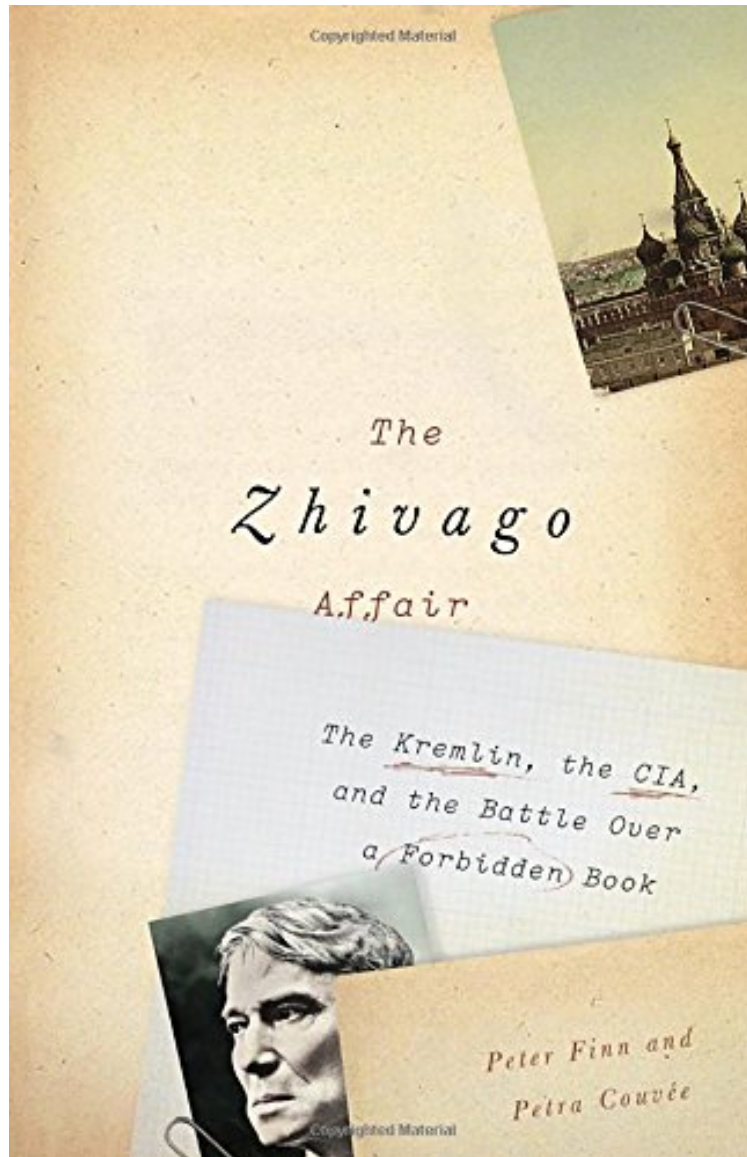


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The Zhivago Affair: The Kremlin, the CIA, and the Battle Over a Forbidden Book

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Peter Finn, Petra Couvée : The Zhivago Affair: The Kremlin, the CIA, and the Battle Over a Forbidden Book before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Zhivago Affair: The Kremlin, the CIA, and the Battle Over a Forbidden Book:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. When Books Were Weapons in the Cold War By Paul

Gelman During the Cold War, the CIA was engaged in relentless global warfare with the Kremlin. The agency used a host of front organizations and phony foundations, spent many millions of dollars to fund concert tours, art exhibitions, magazines, academic research, student activities and book publishing. All these were weapons in the covert action against the Soviet Union masterminded by George Kennan, who was the intellectual author behind this. One estimate says that some 10 million books and periodicals were distributed by the CIA in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. "Doctor Zhivago" was one of those books which was printed and distributed clandestinely in the main Russian cities. This book, which is just one episode in the colossal ideological battle between the two superpowers, is excellent and is very original. The authors have put in a tremendous effort in researching its topic, using many untapped archives and interviews. It reads like a fast best-selling political thriller. This is a fascinating account of the propaganda machines the USA used against the Eastern Bloc, showing Pasternak's and his friends' courage and it shows to what extent the battle for the minds of the readers in the East was conducted. It is also a detailed story about the cultural and intellectual background of the thirties to the fifties in the USSR. This battle over the publication of "Doctor Zhivago" was one of the first efforts by the CIA to leverage books as instruments of political warfare. It was Khrushchev himself who admitted in the end that the Russians "caused much harm to the Soviet Union" and added that he was "truly sorry for the way he behaved toward Pasternak". There were additional writers who followed Pasternak's way, among them Solzhenitsyn and Brodsky. This book is highly recommended. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Cold War intrigue By Connie Nordhielm Wooldridge When the celebrated poet Boris Pasternak began the novel Doctor Zhivago in 1945, he and his fellow Russian writers were living under the terrifying, watchful eye of Joseph Stalin. Pasternak had lived through the exhilaration and the disillusionment of the 1917 October Revolution and he wanted to write a piece of fiction that would capture the events surrounding it, even if it meant revealing the historic flaws that continued to infect the repressive government under which he lived. When he finished Doctor Zhivago in 1955 it was (predictably) rejected by the Soviet press so Pasternak smuggled the manuscript into Italy to be translated and published. "It does not matter what might happen to me," he told his friend, Isaiah Berlin. "My life is finished. The book is my last word to the civilized world." Doctor Zhivago made its way around the globe at warp speed, coming full circle in 1958 when the CIA's Russian-language edition was smuggled back into the Soviet Union for Pasternak's countrymen to read. Based on newly released documents, Finn and Couvée's account reads like a spy thriller with a deeply flawed but heroic writer at its center. History, Cold War politics, romance, intrigue... this book-about-a-book packs a punch. