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David S. Foglesong
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# The American Mission and the "Evil Empire"

David Foglesong tells the fascinating story of American efforts to liberate and remake Russia since the 1880s. He analyzes the involvement of journalists, political activists, propagandists, missionaries, diplomats, engineers, and others in this grand crusade, with special attention to the influence of religious beliefs on Americans' sense of duty to emancipate, convert, or reform Russia. He discusses the impact of popular debates about changing Russia on how Americans felt about the United States, showing how the belief that Russia was being remade in America's image reaffirmed faith in America's special virtue and historic mission. He also demonstrates that, since the late nineteenth century, opposition to the spread of American influence in Russia has been characterized as evil. While the main focus is on American thinking and action, the book also discusses the responses of Russian and Soviet governments, Russian Orthodox priests, and ordinary Russians to American propaganda campaigns, missionary work, and popular culture.

David S. Foglesong is Associate Professor of History at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey. He is the author of *America's Secret War Against Bolshevism: U.S. Intervention in the Russian Civil War, 1917–1920* (1995).

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More information

# Contents

*List of illustrations* *page* vi
*Preface* ix

Introduction 1

1 "Free Russia": origins of the first crusade, 1881–1905 7

2 "The United States of Russia": culmination and frustration, 1905–20 34

3 Doors opened and closed: opportunities and obstructions in early Soviet Russia, 1921–40 60

4 Revival: hopes for a new Russia during the Grand Alliance, 1941–45 83

5 Visions of "liberation," 1945–53 107

6 Evolution, not revolution: the eclipse of "liberation" and the pursuit of "liberalization," 1954–74 129

7 Recovering the faith: renewal of the crusade, 1974–80 155

8 The Reagan mission and the "evil empire," 1981–89 174

9 Mission unaccomplished: America and post-Soviet Russia 196

Epilogue 219

*Notes* 230
*Bibliography* 310
*Index* 344



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More information

# Illustrations

1. Alexander II as a Christian crusader at the time of the Russo-Turkish War. Thomas Nast cartoon, *Harper's Weekly*, May 26, 1877. *page* 8
2. The Devil tips his hat to immigrants plotting assassination. *The Judge*, February 21, 1885. 9
3. "The remedy is worse than the evil. Will it not be the *cap* instead of the *crown* that is buried with him?" Thomas Nast cartoon in *Harper's Weekly*, April 2, 1881. 13
4. "Not a Beauty Spot." *Life*, May 8, 1890. 22
5. "Europe: 'Shocking, isn't it?' Uncle Sam: 'Quite.' *Chicago News* cartoon reprinted in *Public Opinion*, May 28, 1903. 29
6. "More Light Needed in Russia, the Country that Would Like to Rule the Rest of the World." *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 16, 1903. 30
7. "The Dawn of a New Day for Russia." Columbus *Evening Dispatch*, November 1, 1905. 32
8. "Open Doors to All the World." *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, June 25, 1914. 46
9. "The flock of Christ and the devouring wolves." Cartoon from a Russian Orthodox Church pamphlet, "Stoite v vere!" (Stay in the faith!), first published in 1911. 47
10. "Welcome Russia." Broughton cartoon in *Life*, May 10, 1917. 51
11. "A Light That Will Never Fail!" Cartoon by Cargill in the Kansas City *Journal Post*. Reprinted in *The Literary Digest*, April 14, 1923. 63
12. Title page of *In Place of Profit: Social Incentives in the Soviet Union*, by Harry F. Ward. Drawing by Lynd Ward. New York, 1933. Reprinted with the permission of Scribner, an imprint of Simon & Schuster Adult Publishing Group, from *In Place of Profit* by Harry F. Ward. Copyright 1933



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Frontmatter
More information



by Harry F. Ward; copyright renewed 1961 by Harry F. Ward. All rights reserved. 73
13. "Russia's Patriarch Sergei. God sits in the corner – but waits." Artzybasheff cover for *Time*, December 27, 1943. 84
14. "The Blackguard at the Altar." Cartoon by Parrish in the Chicago *Tribune*, October 3, 1941. 88
15. "Preview of the War We Do Not Want. Russia's Defeat and Occupation 1952–1960." *Collier's*, October 27, 1951. Image by Richard Deane Taylor. 108
16. "Would You Kindly Have Her Crouch Down – That Light Bothers Our Patients." Cartoon by Herblock. *Washington Post*, March 4, 1977. 165
17. "Onward Christian Soldiers." Cartoon by Tony Auth. *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 10, 1983. 184

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# Preface

The first inspiration for this book came in the summer of 1993, when Valery, my host in Moscow, took me on a boating excursion to the river and canal north of the city. Valery and his friend Boris had "privatized" a small sailboat from their economics institute, but they had not quite figured out how to set the sails and they did not bring gasoline for the outboard motor. As a result, we relied on wiggling the rudder periodically for propulsion and drifted slowly along the river and canal. But that was all right because it was a splendid sunny day and we were in no hurry. Drinking vodka flavored at home with berries, we talked about the history of Russia, including the use of convict labor on major construction projects such as canals. Valery believed that his father had worked on the digging of a canal, but he was not sure because his father had been arrested soon after he was born and never returned.

In the late afternoon, Valery and Boris dropped me off at a dock where I could get a ride back to Moscow on a hydrofoil. Not long after they floated away downstream to meet friends and party through the night, the *raketa* ("rocket") arrived. As the hydrofoil raced against the current, spraying water to its sides, I met a fellow American named Chris, who was wearing dark glasses and an orange T-shirt. A Pentecostal missionary from Florida, Chris was scouting the prospect of a hydrofoil excursion for members of his growing congregation. Giving me a lift in his car into downtown Moscow, Chris told me stories of Russians who soon after their conversion suddenly achieved success and wealth in their long frustrated quests for high-profile careers.

That day in Moscow – at a time when many Americans were still acclaiming the "transition" of the former "evil empire" from communism to democracy and a market economy – left me with an intuitive sense that the Russian and American ships actually were not headed toward the same destination. It also spurred a growing interest in investigating the long-term origins of the protean American drives to transform Russia.

Thanks to a grant from the International Research and Exchanges Board and a fellowship from the Hoover Institution, I began research on



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this project in 1995–6. Ten years later, it is a pleasure finally to be able to thank all those who helped me to understand how Americans have thought about liberating and remaking Russia, especially: Michael Adas, James Critchlow, Alan Cullison, Richard T. Davies, David Engerman, Todd Foglesong, Lloyd Gardner, Ziva Galili, Alexei Guz, Gordon Hahn, Bert Haloviak, Walter Hixson, Dianne Kirby, Dan Linke, Victor Malkov, Greg Mitrovich, Karl Morrison, Bill O'Neill, L. Dale Patterson, Stanley Rabinowitz, Norman Saul, Katie Sibley, Tomas Tolvaisas, Robert Whittaker, Ted Wilson, Vika Zhuravleva, and Valery Zotov. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Gerald R. Ford Foundation and the Rutgers Research Council for research travel grants.

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