

# Anglo-American Discourse About the USSR, 1984-1986.

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## Abstract

This thesis examines mainstream discourses about the Soviet Union in the United States and United Kingdom from 1984 to 1986. For more than 50 years, the Soviet Union presented an alternate image of modernity to that pursued by the USA and the UK. The Soviet Union was one of the great 'Others' against which the West, along with liberalism and democracy, could be defined. When commentators began to describe the Soviet Union as changing in the 1980s, this had far-reaching implications. As such, this thesis asks how the events of the 1980s, especially the rise of Gorbachev, were explained and discursively interpreted. Which discourses changed, and which ones remained the same? How were new events used to justify or disrupt traditional narratives about the USSR, which were themselves grounded in traditional narratives about Russia?

More specifically, this thesis addresses the ways in which important political figures and journalists changed or reinforced the ways that they described the world. An important part of this is understanding the place that Gorbachev occupied in Anglo-American discourse: did he challenge criticisms of the USSR or did he reinforce them, and was he reconceptualised by these discursive actors for the sake of maintaining the consistency of their discourses? It is also necessary to elaborate key narratives about the Soviet Union that had existed since the earliest meetings between the British and Russians, and demonstrate the way in which discourses about the USSR never truly departed from these frameworks. These topics have significance not just for understanding Anglo-American self-image, but also the nature of the late Cold War and the ways we attempt to make Eastern Europe explicable in the twenty-first century.

I approach these discourses through a study of political and newspaper commentary. Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher are key figures whose discourse makes for strong case studies in both change and resilience. I also consider significant journalists, including foreign correspondents and political columnists like William Safire, Ian Davidson, and Martin Walker.

The sources that I use are those considered public. They were intended for widespread and open consumption. Above all, I analyse articles which discuss the USSR in several prominent newspapers: *The Times*, the *Guardian*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Financial Times*. I also use speeches by, and interviews with, Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. As far as is practical, I approach these sources in a

systematic fashion. The purpose of this is to demonstrate the existence and evolution of certain discourses, not to present a comprehensive picture of everything that was said about the USSR in this period.

## Declaration

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

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## List of Abbreviations

ABM	Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (1972)
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CDM	Critical Discourse Moment
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CL	Critical Linguistics
CPD	Committee on the Present Danger
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
<i>FT</i>	<i>Financial Times</i>
G7	Group of Seven
GDR	German Democratic Republic
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IBM	Intercontinental Ballistic Missile
INF	Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (1987)
IR	International Relations
KAL 007	Korean Airlines Flight 007
MAD	Mutual Assured Destruction
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NSC	National Security Council
<i>NYT</i>	<i>New York Times</i>
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UPI	United Press International
US	United States
USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
SALT II	Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (1979)
SDI	Strategic Defense Initiative
TASS	Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union
TMI	Three Mile Island (nuclear accident)
<i>WP</i>	<i>Washington Post</i>
<i>WSJ</i>	<i>Wall Street Journal</i>

## Notes

Because most of the primary sources used in this thesis were accessed online, either through databases or on the websites of various newspapers, my citations contain many URLs. For ease of reading, I have not included URLs in footnotes. They are, however, included in the bibliography where relevant. Citations of newspaper articles accessed through databases are instead followed by the database through which they were accessed: Factiva, Periodicals Archive Online, or ProQuest Historical Newspapers. Speeches are identified by the date on which they were given and the website through which they were accessed. Other websites are identified as such by noting of the date on which they were accessed. For example: 'About the Public Papers of President Ronald Reagan', *Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum*, accessed 9 June 2016.