

# How the Beatles Rocked the Kremlin: The Untold Story of a Noisy Revolution

By Leslie Woodhead



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Imagine a world where Beatlemania was against the law-recordings scratched onto medical X-rays, merchant sailors bringing home contraband LPs, spotty broadcasts taped from western AM radio late in the night. This was no fantasy world populated by Blue Meanies but the USSR, where a vast nation of music fans risked repression to hear the defining band of the British Invasion. The music of John, Paul, George, and Ringo played a part in waking up an entire generation of Soviet youth, opening their eyes to seventy years of bland official culture and rigid authoritarianism. Soviet leaders had suppressed most Western popular music since the days of jazz, but the Beatles and the bands they inspired-both in the West and in Russia-battered down the walls of state culture. Leslie Woodhead's *How The Beatles Rocked the Kremlin* tells the unforgettable-and endearingly odd-story of Russians who discovered that all you need is Beatles. By stealth, by way of whispers, through the illicit late night broadcasts on Radio Luxembourg, the Soviet Beatles kids tuned in. "Bitles," they whispered, "Yeah, Yeah, Yeah."



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#### **Editorial Review**

#### From Booklist

Who really tore down the Iron Curtain? British documentarian Woodhead suggests it may have been John, Paul, George, and Ringo. Woodhead was a young researcher when he led a Liverpool TV crew into the Cavern Club to film the Beatles for the first time. He had eavesdropped on Soviet and East German pilots from West Germany during 1950s military service, so when Gorbachev's liberalization brought Soviet tourists west who proclaimed the Beatles had freed their minds, Woodhead wanted to know more. This book is the product of many trips to the USSR and, later, Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus, and encounters and interviews with people, young and old, in the mainstream and far outside it, all of whom viewed the Beatles as their saviors. In a USSR ruled by fear and belief, contemporaries told Woodhead, the Beatles dissolved their fear and undermined their political faith. Sadly, this celebration of the joy and freedom the Beatles brought to the Khrushchev-era USSR closes with Woodhead's Russian friends organizing against the 2012 prosecution of Pussy Riot for all-too-familiar cultural "crimes." --Mary Carroll

#### Review

"Leslie Woodhead has given us a priceless addition to Beatle literature-- and a beautifully observed and witty insight into the cultural underbelly of the Soviet Union." ?Paul Greengrass, director of The Bourne Supremacy, The Bourne Ultimatum, United 93 and Green Zone

"How the Beatles really did come and keep their comrades warm ... a fascinating lost chapter In their history." ?Philip Norman, author of John Lennon: A Life and Mick Jagger

"Forget the triumph of market capitalism. According to Leslie Woodhead, it was the subversive power of art and cultural connection that stoked the fires of freedom and popular revolution, which ultimately brought down the Iron Curtain. A deliciously appealing premise!" *?Helena Kennedy QC, President of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University* 

"Fine on-the-ground reporting here ... [A] worthwhile addition to the Beatles bookshelf." ?Kirkus Reviews

"Did the Fab Four bring down the Soviet Empire single-handed? It's a wonderful thought ... Woodhead's book is rather more about Russia than it is about The Beatles, but it's also about the most socialist of concepts, historical inevitability ... In this story the true believers won, and they still believe. You'll read the book with a smile on your face, and a song–possibly written by Lennon and McCartney–in your heart" *?Daily Mail (UK)* 

"In 1962, as a young TV producer, Leslie Woodhead made a short film at Liverpool's Cavern Club about a local pop group who had caught his eye. The Beatles, of course, went on to conquer the musical world. More startlingly, according to his new book, they might also have helped demolish the vast totalitarian edifice that was the Soviet Union ... Could a few three minute songs really threaten a superpower? Suddenly the claims of Woodhead's Beatlemaniacs – the Russians for whom Lennon trumped Lenin – don't seem quite so absurd after all" *?Mail on Sunday (UK)* 

"Effervescent ... This tells the remarkable story of precisely how and why Woodhead explains, 'the Beatles came to mean more, and were more important, to that generation of Soviet youth that they were here, or in America – for several reasons" ?Observer (UK)

#### About the Author

Leslie Woodhead, OBE is one of Britain's most distinguished documentary filmmakers. His films have won many international awards, including recognition by the Emmy and Peabodys in America, and by BAFTA, and the Royal Television Society in the UK. He is the author of two books, *My Life as a Spy* and *A Box Full of Spirits*. He lives in Cheshire, England.

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happy, fun and loosen up. Try to choose the best book for you personally and try to like reading which.

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