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. almost reading like a spy novel at times By Lynn B "Books are different from all other propaganda media," wrote the CIA chief of covert action, "primarily because one single book can significantly change the reader's attitude and action to an extent unmatched by the impact of any other single medium... that is, of course, not true of all books at all times and with all readers -- but it is true significantly often enough to make books the most important weapon of strategic (long-range) propaganda." This is the true story of how the CIA used the novel Dr. Zhivago as a weapon in the cold-war fight for the hearts and minds of Russian citizens. In fact, the CIA had a "book program" which smuggled hundreds of titles into eastern bloc countries. So, beyond all the politics, beyond the biography of Boris Pasternak, this book is also a testament to the power of literature. The book is well written, almost reading like a spy novel at times. We see what life was like in Stalinist Russia and how important the Cold War was to the U.S. We see the life of Boris Pasternak, including the open affair he carried on and the pressure placed on him to renounce the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Drawing on newly declassified government files, this is the dramatic story of how a forbidden book in the Soviet Union became a secret CIA weapon in the ideological battle between East and West. In May 1956, an Italian publishing scout took a train to a village just outside Moscow to visit Russia's greatest living poet, Boris Pasternak. He left carrying the original manuscript of Pasternak's first and only novel, entrusted to him with these words: "This is Doctor Zhivago. May it make its way around the world." Pasternak believed his novel was unlikely ever to be published in the Soviet Union, where the authorities regarded it as an irredeemable assault on the 1917 Revolution. But he thought it stood a chance in the West and, indeed, beginning in Italy, Doctor Zhivago was widely published in translation throughout the world. From there the life of this extraordinary book entered the realm of the spy novel. The CIA, which recognized that the Cold War was above all an ideological battle, published a Russian-language edition of Doctor Zhivago and smuggled it into the Soviet Union. Copies were devoured in Moscow and Leningrad, sold on the black market, and passed surreptitiously from friend to friend. Pasternak's funeral in 1960 was attended by thousands of admirers who defied their government to bid him farewell. The example he set launched the great tradition of the writer-dissident in the Soviet Union. In *The Zhivago Affair*, Peter Finn and Petra Couvée bring us intimately close to this charming, passionate, and complex artist. First to obtain CIA files providing concrete proof of the agency's involvement, the authors give us a literary thriller that takes us back to a fascinating period of the Cold War—to a time when literature had the power to stir the world. (With 8 pages of black-and-white illustrations.)

