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Reviewed by **Rebecca Lowen, Metropolitan State University**

"In the Shadows of the Bomb" unearths a forgotten effort at scientific exchange between the United States and the Soviet Union soon after World War II that ended abruptly as tensions between the two superpowers hardened into cold war. Whereas much of the literature on cold war science has focused on physics and related disciplines that are seen as having military significance, Nikola Krementsov looks here at the field of biomedicine, specifically oncology. He describes how international scientific exchange, virtually prohibited by the Soviet government prior to World War II, began to flourish once the US and USSR became allies in the fight against Nazism. The demonstration of American scientific prowess and military might in late 1945 with the nuclear bombing of Japan added an element of competition between the superpowers, according to Krementsov, but did not demonstrably crimp the spirit of collaboration. In fact, American possession of atomic weapons increased the Soviet government's interest in fostering Soviet-American scientific exchange, as it sought to advance Soviet science better to compete with the United States. American scientists were equally interested in continuing to exchange scientific information immediately after World War II; U.S. oncologists were particularly eager to maintain close contact with their Russian counterparts who were doing pioneering research on the use of biological agents in the treatment of malignant tumors. Krementsov thus contributes to the growing scholarship on the origins of the cold war that challenges the orthodox view that hostilities between the United States and the USSR were inevitable by late 1945.

The particulars of the attempted collaboration between Soviet and American oncologists in late 1945 and 1946 form the heart of Krementsov's detailed, yet engaging article. News of research by microbiologist Nina Klyueva and her husband Grigorii Roskin on the anticancer potential of microorganisms attracted the interest of several prominent U.S.

oncologists as well as American cancer patients, who were hopeful that Klyueva and Roskin's clinical trials of their anticancer agent, which they called KR, would provide a long-hoped-for cure. Hopes for KR were so great that the American ambassador to the Soviet Union was authorized to propose to the Soviet government a collaborative study of KR, to be funded by the United States; the Soviets, in turn, agreed to enable US and Soviet scientists interested in KR to visit each other. Soon afterward, Vasilii Parin, the secretary of the Soviet Academy of Medical Scientists, and several Soviet oncologists were invited to visit the United States in autumn 1946. Reflecting the atmosphere of collaboration, Klueva and Roskin agreed to give Parin samples of KR, as well as a copy of their soon-to-be-published manuscript on biological anti-cancer agents to share with American scientists.

But the Soviet bureaucracy was not united on the issue. Whereas the Soviet minister of public health, Georgii Miterev, approved the transfer of information, the head of the American section of the Foreign Ministry expressed doubts. The decision then fell to Vyacheslav Molotov, at that time people's commissar of foreign affairs and deputy head of the Council of Ministers, who affirmed the plan. Parin, now in America, dutifully passed along the materials, only to learn a day later that the Soviet Union's deputy foreign minister had wired to warn against sharing any materials with the Americans and had also cabled his concerns to the Politburo. Among those on the Politburo was Andrei Zhdanov. Soviet scientists Klyueva and Roskin had appealed to him just a few weeks previously for increased funding for their laboratory. In their letter to Zhdanov, they had described American interest in their work and warned him that, in the absence of improved working conditions and more funds, they could well lose the lead in anticancer research to the United States. Klyueva and Roskin's appeal had its desired effect; in late 1946 Stalin himself authorized the allocation of a vast sum of money for their laboratory in the coming year.

Klyueva and Roskin's tactic of extracting funds by mentioning competition with American scientists subsequently backfired. The idea that the Soviet Union might lose primacy in this area of oncology apparently troubled Zhdanov. Although aware that Molotov had authorized the transfer of KR materials, Zhdanov inititated interrogations of Klyueva, Parin, Miterev, and others. A complaint from American ambassador Smith in early 1947 that the Soviets were hindering cultural exchanges reinforced Zhdanov's predilections in the matter. At a subsequent Politburo meeting, he, Stalin, Molotov, and others agreed to dismiss Miterev from his post. Shortly thereafter, Parin was arrested as an American spy. Klyueva and Roskin were charged with antipatriotic acts and publicly reprimanded after a show trial before an audience of medical professionals. This trial, according to Krementsov, launched a systematic nation-wide campaign for Soviet patriotism that effectively curtailed the international activities of the Soviet scientific community that had developed during the war years. Krementsov chooses to end his narrative here, never saying what became of Soviet research on biological anticancer agents or how this episode affected the field of onology.

