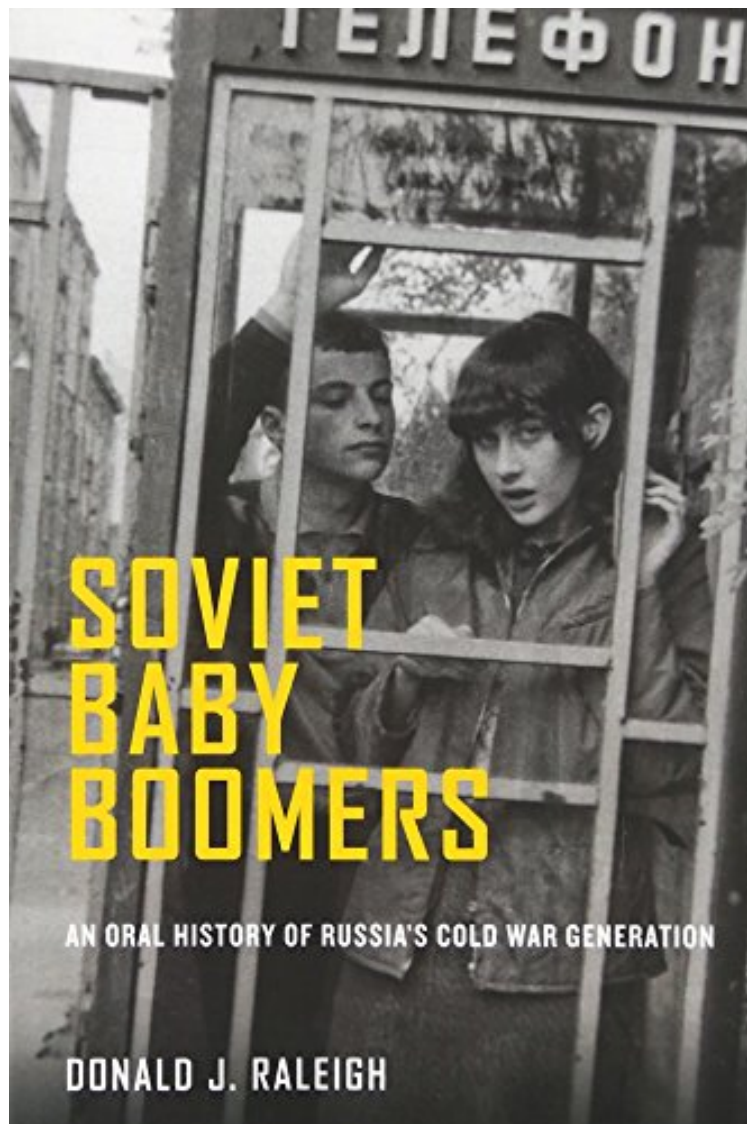


[Mobile library] Soviet Baby Boomers: An Oral History of Russia's Cold War Generation (Oxford Oral History Series)

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Donald J. Raleigh

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Donald J. Raleigh : Soviet Baby Boomers: An Oral History of Russia's Cold War Generation (Oxford Oral History Series) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Soviet Baby Boomers: An Oral History of Russia's Cold War Generation (Oxford Oral History Series):

13 of 13 people found the following review helpful. Soviet Baby Boomers: An Oral History of Russia's Cold War

