

Kennan, George F. *Russia Leaves the War*. Soviet American Relations, 1917-1920, Volume 1. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023. xxvii + 544 pages. Illustrations, maps. Paperback, \$29.95.

George Kennan (1904-2005) was an American diplomat, historian and political scientist whose influence can be felt to this day. Starting in the mid-1920s as a junior diplomat, he served in various European capitals quickly developing an interest in Russian/Soviet affairs. Later in the 1930s and 1940s he was posted to Moscow twice and then to the Department of State in Washington DC before resigning in 1950. As a diplomat, Kennan earned renown as the father of containment policy, an architect of the Marshall Plan, and a major contributor to Anglo-American Cold War cooperation. He briefly returned to diplomatic service as the American ambassador to the Soviet Union (1952) and Yugoslavia (1961-1963). Later in life he became known as one of the “Wise Men” of American foreign policy, earning the Medal of Freedom in 1989.

After his over twenty-five year diplomatic career, Kennan served as an academic at Princeton’s Institute for Advance Study where he continued his study of international relations. During his tenure there, he published 17 books and numerous articles.

Russia Leaves the War is the first subtitle of two volumes by Kennan in a work originally called *Soviet-American Relations 1917-1920*. The second, coming out two years later, *The Decision to Intervene (1958/1990)*, is also still available from Princeton University Press under its original title. *Russia Leaves the War* was so well received, it earned numerous awards including the Pulitzer Prize for History, National Book Award for Nonfiction, the George Bancroft Prize and the Francis Parkman Prize, all in 1957.

When I agreed to review this volume, I expected to find new information added to that which I had read years ago as an undergraduate. This is not the case. It is merely a reprint, having already been reissued numerous times since it first appeared in 1956 at the height of the Cold War. Nothing has changed. Everything remains exactly the same as it originally appeared almost 70

years ago. Yet, it still is a highly detailed and thoughtful work covering the time from the 1917 October Revolution to the 1918 Bolshevik decision with the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk to exit from the First World War, and American reaction to this four-month period. To attempt to write a review now after so many years, numerous awards and other reviews in scholarly journals that are easily accessible would surely prove redundant and self-serving.

The only new feature is a thirteen page foreword by Frank Costigliola, a historian at the University of Connecticut who specializes in American foreign relations and 20th century America. Princeton University Press recently published his 541-page biography of Kennan, *George F. Kennan: A Life between Worlds*. Costigliola starts by correctly stating Kennan's book "remains a riveting study of politics and personalities." (xi) He eloquently explains that Kennan wrote his book to highlight Cold War issues and how they related to Kennan's life. Hence, he linked the past with the contemporary (1950s) by showing the Bolsheviks as rigid ideologues and the Americans as inept diplomats. What is especially noteworthy, while conducting research for his biography of Kennan, Costigliola found an unpublished epilogue to *Russia Leaves the War*. Here Kennan believed that it was entirely possible to keep the Bolsheviks in the war if the American diplomats and leaders understood Marxism-Leninism and were able to negotiate respectfully on their level. If not keeping them fighting, then perhaps prevent such future horrors of Stalin and the Cold War by moderating Bolshevik totalitarianism through such understanding.

After decades, Kennan's work remains a classic. As Castigliola rightly notes in his Foreword, "Kennan's prodigious effort has stood the test of time." (xvi) It is fundamental reading for a true grasping of a complicated brief period of time that has had an enormous impact on subsequent Russian/Soviet-American relations.

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