Russians - The People behind the Power

From former NPR Moscow correspondent Gregory Feifer comes an incisive portrait that draws on vivid personal stories to portray the forces that have shaped the Russian character for centuries-and continue to do so today. RUSSIANS explores the seeming paradoxes of life in Russia by unraveling the nature of its people: what is it in their history, their desires, and their conception of themselves that makes them baffling to the West? Using the insights of his decade as a journalist in Russia, Feifer corrects pervasive misconceptions by showing that much of what appears inexplicable about the country is logical when seen from the inside. He gets to the heart of why the world's leading energy producer continues to exasperate many in the international community. And he makes clear why President Vladimir Putin remains popular even as the gap widens between the super-rich and the great majority of poor. Traversing the world's largest country from the violent North Caucasus to Arctic Siberia, Feifer conducted hundreds of intimate conversations about everything from sex and vodka to Russia's complex relationship with the world. From fabulously wealthy oligarchs to the destitute elderly babushki who beg in Moscow's streets, he tells the story of a society bursting with vitality under a leadership rooted in tradition and often on the edge of collapse despite its authoritarian power. Feifer also draws on formative experiences in Russia's past and illustrative workings of its culture to shed much-needed light on the purposely hidden functioning of its society before, during, and after communism. Woven throughout is an intimate, first-person account of his family history, from his Russian mother's coming of age among Moscow's bohemian artistic elite to his American father's harrowing vodka-fueled run-ins with the KGB. What emerges is a rare portrait of a unique land of extremes whose forbidding geography, merciless climate, and crushing corruption has nevertheless produced some of the world's greatest art and some of its most remarkable scientific advances. RUSSIANS is an expertly observed, gripping profile of a people who will continue challenging the West for the foreseeable future.

Spy Handler - Memoir of a KGB Officer: The True Story of the Man Who Recruited Robert Hanssen and Aldrich Ames

In his four decades as a KGB officer, Victor Cherkashin was a central player in the shadowy world of Cold War espionage. From his rigorous training in Soviet intelligence in the early 1950s to his prime spot as the KGB's head of counterintelligence at the Soviet embassy in Washington, Cherkashin's career was rich in episode and drama. In a riveting memoir, Cherkashin provides a remarkable insider's view of the KGB's prolonged conflict with the CIA. Playing a major role in global espionage for most of the Cold War, Cherkashin was posted to stations in the United States, Australia, India, and Lebanon. He tracked down U.S. and British spies around the world. But it was in 1985 that Cherkashin scored two of the KGB's biggest-ever coups. In April of that year, he recruited disgruntled CIA officer Aldrich Ames and became his principal handler. Six months later, FBI special agent Robert Hanssen contacted Cherkashin directly, eventually becoming an even bigger asset than Ames. In Spy Handler, Cherkashin offers the complete account of how and why both Americans turned against their country, and
addresses the rumors of an undiscovered KGB spy—another Hanssen or Ames—still at large in the U.S. intelligence community. Full of vivid detail and dramatic accounts that shed stark new light on the inner workings of the KGB, Spy Handler is a major addition to Cold War history, told by one of its major players.

**The Great Gamble - The Soviet War in Afghanistan**

The Soviet war in Afghanistan was a grueling debacle that has striking lessons for the twenty-first century. In *The Great Gamble*, Gregory Feifer examines the conflict from the perspective of the soldiers on the ground. During the last years of the Cold War, the Soviet Union sent some of its most elite troops to unfamiliar lands in Central Asia to fight a vaguely defined enemy, which eventually defeated their superior numbers with unconventional tactics. Although the Soviet leadership initially saw the invasion as a victory, many Russian soldiers came to view the war as a demoralizing and devastating defeat, the consequences of which had a substantial impact on the Soviet Union and its collapse. Feifer's extensive research includes eye-opening interviews with participants from both sides of the conflict. In gripping detail, he vividly depicts the invasion of a volatile country that no power has ever successfully conquered. Parallels between the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the U.S. invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq are impossible to ignore—both conflicts were waged amid vague ideological rhetoric about freedom. Both were roundly condemned by the outside world for trying to impose their favored forms of government on countries with very different ways of life. And both seem destined to end on uncertain terms. A groundbreaking account seen through the eyes of the men who fought it, *The Great Gamble* tells an unforgettable story full of drama, action, and political intrigue whose relevance in our own time is greater than ever.