"Beautifully crafted and scrupulously researched... Finn and Couvée have taken a complex and difficult history with

many moving parts and turned it into a kind of intellectual thriller. They have to control a lot of information, yet they keep the book well-paced and often exciting. The Zhivago Affair is a prime example of hard work and fidelity to a good story."—Washington Post "A work of deep historical research that reads a little like Le Carré, this is the backstory of the foreign publication of Boris Pasternak's *Dr. Zhivago*, and it bears its multiple burdens lightly: a sideways biography of Pasternak; a psychological history of Soviet Russia; a powerful argument for the book as literature; an entry into the too-small canon on the CIA's role in shaping culture. In new reporting on the Agency's distribution of the book behind enemy lines, the authors show how both sides in the Cold War used literary prestige as a weapon without resorting to cheap moral equivalency."—New York "Fascinating...Told in its entirety, the story of how Doctor Zhivago helped disrupt the Soviet Union holds some intriguing implications for the present and future of cultural conflict."—The Atlantic "The Zhivago Affair does a masterful job of putting flesh on the bare bones of a story that has been hinted at in the press for decades."—NPR "A rich and unanticipated story...[Finn and Couvée] demonstrate a sophisticated appreciation for an artistic quest that was haunted by dread, persecution, and loss. They also share an avid eye for detail...Finn and Couvée's poignant depiction of Pasternak is the book's greatest strength."—The Daily Beast "[Finn and Couvée's] riveting, well-researched book reads like a literary thriller...a fascinating essay on mid-century politics...illuminating, humane."—New Republic "An informative, fascinating, and often moving account of personal courage, espionage and propaganda, and the role of literature in the political struggle for the hearts and minds of people."—Huffington Post "Crushingly poignant."—Knoxville News Sentinel "Thrilling...Deftly combining biography, cultural history and literary tittle-tattle, [Finn and Couvée] have shone a light on a shadowy operation...Crushingly poignant."—Newsday "Brisk and thrilling...The authors use rich archival research, including previously classified CIA files, to depict the oppressive political conditions that gave rise to Pasternak's masterpiece, and the international firestorm that occurred when the novel was banned in the Soviet Union. The book offers nuanced depictions of the people in Pasternak's life, including his lover, Olga Ivinskaya, who championed his work and shared his torment at the hands of the KGB. The torturous ideological policing by the Soviets is discussed to great effect; for indeed, the tale of Doctor Zhivago itself is very much about the long psychic scar left by Russian Revolution. It's a story expertly told by Finn and Couvée, who unsparingly present the role played by the Kremlin in persecuting Pasternak and his loved ones, as well as the role of the CIA in using his masterpiece in a game of ideological warfare—overall, a triumphant reminder that truth is sometimes gloriously stranger than fiction."—Publishers Weekly, starred review "A detailed reconstruction of one of the most fascinating of the Cold War's cultural skirmishes...The Zhivago Affair ought to bring a new generation of readers to it, curious to know what kind of a novel could make a superpower tremble."—Tablet "A fast-paced political thriller about a book that terrified a nation."—Kirkus "A riveting account...[Finn and Couvée] have drawn not only on archival documents and interviews with surviving actors in the international drama but also on newly declassified files of the Soviet, American, and Dutch intelligence services."—Bookforum "It is quite simply a remarkable story and fully sourced book, the scholarship peerless but never eclipsing one amazingly humanist story of a towering figure of 20th century Russian literature."—New York Journal of Books "With groundbreaking reporting and character-rich storytelling, Peter Finn and Petra Couvée uncover the high-stakes drama behind one of the Cold War's strangest turning points. Passionately written and acutely aware of the historical context, *The Zhivago Affair* almost makes one nostalgic for a time when novels were so important that even the CIA cared about them."