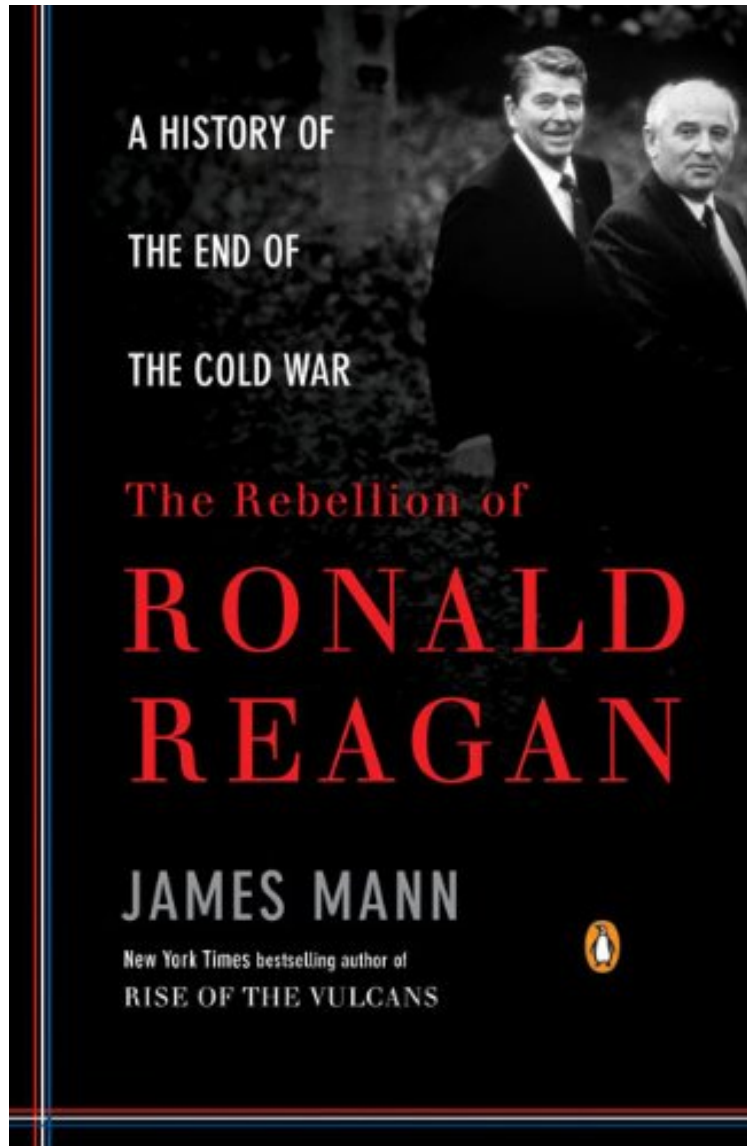


(Free pdf) The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan: A History of the End of the Cold War

The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan: A History of the End of the Cold War

James Mann

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James Mann : The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan: A History of the End of the Cold War before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan: A History of the End of the Cold War:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Game, Set, MatchBy Etienne RPOddly enough, James Mann's short