**Words Will Break Cement - The Passion of Pussy Riot**

From National Book Award winner Masha Gessen, the heroic story of Pussy Riot, who resurrected the power of truth in a society built on lies. On February 21, 2012, five young women entered the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow. In neon-colored dresses, tights, and balaclavas, they performed a “punk prayer” beseeching the “Mother of God” to “get rid of Putin.” They were quickly shut down by security, and in the weeks and months that followed, three of the women were arrested and tried, and two were sentenced to a remote prison colony. But the incident captured international headlines, and footage of it went viral. People across the globe recognized not only a fierce act of political confrontation but also an inspired work of art that, in a time and place saturated with lies, found a new way to speak the truth. Masha Gessen’s riveting account tells how such a phenomenon came about. Drawing on her exclusive, extensive access to the members of Pussy Riot and their families and associates, she reconstructs the fascinating personal journeys that transformed a group of young women into artists with a shared vision, gave them the courage and imagination to express it unforgettably, and endowed them with the strength to endure the devastating loneliness and isolation that have been the price of their triumph.

**The Scholar Explorer -**
This book is full of little known facts about Australia and Papua New Guinea, through the diaries of this amazing Russian born and German educated scientist. From an evocative tale of a feisty science-driven man who lived among the indigenous people of New Guinea, to his suffering from beriberi and malaria, sending him to Australia and a fanfare from the scientific community, Yvonne Webb presents his multiple passions, achievements and disappointments. A biological research station was built for him in Sydney. A German colleague doublecrossed him. He was instrumental in the British, German and Australian presence in New Guinea. He married a NSW Premier’s daughter. Archival material sheds light on the blackbirding trade and the slaving of people from Arnhem Land and Papua New Guinea by the adjacent Muslim Maharajahs. In Queensland he travelled recording previously unknown facts of indigenous lives. Charles Darwin and Alfred Wallace were his friends. His story is one of a driven man struggling with the politics of the time. He died prematurely of an undiagnosed brain tumour. Yet this giant of a man is generally unknown in Australia.

**Putin's World - Russia Against the West and with the Rest**

From renowned foreign policy expert Angela Stent comes a dissection of how Putin created a paranoid and polarized world -- and increased Russia's status on the global stage. How did Russia manage to emerge resurgent on the world stage and play a weak hand so effectively? Is it because Putin is a brilliant strategist? Or has Russia stepped into a vacuum created by the West's distraction with its own domestic problems and US ambivalence about whether it still wants to act as a superpower? Putin's World examines the country's turbulent past, how it has influenced Putin, the Russians' understanding of their position on the global stage and their future ambitions -- and their conviction that the West has tried to deny them a seat at the table of great powers since the USSR collapsed. This book looks at Russia's key relationships -- its downward spiral with the United States, Europe, and NATO; its ties to China, Japan, the Middle East; and with its neighbors, particularly the fraught relationship with Ukraine. Putin's World will help Americans understand how and why the post-Cold War era has given way to a new, more dangerous world, one in which Russia poses a challenge to the United States in every corner of the globe -- and one in which Russia has become a toxic and divisive subject in US politics.

**My Neighbour over the Border - Tales of towns and cities separated by borders and how they get along**

How do towns and cities divided by the harsh reality of an international border manage to get on with each other when their closest neighbour lives just next door, but in another country? Are they thriving or surviving? Utterly dependent on each other or with backs turned, socially and economically? We visit towns and cities that you may not have heard of or know little about. Places like distant Blagoveshchensk and Heihe, Narva and Ivangorod and Gorlitz and Zgorzelec. But also the better known Nicosia, Europe’s only divided capital, Detroit with its Canadian neighbour Windsor, Geneva and its French suburb Annemasse and the cities of Sarajevo and Mostar, divided not by international borders but ethnic divisions baked into everyday life. This is a fascinating and well-researched study of thirty-six towns and cities from across the world that are separated by borders. Paul Doe delves into the way in which these divisions came about and how the separated towns and cities manage to get along, or not,
buffeted as they are by geopolitics, ethnic differences and historical animosities.

