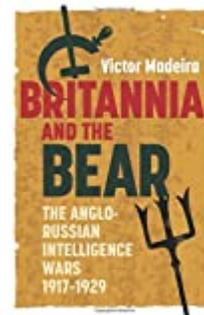**Victor Madeira.** *Britannia and the Bear: The Anglo-Russian Intelligence Wars, 1917-1929.* Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2014. 339 pp. $95.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-84383-895-1.

**Reviewed by** Alex Nordlund (University of Georgia)

Britannia *and the Bear* offers a historical assessment of the âfirst Cold Warâ between Britain and the Soviet Union in the immediate aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution. Focusing on the intelligence services in Britain and the Soviet Union, Madeira analyzes official perceptions of âsubversionâ and their impact on intelligence work in both countries. Supported by extensive archival research, the work argues that by equating âsymptoms of popular discontent more to do with postwar socioeconomic conditions and State policiesâ to Bolshevik subversion, the British intelligence community undermined itself from the outset of the intelligence wars with the Soviet Union and opened itself up to even greater penetrations after 1929 (p. 6).

In the aftermath of the First World War, the British government faced both domestic and international turmoil, such as police strikes at home and the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. As Madeira argues, the conflation of these internal and external issues undermined British security against a viable threat in the form of the Soviet Union. Many British politicians and intelligence analysts–notably the Home Office director of intelligence, Sir Basil Thomson–fearing what they believed were the âsymptoms of the alien ideology that was Communism,â both undermined efforts to normal-

ize relations with the Soviets and âcreated a longer-term threat: Bolshevik penetration of British security, intelligence and policy circlesâ by disaffected or ideologically motivated members of society (p. 59). Throughout much of this period, the British intelligence community, generally comprised of upper-class Conservatives, politicized their work in an effort to discredit Labour opposition and social reform movements, which ultimately would undermine their own efforts to combat actual Soviet subversion. In spite of all of this tension within Britain, Madeira points out that âeconomics, then as now, usually trumps ideology and convictionâ (p. 64). Despite national security concerns, the British government nevertheless established trade agreements with the Soviets by 1921 due to postwar economic crises. In his conclusion, Madeira compares this conflict between economic needs and security concerns to contemporary clashes between the West and the Putin-Medvedev regime in Russia.

The most compelling aspect of the work is its reconceptualization of early Cold War history that focuses on Britain rather than the United States. Although Russian sources play an important role in the work, this is very much a British narrative. While Madeira focuses primarily on institutions and political leaders, he also succeeds in considering how cultural developments, such as

the impact of Victorian public school values on Sir Basil Thomson, helped shape the way that both approached intelligence. Perhaps most importantly, the work utilizes an extensive amount of unpublished British, French, and Russian archival collections. In perhaps the greatest finding of this research, Madeira diverts attention away from the better-known âCambridge Five,â revealing that the distinguished journalist William Norman Ewer, under the cover name âTrilby,â had received support from Moscow and infiltrated British government departments as early as 1919 (pp. 39-41). One minor shortcoming, however, is the marginal consideration of the centuries-long geopolitical rivalry between Britain and Tsarist Russia and its impact on relations with Soviet Russia. While the Soviet Union presented a far more ideological opponent than the previous Russian regime, its rise after 1917 did not necessarily constitute a watershed moment–a historical clichÃ© often attributed in general to the First World War. To his credit, Madeira does indirectly allude to some continuity in his introduction, and later admits that âBritish administrators [in India] and in London came to regard Bolshevism as a new variation on an old theme (imperial rivalry with Russia)â during the period covered in his work (p. 49). Nevertheless, when he concludes that the Putin-Medvedev regime has applied the same strategy as the Soviets of seducing the West with âpromises of quick and substantial profitsâ (p. 190), Madeira rightfully challenges how the British intelligence community interpreted âsubversionâ in terms of ideology and social discontent, thus putting to question the centrality of ideological rivalry in the narrative of the Cold War. If there is little difference between Putin and Lenin in terms of how Russia has approached its relations with the West, it seems also necessary to consider the diplomacy of the Tsars within such a consideration rather than relegating them to a âdistantâ nineteenth century. Perhaps this is the subject of a different book altogether. Additionally, while Madeira writes in a clear, straightforward way, his use of the term âhardlinerâ throughout the work seems a bit sweeping and deserves some sort of definition.

While his revision of Cold War history is valuable to any academic or general reader interested in the subject, Madeira seems most interested in having foreign affairs and intelligence analysts as his target audience. With its recurring allusions to Vladimir Putin, the presentation of âlessons learned,â and criticism of the Western reaction to the collapse of the Soviet Union, *Britannia and the Bear* concerns itself with contemporary geopolitics and the notion that âsome historical patterns unnecessarily repeat themselves,â thus making it a study far more interested in the present and future rather than in the past (p. 3). This observation, however, should not take away from what is an impressively researched and insightful history that highlights the centrality of the geopolitical rivalry between Britain and Russia–or, perhaps more accurately, the Soviet Union–and the importance of understanding the intelligence wars of the early twentieth century.

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