—Ken Kalfus, author of *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country* "A thrilling literary espionage yarn, but much more than that. Finn and Couvée shed new light on the Cold War struggle for the hearts and minds of millions of people, introducing a cast of characters—poets and spies, idealists and cynics, politicians and dissidents—who could have stepped out of the pages of *Doctor Zhivago* itself."—Michael Dobbs, author of *Six Months in 1945: FDR, Stalin, Churchill, and Truman—from World War to Cold War* "A sparkling and fascinating account of how one of the most important novels of the twentieth century found its way back to Russia, a juggernaut of truth thrust into the Soviet darkness. Finn and Couvée elegantly and authoritatively capture Pasternak's brilliance, the courage of his friends, and the CIA's hidden role in bringing the forbidden book to Russian readers."—David E. Hoffman, author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Dead Hand: The Untold Story of the Cold War Arms Race and Its Dangerous Legacy* "The most detailed account to date of the events that suddenly placed one of Russia's greatest poets in the center of the struggle between Soviet and Western propaganda machines at the height of the Cold War. Pasternak's personal courage in the face of this totally incongruous conflict is the quality that emerges most clearly from this well-paced narrative, which is especially commendable for its avoidance of all romantic exaggeration—a quality Pasternak himself strove for in *Doctor Zhivago*. The book is of great relevance today, when such conflicts seem (but only seem) to have disappeared."—Richard Pevear, co-translator of *Doctor Zhivago* About the Author Peter Finn is National Security Editor for *The Washington Post* and previously served as the Post's bureau chief in Moscow. Petra Couvée is a writer and translator and teaches at Saint Petersburg State University. *The Zhivago Affair* is their first collaboration together. Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Chapter 1 Bullets cracked against the facade of the Pasternak family's apartment building on Volkhonka Street in central Moscow, pierced the windows, and whistled into the plaster ceilings. The gunfire, which began with a few isolated skirmishes, escalated into all-out street fighting in the

surrounding neighborhood, and drove the family into the back rooms of the spacious second-floor flat. That, too, seemed perilous when shrapnel from an artillery barrage struck the back of the building. Those few civilians who ventured out on Volkhonka crab-ran from hiding spot to hiding spot. One of the Pasternaks' neighbors was shot and killed when he crossed in front of one of his windows. On October 25, 1917, in a largely bloodless coup, the Bolsheviks seized power in Petrograd, the Russian capital, which had been called Saint Petersburg until World War I broke out and a Germanic name became intolerable. Other major centers did not fall so easily as militants loyal to the revolutionary leader Vladimir Lenin battled the Provisional Government that had been in power since March. There was more than a week of fighting in Moscow, the country's commercial center and second city, and the Pasternaks found themselves in the middle of it. The family's apartment building was on a street that crested a hill. The flat's nine street-side windows offered a panoramic view of the Moscow River and the monumental golden dome of Christ the Savior Cathedral. The Kremlin was just a few hundred meters to the northeast along the bend of the river. Pasternak, who rented a room in the Arbat neighborhood, had happened over to his par-ents' place on the day the fighting began and found himself stuck there, eventually huddling with his parents and younger, twenty-four-year-old brother, Alexander, in the downstairs apartment of a neighbor. The telephone and lights were out, and water only occasionally, and then briefly, trickled out of the taps. Boris's two sisters—Josephine and Lydia—were caught in similarly miserable conditions at the nearby home of their cousin. They had gone out for a stroll on an unseasonably mild evening when, suddenly, armored cars began to careen through streets that quickly emptied. The sisters had just made it to the shelter of their cousin's home when a man across the street was felled by a shot. For days, the constant crackle of machine-gun fire and the thud of exploding shells were punctuated by "the scream of wheeling swifts and swallows." And then as quickly as it started "the air drained clear, and a terrifying