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978-1-107-03139-5 - Symbolism and Regime Change in Russia

Graeme Gill

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## Symbolism and Regime Change in Russia

During the Soviet period, political symbolism developed into a coherent narrative that underpinned Soviet political development. Following the collapse of the Soviet regime and its widespread rejection by the Russian people, a new form of narrative was needed, one which both explained the state of existing society and gave a sense of its direction. By examining the imagery contained in presidential addresses, the political system, the public sphere and the urban development of Moscow, Graeme Gill shows how no single coherent symbolic programme has emerged to replace that of the Soviet period. Laying particular emphasis on the Soviet legacy, and especially on the figure of Stalin, *Symbolism and Regime Change in Russia* explains why it has been so difficult to generate a new set of symbols which could constitute a coherent narrative for the new Russia.

GRAEME GILL is Professor of Government and Public Administration at the University of Sydney, and a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia.

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## Preface

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This book is a sequel to *Symbols and Legitimacy in Soviet Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 2011). It continues the story from where the earlier book ended in 1991 through until 2011, charting the attempts by the political elite to design a narrative that would help explain the Soviet fall and provide a basis for the future development of the Russian polity. The focus has shifted somewhat from the earlier volume, reflecting the reality of the different political systems with which each book has had to deal: the non-totalist nature of contemporary Russia means that the inclusion of artwork in the earlier analysis would be much less relevant for this one. Nevertheless, together these books provide a comprehensive analysis of the growth and use of symbolism over the lives of the Soviet and post-Soviet regimes.

Many debts are incurred in a volume such as this. The principal one is, of course, to those scholars who have spent the past two decades studying the changing course of Russian politics. Among this group I would like particularly to identify those whose early careers were built in Soviet studies but who, with the Soviet collapse in 1991, made the transition from being what in those times were often called ‘Kremlinologists’ into being students of contemporary Russia. The historical sensitivity they bring to their work is often underestimated. This book relies heavily upon the insights and the results of the labours of many of these scholars. Efficient research assistance was provided by James Young and Anya Poukchanski, while important periods in working on this book were spent at St Antony’s College, Oxford, at the Davis Center at Harvard, and in Moscow. Financial support came from the Australian Research Council, which generously granted me an Australian Professorial Fellowship, during the tenure of which much of the work for this was completed. The Department of Government and International Relations at the University of Sydney has again provided me with a stimulating and comfortable intellectual home within which to work on this book. I would also like to thank the two anonymous reviewers whose comments have greatly improved the book. But, finally, to the one without whose support, love and all-round care this book would have been impossible, Heather, go my greatest thanks.

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