bio on the opening page of *The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan* mentions that "his tennis remains mediocre." Perhaps; but what the author lacks in tennis skills, he compensates in intellectual brilliance. To use the court tennis metaphor, Mann knows how to pick a partner; how to deliver a series of aces; and how to play the game by alternating short volleys and hard baseline shots. His book is as entertaining as a Roland Garros final. The endgame he describes--how Ronald Reagan singlehandedly inflected the course of history by reorienting US's relationship with the Soviet Union--concludes with the referee proclaiming the end of the Cold War: game, set, match. And the winner of the tournament is not the one you would expect, although the two opponents are commended for their fair play and elegant gamesmanship. James Mann devoted his other books to the US-China relationship and to foreign policy-making at the White House (from *The Vulcans* to *The Obamians*). These were interventions into contemporary public debates and pressing political issues, for which the dust of history hasn't yet settled. By contrast, *The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan* is a history book, written after the main character passed away, and based on archival work and oral history recollection. But it is written with the style and alacrity of a media reportage, and it includes many of the skills and techniques that the author used in his previous books. James Mann conducted interviews with more than one hundred key players and witnesses, including former heads of states and White House staff. He did extended fact-checking, requesting some pieces of archival evidence obtained under the Freedom of Information Act. And he structured his narrative around symbolic junctures: Nixon's stealth visit to the White House in April 1987; Reagan's consultations with an informal adviser on Russian affairs; the Berlin speech pronounced in front of the Brandenburg Gate; and the summitry that cemented the relationship between Reagan and Gorbachev. As the author notes, he is "always astonished to discover how interviews produce more information, more detail, and more insight than is on the historical record." It doesn't mean he buys at face value everything his interlocutors recollect from their memory. Testimonies should be taken with a pinch of salt. For instance, former secretary of state George Shultz declared in an interview to the author that he didn't recall opposing to the inclusion of the famous line: "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" in the speech that Reagan pronounced on June 12, 1987, standing in front of the Brandenburg Gate and the Berlin Wall. In his memoirs, he did not mention the speech at all. The speech nonetheless became an enduring symbol of the Reagan presidency. It captured everything Reagan stood for: his optimism; his belief in the transformational power of freedom; and his unwillingness to accept the permanence of the East-West divide. The speechwriter of the Berlin speech, who meticulously collected background material and included direct observations and quotes in his draft, similarly testified that State Department officials had warned him to stay away from the subject of the Berlin Wall. In fact, the Berlin embassy's competing draft did include reference to the wall and called it to be destroyed, although not as a direct appeal to the Soviet leader. Reagan's famous exhortation to "tear down this wall" was, until the very last moment, the object of an epic struggle within the administration, pitting Reagan's domestic advisers and speechwriters against his foreign policy teams. In the end, history remembered only this single sentence, and completely forgot the "Berlin Initiative" that, in the eyes of the State Department, was the most substantive part of the address. Allying the skills of the historian with the curiosity of the journalist, James Mann had the simple but powerful idea of checking into Reagan's schedule of meetings in the Oval Office. This is how he measured the influence of an unlikely adviser on Russian affairs, who spoke to the president on more than twenty occasions. Suzanne Massie, a Russian-speaking, fifty-year old woman who wrote sentimental essays about the Russian soul, wasn't part of the foreign policy establishment. But she had the ear of the president, who liked her informal style and who used her for back-channel diplomacy missions. What Massie knew, and CIA experts on the Soviet Union didn't, was how to tell a story. She imparted on him her fascination for a timeless Russia, whose culture and religious traditions were still alive below the Soviet veneer. As James Mann portrayed him, Reagan was a rebel with a cause. What he rebelled against was the forces and ideas that had made the Cold War seem endless and untractable. He believed in the better angels of our nature, and was willing to bet on the reformist orientation of Gorbachev by offering the breathing space he needed to fend off his opponents. The Cold War, in Reagan's terms, was not primarily a foreign-policy struggle, but a moral one. By contrast, Nixon and Kissinger shared a basic "realpolitik" approach to diplomacy, centered on the national interest and the balance of powers. Die-hard conservatives, for their part, believed in the intrinsic evil of the Soviet system, and warned that Gorbachev represented merely a new face for the same old totalitarian policies. At critical junctures during his second term, Mann shows both the political right and the foreign-policy realists were against Reagan. The personal element also stands out in this biography. One point is of particular interest to this reviewer: foreign languages. The Great Communicator was a master of the spoken word, but he wasn't known for his fluency in languages other than English. He seemed to hold a particular grudge against French words. Under his leadership, the White House replaced "communiqués" with "agreed statements," and "tête-à-tête meetings" with "one-on-ones". The word "détente", or the policy to seek accommodation with the Soviet, elicited a strong reaction, both because Reagan opposed the notion but also perhaps because he found the French word obscure and conceited. "Détente--isn't that what a farmer has with his turkey--before Thanksgiving?" he concluded a radio fireside chat. His speechwriters somehow shared this anti-gallic bias: under their pen, the phrase "fait accompli" was once turned into a kind of Greek cheese: "feta compli". German had more favour with the US president. He once greeted the Berlin mayor with the words: "Haben Sie einen Streichholz" (the German for: "Do you have a match?"), a phrase he had learned from a

