



How the Cold War Began

Amy Knight

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On September 5, 1945, Soviet cipher clerk Igor Gouzenko severed ties with his embassy in Ottawa, Canada, reporting allegations to authorities of a Soviet espionage network in North America. His defection — the first following the end of WWII, occurring less than a month after atomic bombs exploded over Japan — sent shockwaves through Washington, London, and Ottawa. The three allies, who until weeks earlier had been aligned with the Soviets, feared that key atomic secrets had been given to Russian agents, affecting the balance of postwar power. In her riveting narrative, Amy Knight documents how Gouzenko's defection, and the events that followed it, triggered Cold War fears and altered the course of modern history. Knight sheds new light on the Gouzenko Affair, showing how J. Edgar Hoover hoped to discredit the Truman administration by incriminating U.S. government insiders Alger Hiss and Harry Dexter White. She also probes Gouzenko's motives for defecting and brilliantly connects these events to the strained relations between the Soviet Union and the West that marked the beginning of the Cold War.

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