He draws two conclusions from his close study of this episode. First, he argues that it shows that science and scientists were valuable to the state during the cold war not merely because they were seen as essential to the development of nuclear weapons. No one believed that a cancer cure had military significance; instead, a breakthrough in cancer treatments had *symbolic* significance. A Soviet discovery of a cure for cancer would be a tremendous propaganda coup, "a kind of biological 'atomic bomb,'" in the words of a Soviet journalist at the time. (64) Krementsov suggests that nuclear weapons themselves played a symbolic (as well as a military one) in the cold war. His point is well taken. Historians of post-war America routinely recognize the cultural dimension of the cold war, but rarely incorporate science into their discussions of culture. Historians of cold war science have, as Krementsov says, devoted most of their energies to unearthing the links between scientists and the military-industrial complex. While the last decade has seen historical explorations of relatively unstudied scientific disciplines, including biology, oceonography and even the social sciences, historians of cold war science have been slow to appreciate the cultural dimensions of their subject. Krementsov's study offers a model for exploring the dynamic between scientists and their work, the state, and the culture of the cold war.

Krementsov's second conclusion is more problematical. He claims that this episode in the history of science shows that scientific collaboration between the United States and the Soviet Union was not simply a casualty of the growing political and ideological tensions that marked the cold war. In fact, in this instance, the situation was reversed: a matter involving science—in this case, the transfer of KR materials to the United States—sharply affected Soviet politics and culture. In making this claim, Krementsov is revising his own view, put forth in his *Stalinist Science* (Princeton, 1997), that scientific events in the Soviet Union were strongly directed and shaped by the political needs of the state. Krementsov may be correct. However, the story he tells provides no evidence for his revised understanding. He presents the sequence of events that occurred but no evidence to explain the motives of any of the actors involved. He seems to realize this near the end of the article, where he writes "the evidence suggests that a single event [the transfer of the KR materials] triggered *(or at least was pretext for*) this profound policy change…[emphasis added]" (63). To state that an event was the impetus for a policy change (in this case, the institution of the Soviet patriotism campaign) is quite different from suggesting that it was merely a pretext for it. The latter suggests that something else—quite possibly something completely unrelated to science—triggered the Politburo's decision to promote patriotic fervor. What this something else may have been, Krementsov doesn't offer, since he wishes to promote the alternate interpretation.

This points to a significant absence in the article: the lack of any discussion of the larger context of U.S.-Soviet relations between 1945 and 1947 when the KR affair occurred. It seems likely during these years, when the fragile alliance between the Soviet Union and the United States was being tested over conflicts related to the governance of occupied Germany, that Molotov, Stalin, Zhdanov, and others in the Politburo as well as in the Foreign Ministry had many concerns in addition to the Soviet's international standing in

the field of oncology. The best book on this subject remains Carolyn Eisenberg's award-winning *Drawing the Line: The American Decision to Divide Germany, 1944-1949* (Cambridge University Press, 1996). It is a shame that Krementsov seems unfamiliar with this and other work along these lines which share his view of the gradual deterioration of U.S.-USSR relations into cold war, but which offer a more realistic picture both of American intentions during this period as well as of the preoccupations of Soviet leaders in the immediate postwar years. (1486)

Rebecca Lowen earned her doctorate in U.S. History from Stanford University and studied the history of science as an NSF postdoctoral fellow at the Johns Hopkins University. She is co-editor, with Doug Rossinow, of *The United States Since 1945: Historical Interpretations* (Prentice Hall, 2007), and the author of *Creating the Cold War University: The Transformation of Stanford* (University of California Press, 1997). She teaches at Metropolitan State University in St. Paul, Minnesota.

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