**The Russian Revolution - A New History**

From an award-winning scholar comes this definitive, single-volume history that illuminates the tensions and transformations of the Russian Revolution. In *The Russian Revolution*, acclaimed historian Sean McMeekin traces the events which ended Romanov rule, ushered the Bolsheviks into power, and introduced Communism to the world. Between 1917 and 1922, Russia underwent a complete and irreversible transformation. Taking advantage of the collapse of the Tsarist regime in the middle of World War I, the Bolsheviks staged a hostile takeover of the Russian Imperial Army, promoting mutinies and mass desertions of men in order to fulfill Lenin's program of turning the "imperialist war" into civil war. By the time the Bolsheviks had snuffed out the last resistance five years later, over 20 million people had died, and the Russian economy had collapsed so completely that Communism had to be temporarily abandoned. Still, Bolshevik rule was secure, owing to the new regime's monopoly on force, enabled by illicit arms deals signed with capitalist neighbors such as Germany and Sweden who sought to benefit-politically and economically-from the revolutionary chaos in Russia. Drawing on scores of previously untapped files from Russian archives and a range of other repositories in Europe, Turkey, and the United States, McMeekin delivers exciting, groundbreaking research about this turbulent era. The first comprehensive history of these momentous events in two decades, *The Russian Revolution* combines cutting-edge scholarship and a fast-paced narrative to shed new light on one of the most significant turning points of the twentieth century.

**The Compatriots - The Brutal and Chaotic History of Russia's Exiles, Émigrés, and Agents Abroad**

The authors of *The Red Web* examine the shifting role of Russian expatriates throughout history, and their complicated, unbreakable relationship with the mother country--be it antagonistic or far too chummy. The history of Russian espionage is soaked in blood, from a spontaneous pistol shot that killed a secret policeman in Romania in 1924 to the attempt to poison an exiled KGB colonel in Salisbury, England, in 2017. Russian émigrés have found themselves continually at the center of the mayhem. Russians began leaving the country in big numbers in the late nineteenth century, fleeing pogroms, tsarist secret police persecution, and the Revolution, then Stalin and the KGB--and creating the third-largest diaspora in the world. The exodus created a rare opportunity for the Kremlin. Moscow's masters and spymasters fostered networks of spies, many of whom were emigrants driven from Russia. By the 1930s and 1940s, dozens of spies were in New York City gathering information for Moscow. But the story did not end with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Some émigrés have turned into assets of the resurgent Russian nationalist state, while others have taken up the dissident challenge once more--at their personal peril. From Trotsky to Litvinenko, *The Compatriots* is the gripping history of Russian score-settling around the world.

**From Russia with Blood - The Kremlin's Ruthless Assassination Program and Vladimir Putin's Secret War on the West**
The untold story of how Russia refined the art and science of targeted assassination abroad -- while Western spies watched in horror as their governments failed to guard against the threat. They thought they had found a safe haven in the green hills of England. They were wrong. One by one, the Russian oligarchs, dissidents, and gangsters who fled to Britain after Vladimir Putin came to power dropped dead in strange or suspicious circumstances. One by one, their British lawyers and fixers met similarly grisly ends. Yet, one by one, the British authorities shut down every investigation -- and carried on courting the Kremlin. The spies in the riverside headquarters of MI6 looked on with horror as the scope of the Kremlin's global killing campaign became all too clear. And, across the Atlantic, American intelligence officials watched with mounting alarm as the bodies piled up, concerned that the tide of death could spread to the United States. Those fears intensified when a one-time Kremlin henchman was found bludgeoned to death in a Washington, D.C. penthouse. But it wasn't until Putin's assassins unleashed a deadly chemical weapon on the streets of Britain, endangering hundreds of members of the public in a failed attempt to slay the double agent Sergei Skripal, that Western governments were finally forced to admit that the killing had spun out of control. Unflinchingly documenting the growing web of death on British and American soil, Heidi Blake bravely exposes the Kremlin's assassination campaign as part of Putin's ruthless pursuit of global dominance -- and reveals why Western governments have failed to stop the bloodshed. The unforgettable story that emerges whisks us from London's high-end night clubs to Miami's million-dollar hideouts ultimately renders a bone-chilling portrait of money, betrayal, and murder, written with the pace and propulsive power of a thriller. Based on a vast trove of unpublished documents, bags of discarded police evidence, and interviews with hundreds of insiders, this heart-stopping international investigation uncovers one of the most important -- and terrifying -- geopolitical stories of our time.