silence fell." Moscow had fallen to the Soviets. Russia's year of revolution had begun the previous February when women protesting bread shortages in Petrograd were joined by tens of thousands of striking workers and the national war weariness swelled into a sea of demonstrators against the exhausted autocracy. Two million Russians would die in the carnage at the Eastern Front and another 1.5 million civilians died from disease and military action. The economy of the vast, backward Russian empire was collapsing. When troops loyal to the czar fired on the crowds, killing hundreds, the capital was in open revolt. On March 3, having been abandoned by the army, Nicholas II abdicated, and the three-hundred-year-old Romanov dynasty was at an end. Pasternak, who had been assigned to a chemical factory in the Urals to support the war effort, hurried back to Moscow. He traveled part of the journey on a kibitka, a covered wagon on runners, and warded off the cold with sheepskin coats and hay. Pasternak and his siblings welcomed the fall of the monarchy, the emergence a new Provisional Government, and, above all, the prospect of a constitutional political order. Subjects became citizens, and they reveled in the transformation. "Just imagine when an ocean of blood and filth begins to give out light," Pasternak told one friend. His sister Josephine described him as "overwhelmed" and "intoxicated" by the charisma of Alexander Kerensky, a leading political figure, and his effect on a crowd outside the Bolshoi Theatre that spring. The Provisional Government abolished censor-ship and introduced freedom of assembly. Pasternak would later channel the sense of euphoria into his novel. The hero of Doctor Zhivago was spellbound by the public discourse, which was brilliantly alive, almost magical. "I watched a meeting last night. An astounding spectacle," said Yuri Zhivago, in a passage where the character describes the first months after the fall of the czar. "Mother Russia has begun to move, she won't stay put, she walks and never tires of walking, she talks and can't talk enough. And it's not as if only people are talking. Stars and trees come together and converse, night flowers philosophize, and stone buildings hold meetings. Something gospel-like, isn't it? As in the time of the apostles. Remember, in Paul? 'Speak in tongues and prophesy. Pray for the gift of interpretation.'" It seemed to Zhivago that "the roof over the whole of Russia has been torn off." The political ferment also enfeebled the Provisional Government, which was unable to establish its writ. It was overwhelmed above all by the widely hated decision to keep fighting in the world war. The Bolsheviks, earning popular support with the promise of "Bread, Peace and Land," and driven by Lenin's calculation that power was for the taking, launched their insurrection and a second revolution in October. "What magnificent surgery," Pasternak wrote in Doctor Zhivago. "To take and at one stroke artistically cut out the old, stinking sores!" The Bolsheviks, in their constitution, promised Utopia—"the abolition of all exploitation of man by man, the complete elimination of the division of society into classes, the ruthless suppres-sion of the exploiters, the establishment of a socialist organization of society, and the victory of socialism in all countries." Yuri Zhivago quickly is disillusioned by the convulsions of the new order: "First, the ideas of general improvement, as they've been understood since October, don't set me on fire. Second, it's all still so far from realization, while the mere talk about it has been paid for with such seas of blood that I don't think the ends justify the means. Third, and this is the main thing, when I hear about the remaking of life, I lose control of myself and fall into despair." The word remaking was the same one Stalin used when toasting his writers and demanding engineers of the soul. Zhivago tells his interlocutor, a guerrilla commander: "I grant you're all bright lights and liberators of Russia, that without you she would perish, drowned in poverty and ignorance, and nevertheless I can't be bothered with you, and I spit on you, I don't like you, and you can all go to the devil." These are the judgments of a much older Pasternak, writing more than three decades after the revolution and looking back in sorrow and disgust. At the time, when Pasternak was twenty-seven, he was a man in

love, writing poetry, and swept along in the “greatness of the moment.”