German actress during his days in Hollywood. He burst into laughter when he discovered that the German words for entrance and exit were "Einfahrt" and "Ausfahrt"--this became the source for a series of "fahrt" jokes. His Berlin speech, pronounced in June 12, 1987, was carefully drafted. Reagan avoided repeating Kennedy's famous "Ich bin ein Berliner," introducing instead an English paraphrase: "Every man is a Berliner." But his speech included several expressions in German: from the word "Wirtschaftswunder," or economic miracle, to the expression "Es gibt nur ein Berlin," and to a reference to a Marlene Dietrich's song: "Ich hab' noch einen Koffer in Berlin." But perhaps Reagan's most-often used foreign expression was the Russian: "Doveryai no proveryai", meaning: "trust, but verify". He learned it from his informal advisor on Russian affairs, Suzanne Massie, and kept repeating it at every occasion, to Gorbachev's considerable annoyance. Gorbachev got used to Reagan's proclivities and, knowing his evangelical penchants, even served him a quotation from the Bible during their first meeting, which made his interlocutor attempt to appeal for his religious soul--in fact, the Soviet leader was not religious, and was startled when the U.S. president attempted to convince him of the existence of God. Reagan did not memorize any other Russian phrase, except maybe for the words "glasnost" and "perestroika". But he had a collection of Soviet jokes, which he brought about during informal conversations or even at summit meetings, causing consternation among his aides. Here is a good one: it is the story of the Moscow resident who purchased a car and was told by the salesman that it would be ready on a specific date a quarter century later. "Morning or afternoon?" the customer asked. "Why does it matter for a date so far away?" the salesman wondered. "Because the plumber is coming in the morning." In repeating these old jokes, without glossing over Reagan's political aloofness and immature pranks, James Mann gives a human face to the fortieth president.⁶¹ of 64 people found the following review helpful. A Well Researched Thesis By R. Bono I found the thesis of this book to ring true. The idea that Reagan on his own, came to conclusions at variance, with both his conservative base, and the "realist" school that included Nixon, Kissinger, and Snowcroft, has been repressed on both sides of the American political divide, for different reasons. Some like to think of Ronald Reagan as either a rigid and narrow-minded, ideological Cold Warrior, in the school of Joe McCarthy...or, a conservative, neo-con, cowboy-saint, who single-handedly, won the Cold War by forcing the Soviets to capitulate in the face of our arms build-up, our Pershing missile deployment, and our moral vigor. James Mann explodes both these misconceptions. His thesis is that eventually, Reagan saw in Mikhail Gorbachev...as good hearted man of flexible mind...and crucially, as man with whom he could negotiate. Reagan was aided in this effort by an extraordinary woman...a writer, with good contacts within the Soviet Union, and whom Reagan personally trusted to send and receive messages and overtures...as well as report her observations. In fact, he trusted this woman more than his conservative political base, and more than George Schultz and his own State Department. It's an extraordinary story of the personal diplomacy of "trusting, but verifying". Mann documents that Reagan's real role was, in first understanding Gorbachev's internal political position, and responding to it in such a way as not to undermine the Kremlin politics that kept him on top. The fact that Reagan's arms build-up, in a way, actually helped to propel Gorbachev into power, is intriguing, for as Andropov's intelligence protege, he was trusted on security issues by the Soviet military and political establishment. This was particularly important for progress on the IMF treaty, so vehemently opposed by Reagan's right wing...the up-and-coming American neo-cons. Mann sees Reagan deftly acting in ways to respect and support his "enemy"...who eventually became his colleague in ending the Cold War. I even see an element of Gandhi's non-violent opposition, in this highly counter-intuitive idea of supporting one's opponent. I think Mann convinces the reader that, in the end, it was Gorbachev's central role, in desiring a European Russia...who ABANDONED the Cold War...not Reagan who FORCED its ending. But Mann is most clear that Reagan was quite instrumental in making it politically possible for him to do so. This was, without doubt, a HUGE contribution to the success of peace, and the nearly bloodless transformation and normalization of Europe. Ronald Reagan deserves the credit he's accorded as a first class diplomat..but Mann's script for how he achieved this, is different from the usual dogma of either the American right, or the American left...or, for that matter, the genetically critical Euro left. Mann's thesis is quite believable to me....and I think this well documented history should have nothing but a beneficial effect, upon the highly contentious partisanship we've seen in America, since Reagan and Gorbachev left the world stage. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Reagan in a different light By J. Scott Shipman Mr. Mann delivers an interesting perspective on the mechanics of Ronald Reagan's Soviet foreign policy. Using four separate themes, Mann describes how Reagan ostensibly parted company with many on the right to bring about the end of the Soviet Union. Mann covers the Nixon-Reagan relationship (perhaps the best part of the book), the role of Reagan's informal advisor/diplomat Suzanne Massie, the Berlin Wall speech, and the summits in highlighting the complexity of US-Soviet relations from 1980-88. If you've read Mann's excellent *The Rise of the Vulcans*, you will probably enjoy this title. Mann's writing style is engaging and it would be accurate to call this title a page-turner if you're interested in Reagan's presidency. Highly recommended.

A controversial look at Reagan's role in ending the Cold War- from the author of *The New York Times* bestseller *Rise of the Vulcans* In his surprising new book, critically lauded author James Mann trains his keen analytical eye on Ronald Reagan and the Soviet Union, shedding new light on the hidden aspects of American foreign policy. Drawing

on recent interviews and previously unavailable documents, Mann offers a new history assessing what Reagan did, and did not do, to help bring America's four-decade conflict with the U.S.S.R. to a close. Ultimately, *The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan* dispels the facile stereotypes surrounding America's fortieth president in favor of a levelheaded, cogent understanding of an often misunderstood man.