GenerationBy Marina BraunAs one of the "Soviet baby-boomers" interviewed by the author, I'd been dying to see the book in print. The result of this fascinating project exceeded my expectations. For me, as it is, I'm sure, for my former classmates, it is a nostalgic trip down memory lane. For an outsider it will be an eye opener. I've lived and worked in the United States for over twenty years and I know from experience that the Americans' view of the Soviet Union is still, by and large, incomplete, at best, or distorted, at worst. Since the end of the Cold War, there appeared quite a few informative publications about the country: its economy, culture, politics, etc. But there was (until now!) a virtual vacuum of accurate information about its people. What makes this book unique is that, drawing from the conversations with numerous Soviet baby boomers, a generation born after a devastating war, it provides a rare insight into their lives, their values and aspirations. It might come as a huge surprise to some Western readers that those were formed not only by the values instilled in them by the country they were born and lived in but also by the Western world that seemingly they were shut off from by the Iron Curtain. Why and how they had access to that world, especially during the tumultuous 60's, why they enthusiastically and wholeheartedly supported Gorbachev's "perestroika" in the 80's is one of the most intriguing, in my view, parts of this amazing book. American baby-boomers are in for a follow-up surprise: despite the differences, they and their Soviet counterparts have a great deal in common. A realization that, I believe, is vital in the world we live in, the world of today and tomorrow.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Through Don, I discovered a second cousinBy Victor A. BaryFascinating exposure to my age cohort in Russia who experienced the Soviet system and its break-up. The graduates of magnate schools 20 and 42 were raised by parents who had lived through WW II and Stalin's purges and were professionals. Their parents tried their best to provide a better life for their children and to prepare them for career success within the Soviet system. Because both parents worked, in many families the Boomers were also influenced by grandparents and nannies from small villages who cared for them while the parents were at work. The first had fond memories of pre-Revolutionary Russia, and both clung to the old religion. Hard working and careerist, these Boomer succeeded at school and went into the system of guaranteed lifetime jobs. At the same time, they were being influenced by the Beatles and the bleed-through of western European radio broadcasts, and in some cases, visits to Eastern Bloc satellites where living conditions were much better than in Russia, and there was less state interference in peoples' lives. These windows, and the leg-up their command of English (superior upon their high school graduation to what was offered at the university level), prepared them to start questioning the system, and ultimately contributed to its demise. It's an interesting book, especially if you have Russian roots and/or are a Babyboomer.

We met Don Raleigh on a university alumni river cruise of Russia. I had rewritten my name on my name badge in Cyrillic letters. When Don saw it he said "Vic Bary? I just wrote a book about Soviet Baby boomers and the first woman I interviewed talked about a predecessor with the same last name who was instrumental in the 19th century industrialization of Russia." I replied, "That would be great grandfather Alexander". He got a copy of his book which had a photo of Alexander B. Bary, and I got a photo of a promotional map of Russia which had a photo of Alexander Bary. It was the same photo! Thanks to Don, I've been introduced to my second cousin in Moscow and have been in regular communication with her ever since.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Russia's Baby BoomBy Eric MayforthIt is widely known in the United States that the Baby Boom generation born right after World War II has had (and continues to have) an enormous impact on the country at each stage of its life. Much less known in this country is the fact that our fearsome adversary during much of the twentieth century, the Soviet Union, also had a baby boom at the same time, and that generation impacted Russia greatly as well. Author Donald Raleigh explores that generation of Russians in "Soviet Baby Boomers." Raleigh interviewed dozens of Soviet Boomers born around 1950 from Moscow and Saratov. The childhoods of the interviewees were during the Khrushchev years, a time of changing conditions in the USSR--the author notes both how the times shaped the Baby Boomers and how the Baby Boomers shaped the times. The author describes the family life, education, socialization, summer camps, romances, music, movies, and the covert listening to Western radio broadcasts of Soviet youth then, and describes the reaction of the interviewees to huge events of the Sixties like the Cuban Missile Crisis, the assassination of President Kennedy, and the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia. The Baby Boomers that Raleigh interviewed were from the upper strata of Soviet society, and the author notes how disillusionment with the Soviet system was widespread by the late Brezhnev years. At the time, Americans sometimes naïvely separated Russians into just two camps--fire-breathing Marxists on one hand, and on the other hand heroic dissidents, a few of whom like Alexander Jourjine bravely risked their lives attempting to escape the Soviet Union rather than continue to "live" in a "society" in which millions of innocent people were murdered by the state, in which the state attempted to inject itself into just about every area of life, and in which decisions even as consequential as what you did for a living were made for you. But vast numbers of Russians of the time, including many Baby Boomers, were neither committed Communists nor dissidents, just average people who happened to be born under a squalid regime that was conducting one of the most evil, anti-human experiments in world history and who just tried to muddle their way through a system they knew no longer worked when the stagnation of the 1970s and 1980s set in. Mikhail Gorbachev brought glasnost and perestroika in the mid-Eighties, and the Soviet Union imploded only a few years later. Raleigh offers his opinion of why the country broke up, and the Boomers tell their stories of how they (and some of their marriages) were challenged by the hard economic times that followed in the Nineties. Boris Yeltsin and

