fainberg, Dina. *Cold War Correspondents: Soviet and American Reporters on the Ideological Frontlines*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2021. 376 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1421438443

The Cold War of the Twenty-First Century is widely used to describe the rising conflict between the United States and China. At the global level, China obviously represents the only viable challenge to US domination, and US President Joseph Biden is describing the war in terms of a clash between democracy and authoritarianism. Apart from the problematic and oxymoronic images that such language conjures up, the truth is frequently the first casualty in such fights. For David Engerman the Cold War was a “battle of ideas” between American liberal capitalism and Soviet socialism. Both countries associated their ideologies with universality and modernity and ascribed a special mission to themselves; a mission that remained incomplete as long as the other state existed. All aspects of life, including the press were mobilized in the struggle. Dina Fainberg’s *Cold War Correspondents: Soviet and American Reporters on the Ideological Frontlines* explores the communications and mass media aspects of the Cold War. The book is based on material gathered from Soviet correspondents in the United States and from American correspondents in Moscow.

The book is divided into four sections. Each one delves into a distinct era of the Cold War. The first section focuses on the earliest stages of the worldwide ideological clash between 1945 and 1953, as well as how journalists in both nations viewed the conflict. Fainberg adds that the phrase “Cold War” was first used by journalists in neither the United States nor the Soviet Union. The active weapons race, Moscow’s accomplishment in launching a satellite, and the ambition of the economically and socially trailing USSR to surpass America are all discussed in the second section. The memoirs and work of American and Soviet journalists during the Vietnam and Afghanistan wars are the subject of the third section. The fourth section discusses the perestroika strategy of Mikhail Gorbachev, which prompted a profound paradigm shift in journalistic work in both the United States and the Soviet Union.

The first part of the book focuses on the early stages of the Cold War, from 1945 to 1953, and the perspectives of journalists on both sides. The armaments competition and Soviet aspirations to economically surpass

the United States are discussed in the second half. The third part is dedicated to journalists' memoirs during the Vietnamese and Afghan wars. Perestroika's impact on journalism is discussed in the last section. The book demonstrates that the disparity between American and Soviet reporting stemmed from how people from all areas of life saw the other country. The reporting shaped the image of the other in popular perception (2). Fainberg argues that "foreign correspondents were keen analysts who aspired to understand their host country, at the same time; they were fundamentally shaped by their cultural and institutional backgrounds" (3-4). She points out that both sides claimed to be keeper of the truth and criticized the opposing viewpoint as "lies, disinformation, and propaganda." Governments on both sides acquired an interest in the power of mass media in discrediting their rivals and bringing their perspective "to the masses at home and abroad" (11). The author argues that the reporting on both sides increased tensions, and that "[I]nternational reporting quickly reacted to the rising tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States and the two countries' growing sense of disadvantage vis-à-vis the rival's propaganda" (11).

The author describes the first visit of Soviet journalists to America in April 1946, when Konstantin Simonov, Ilya Ehrenburg, and Mikhail Galaktionov were among the Soviet delegation. Simonov was under the impression that their "instructions came directly from Stalin" (18), thereby confirming the argument that the political leadership paid close watch

over journalism. Another interview described the October 31st, 1985 visit to the White House's Oval Office by Gennadii Shishkin (TASS), Stanislav Kondrashov (Izvestiia), Genrikh Borovik (Novosti), and Vsevolod Ovchinnikov (Pravda), to interview President Reagan. The author notes that Kondrashov reflected on the highly charged atmosphere of the Oval Office in his diary. He also noted that Reagan acted "like a Superman-Buddha, handling even the most difficult questions in a clear and relaxed fashion" (227). The propaganda machine of the Soviet Union is thoroughly explained in this book. The function of reporters was enlarged under Perestroika and Glasnost, and this tendency continued between 1985 and 1991. The journalists concocted a story that depicted the conclusion of the Cold War (229). Anyone interested in the Cold War and its journalism, particularly US academics interested in dissecting current conflict narratives including the People's Republic of China, should read this book to gain a better understanding of the processes of "truth making" in the pre-internet media.

Correspondents attended all periods of the Cold War, according to the author, and they were a mirror of bilateral ties. It is worth noting that journalists' importance grew after 1985, when perestroika began and, in reality, the Cold War ended. Cold War correspondents—journalists who covered the other side before 1985—played an active role in this process. Between 1985 and 1991, these journalists were more crucial in shaping the story of a dissolving superpower rivalry and the end of the Cold War (229).

Dina Fainberg's book deserves special attention from all those who research and are interested in the history of the Cold War, propaganda, and world journalism. Despite minor flaws and the boldness of individual hypotheses, the monograph is a qualitative scientific, historical study.

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