Mann is a dogged seeker after evidence and a judicious sifter of it. His verdict is convincing. The New York Times A compelling and historically significant story The Washington Post About the Author James Mann is the senior writer in residence at the CSIS International Security Program and the author of two critically acclaimed books: *About Face: A History of America's Curious Relationship with China from Nixon to Clinton* and *Beijing Jeep*. Previously, he was a long-time correspondent with the Los Angeles Times, and his writing has also appeared in *The New Republic* and *The Atlantic Monthly*. From The Washington Post From The Washington Post's Book World/washingtonpost.com ed by Ronald Steel Are the great questions of war and peace, victory and failure, too important to be left to the experts? This is the question posed decades ago by David Halberstam in "The Best and the Brightest," his landmark study of the Vietnam War. And it is one provocatively raised by James Mann in this revealing inquiry into the role played by Ronald Reagan in the fall of communism and the end of the Cold War. In his previous book, "Rise of the Vulcans," Mann subjected George W. Bush's inner circle of war planners to critical scrutiny. Here he turns back the page to an earlier Republican president, elected as a fierce opponent of communism, who in his second term challenged "the forces and ideas that had made the Cold War seem endless and intractable." Reagan's rebellion, in Mann's engrossing account, entailed viewing with guarded hope, rather than with cynicism, the efforts of Mikhail Gorbachev to liberalize the internal structure of the Soviet state and transform Moscow's relations with its empire and its adversaries. Responding to Gorbachev's initiatives, Reagan found himself, Mann relates, at odds with his political base within the Republican party, with much of his own national security bureaucracy and with both Richard Nixon and former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. In Reagan's "rebellion," two schools of foreign policy struggled for dominance. On one side were the "realists," who believed that the behavior of states was dominated by the struggle for power and that the contest would continue interminably and without quarter until one side or the other accepted total defeat. Reagan, however, in Mann's view, believed that the Cold War rested less on the weight of armies and weapons than on the struggle of ideas and political values. In the relatively youthful Gorbachev, who came to power in 1985 after the death in office of four Soviet leaders in as many years, he found a different kind of adversary -- one who spoke of social reform at home and of reversing the decades-long arms race with the United States. During their first summit encounter -- at Reykjavik, Iceland, in October 1986 -- the two leaders came remarkably close to an accord not merely to reduce, but actually to scrap much of their missile forces. This astonishing proposal failed largely because Reagan insisted on pursuing his effort to build an anti-missile arsenal known to skeptics as "Star Wars." Today, more than 20 years and billions of dollars later, that project remains more dream than reality -- but a lucrative one, still producing juicy pork for what Dwight Eisenhower labeled the "military-industrial complex." The intriguing question is why Reagan, who had won the presidency twice by denouncing communism as a force of evil, was so receptive to Gorbachev. Mann attributes this largely to the influence of an American cultural historian named Suzanne Massie. Enamored of the "soul" of ancient Russia rather than with machinations in the Kremlin, she became Reagan's unofficial adviser. To the dismay of his foreign policy team, Reagan met with her more than 20 times in the White House and used her as his personal messenger to Gorbachev, bypassing his own official advisers. In the face of intense opposition to his overtures to Moscow from Nixon and Kissinger, as well as the Republican punditry, Reagan employed political rhetoric to secure his base. A generation after JFK stood at the Brandenburg Gate, Reagan went there in June 1987 with a message of his own: "Tear down this wall." In fact, by that time the wall was already being undermined by Gorbachev himself, who had made clear to Russia's satellite regimes in Eastern Europe that they could not count on the Red Army to protect them against their own people. Reagan's speech, which Mann follows in considerable detail, was pure theater. But it fortified his position with Senate Republicans, whose support he and Secretary of State George Shultz needed to push through a treaty with Moscow banning medium-range nuclear missiles. Two years later, on Nov. 11, 1989, the Berlin Wall came down as Gorbachev allowed the East German regime to collapse. Soon the two Germanies were united. And in 1991 the Soviet Communist Party disintegrated and with it ultimately the Soviet Union itself. Did Reagan make it happen? This would be too strong, Mann insists. The Cold War ended largely because Gorbachev "had abandoned the field." But by supporting Gorbachev at the right time, even in the face of intense opposition from within his own party, Reagan had "helped create the climate in which the Cold War could end." Mann is wise not to overdo Reagan's role. In addition to whatever contribution Reagan may have made, the Soviet Union was brought down by the immense economic strain of the Cold War and the futile and demoralizing war in Afghanistan. (This is a lesson that Barack Obama, prodded increasingly by key advisers into his own Afghan morass, would do well to ponder.) In fashioning a compelling and historically significant story, Mann has cast new light both on Reagan and on the strange ending of a decades-long conflict between two great imperial powers that somehow, through skill and fear and plain dumb luck, never degenerated into a war that would have destroyed them both. With this book, following John Patrick Diggins's landmark study "Ronald Reagan: Fate, Freedom, and the

Making of History" (2007), Reagan revisionism has truly begun in earnest. Copyright 2009, The Washington Post. All Rights Reserved.