Vladimir Putin led Russia after the breakup of the USSR, and the book looks at those times and how the Boomers responded to them, and the interviewees offer their thoughts on Russia today. Perhaps the most stark commentary the interviewed Boomers made on life in their home country is the fact that an amazing one-sixth of them emigrated from Russia when they got the chance. The book closes with an appendix that describes where the interviewees are today--many of the subjects of the book led pretty interesting lives. Much examination has been done of the Baby Boomers of America--"Soviet Baby Boomers" is a worthwhile look at their same-age cohorts who were unfortunate enough to have been born in the Evil Empire.

Donald Raleigh's *Soviet Baby Boomers* traces the collapse of the Soviet Union and the transformation of Russia into a modern, highly literate, urban society through the fascinating life stories of the country's first post-World War II, Cold War generation. For this book, Raleigh has interviewed sixty 1967 graduates of two "magnet" secondary schools that offered intensive instruction in English, one in Moscow and one in provincial Saratov. Part of the generation that began school the year the country launched Sputnik into space, they grew up during the Cold War, but in a Soviet Union increasingly distanced from the excesses of Stalinism. In this post-Stalin era, the Soviet leadership dismantled the Gulag, ruled without terror, promoted consumerism, and began to open itself to an outside world still fearful of Communism. Raleigh is one of the first scholars of post-1945 Soviet history to draw extensively on oral history, a particularly useful approach in studying a country where the boundaries between public and private life remained porous and the state sought to peer into every corner of people's lives. During and after the dissolution of the USSR, Russian citizens began openly talking about their past, trying to make sense of it, and Raleigh has made the most of this new forthrightness. He has created an extraordinarily rich composite narrative and embedded it in larger historical narratives of Cold War, de-Stalinization, "overtaking" America, opening up to the outside world, economic stagnation, dissent, emigration, the transition to a market economy, the transformation of class, ethnic, and gender relations, and globalization. Including rare photographs of daily life in Cold War Russia, *Soviet Baby Boomers* offers an intimate portrait of a generation that has remained largely faceless until now.

"A landmark...[Raleigh] has created a sophisticated and nuanced cultural history. His book, eschewing cliché about the necessary and inevitable stasis of Russian society or its long-term yen for authoritarianism, at the same time puts forward thought-provoking, and at times unexpected, material about the lasting and deep impact of the late Soviet era on the present day."--English Historical "[A] unique, revealing oral history of the Cold War generation...This well-crafted book is required reading for anyone interested in understanding changing Soviet attitudes during the ear of late socialism...Essential."--CHOICE "This book is a collective biography that will fascinate its subjects' grandchildren, to whom the world it depicts will seem like a distant planet."--Foreign Affairs "What was it like to grow up under Communism and to live through and beyond its collapse? Soviet baby boomers tell their illuminating stories to an American historian of their country in this valuable book. Both Russia specialists and general readers will find it fascinating."--William Taubman, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era* "Donald Raleigh's book creates a fascinating portrait of an elite group within the last true Soviet generation. Born after Stalin's great war, these people saw the best the Soviet system could provide and they witnessed its fall. Their story is a poignant but surprising one, a glimpse into another world, and Raleigh tells it with humanity and admirable tact. An authentic and perceptive oral history whose warmth and color make this work a model of its kind."--Catherine Merridale, author of *Night of Stone: Death and Memory in Twentieth-Century Russia* "The book offers a valuable, and rare, comparative perspective by putting together respondents from the capital and 'closed' city. Their stories highlight many momentous differences in Soviet life experience that were determined by geographic location...This is a hugely valuable set of personal windows on grand--and less grand--historical events. It shows us how highly educated urbanites from a particular generation remember their country's passage from Stalinism to its version of capitalism. As Raleigh keenly observes, this tells us much about Russia today."--The Russian About the Author Donald J. Raleigh is Jay Richard Judson Distinguished Professor of History, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. He is the author of *Revolution on the Volga*, *Experiencing Russia's Civil War*, and *Russia's Sputnik Generation*.