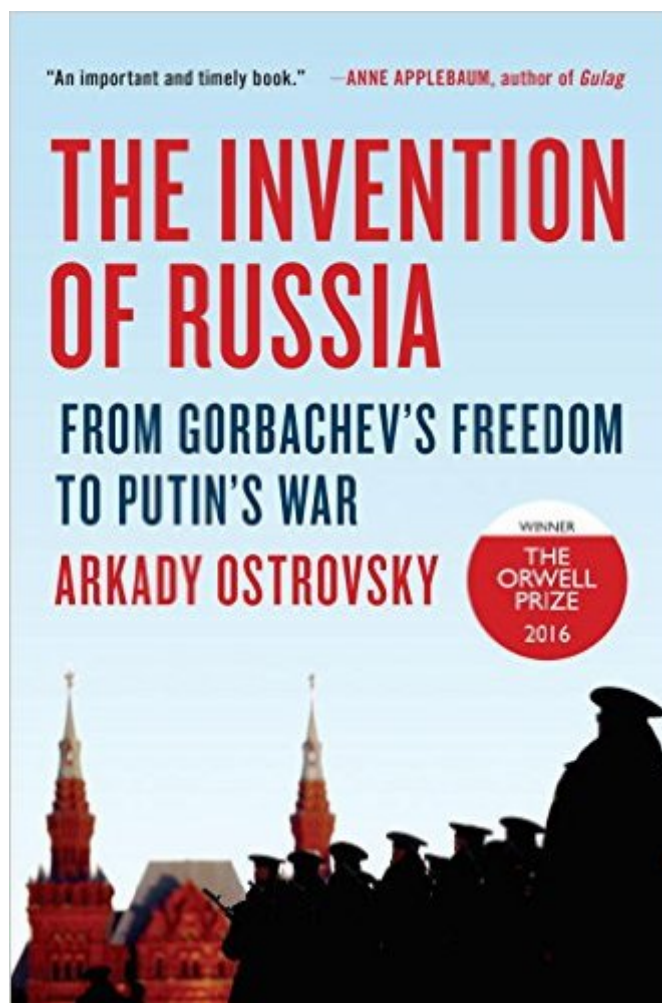


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# The Invention Of Russia: From Gorbachev's Freedom To Putin's War



## Synopsis

WINNER OF THE 2016 ORWELL PRIZE FINANCIAL TIMES BOOK OF THE YEAR • Fast-paced and excellently written • A much needed, dispassionate and eminently readable explanation... • "The New York Times" • "[A] bold new book" • "[filled with] sparkling prose and deep analysis." • "The Wall Street Journal" • A highly original narrative history by The Economist's Moscow bureau chief • The breakup of the Soviet Union was a time of optimism around the world, but Russia today is actively involved in subversive information warfare, manipulating the media to destabilize its enemies. How did a country that embraced freedom and market reform 25 years ago end up as an autocratic police state bent once again on confrontation with America? A winner of the Orwell Prize, *The Invention of Russia* reaches back to the darkest days of the cold war to tell the story of Russia's stealthy and largely unchronicled counter revolution. A highly regarded Moscow correspondent for the Economist, Arkady Ostrovsky comes to this story both as a participant and a foreign correspondent. His knowledge of many of the key players allows him to explain the phenomenon of Vladimir Putin - his rise and astonishing longevity, his use of hybrid warfare and the alarming crescendo of his military interventions. One of Putin's first acts was to reverse Gorbachev's decision to end media censorship and Ostrovsky argues that the Russian media has done more to shape the fate of the country than its politicians. Putin pioneered a new form of demagogic populism --oblivious to facts and dangerously manipulative - that has now been embraced by Donald Trump.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Overall this was a very interesting and informative work that details the transition from the final years of the USSR to the rise of Putin. Ostrovsky takes a unique approach in examining the role of the media throughout the evolution of Russian politics. As with most works involving Russian history/politics/literature there are a great deal of potentially confusing names, such as two prominent but unrelated figures named Yakovlev, but there is a handy *Dramatis Personae* outlining a who's who of Russian politicians, oligarchs, and media personnel. As for the content, the work starts with an interesting overview of Soviet media, focusing on Khrushchev's thaw before branching out into Perestroika, its leading figures, their goals, and the consequences of Gorbachev's government. The 1990s are where Ostrovsky's work shines, highlighting Russia's attempt to transition from an Authoritarian Socialist state to a liberal democracy. Ostrovsky helps his read sift through this tumultuous period as Oligarchs, Journalists, and Politicians battle for the soul of Russia. The last third of the book dealing with Putin's presidency is a bit lacking. Instead of delving in depth into events it's mostly an overview of over a decade and a half of Putin's regime. For example the action film *Brat 2* seemed to get about as much coverage as the Russian invasion of Georgia. However, this section was still good at piecing together the various themes across Russian political history. Overall, I was quite pleased with the book and will look into Ostrovsky's other works. I received this book for free through Goodreads Giveaways, which I believe covers the legal necessities.

The Wall fell at the beginning of my sophomore year at Purdue. A political science student, this was an amazing time to live. My now-wife and I made it to Check Point Charlie in less-than a year - was cool to get there: celebrate, speak with my new brothers. It was reassuring that the US government had it right and due to the strong leadership of Ronald Reagan and the reasonable gentlemen from the USSR, everything was going to work out fine. Well folks, there is always more to the story and this book, especially the final chapters, tells a roller coaster back story that all politicians can relate to. While horrifying to me, there is an appreciable quality in recognizing the Russian struggles in their climb to democracy (Gangs of NY come to mind). I think I'm more optimistic than the author, as I put great faith in rational actors, but as the book capably paints, these guys are all over the map! As a first-time reader of so many Russian names and terms, the "*Dramatis personae*" was greatly appreciated. If a reprint is requested, and I hope it is, some maps and pictures would be very helpful. Five stars because I actually finished the book.

"Author, Arkady Ostrovsky is a Russian-born journalist who has spent 15 years reporting from

Moscow, first for the Financial Times and then as bureau chief for The Economist.....(from book cover) Arkady Ostrovsky proposes the answer to the question What happened to the promise of the late 80's and early 90's Russia? Parameters like foreign affairs, politics and economy do not give the complete narrative. Media was seen as a "prism for Russia's post Soviet transformation." Ideologues and oligarchical activity promoted words, ideas and images that often conflicted with actual reality. The television literally came first and reformation of country was to follow. Reading, you'll see how oligarchs, ideologues and television rebuilt Russia. Acknowledgments, notes, "dramatis personae" and bibliography are extensive. I found Ostrovsky's chronicle to be a clear explanation of the fall of the Soviet Union and the rise of Vladimir Putin. 5 stars... (I received this book as a Goodreads giveaway)

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