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1983 Remembered:

The Most Dangerous Year of the Cold War?

Conference Programme

12 December - 14 December 2023



Photo: Rally in Moscow against the deployment of Cruise and Pershing missiles in Western Europe, 1 October 1983, CND archive, LSE Library. Credit: Luc-André Brunet. For more information Dr Brunet's work on these archives, visit: <https://www.lse.ac.uk/ideas/projects/peace-security/cnd-archives>



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Forty years have now passed since what many historians describe as some of the most dangerous moments of the Cold War. On 14 November 1983 it was announced by the British Government that the first US ground-launched cruise missiles had arrived at the UK airbase of Greenham Common, and soon after the Soviet Union walked out of arms talks with the US at Geneva. As NATO's twin track decisions of 1979 to field a new generation of intermediate range nuclear forces reached this major milestone, the deployment marked the culmination of a period of high international tensions. On 1 September a South Korean airliner, flight KAL 007, had been shot down by Soviet fighter aircraft over the Kamchatka peninsula, killing all 269 passengers and crew, and leading to widespread denunciations of Moscow's actions. Anatoly Chernyaev, the Deputy Director of the International Department of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union's Central Committee noted in his celebrated diary that 'this vast world, full of fantastic achievements of the human mind and labor, can in a few short minutes fall victim to a nervous breakdown of one the two "superpower" leaders ...when you walk down the street, you see hundreds and thousands of people ... tomorrow they and everything around them could be gone.' A NATO "command post" exercise, Able Archer, staged in November, was later seen by Western officials as triggering a heightened state of nuclear alert across the Warsaw Pact. Meanwhile across the countries of Western Europe, NATO's deployment of US cruise and Pershing II missiles, had sparked an upsurge of popular anti-nuclear protest and activism that had few parallels in the Cold War. Western European governments' efforts to maintain a united front in the face of such public pressure were strained to breaking point. In the United States, the Reagan administration's anti-Communist rhetoric was reaching a crescendo, while in the Soviet Union an ailing Soviet leadership feared that their own system had lost all vitality and appeal.

To mark the fortieth anniversary of the events of 1983, where some argue the world was brought again to the "Nuclear Brink", this conference brings together Cold War historians of both the "hard power" of nuclear weapons and geopolitics, and the "soft power" of popular activism and culture. The aim of this dialogue is to consider the events of 1983 in the round, develop cross-discipline innovations, and reflect on the wider significance of 1983 in the history of the Cold War.

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Tuesday 12 December: **Keynote Lecture 1**

(6pm – 8pm)

Yangtze Theatre, Centre Building, LSE

Wednesday 13 December: **Conference Day 1**

(9.30am – 6pm)

LSE Life Workspace 4, Lionel Robbins Building, LSE

Wednesday 13 December: **Keynote Lecture 2**

(6.30pm – 8pm)

MAR.1.04, Marshall Building, LSE

Thursday 14 December: **Conference Day 2**

(9.30am – 6pm)

LSE Life Workspace 4, Lionel Robbins Building, LSE

Thursday 14 December: **Keynote Lecture 3**

(6.30pm – 8pm)

MAR.1.04, Marshall Building, LSE

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TUESDAY – 12 DECEMBER

5:00pm – 6:00pm: **Conference Reception** (Staff Dining Room, Level 5, Old Building, LSE)

6:00pm – 8:00pm: **Keynote Lecture: David Holloway (Stanford University), “Reflections on 1983” (Yangtze Theatre, Centre Building CBG, LSE)**

Introductory remarks from: Vladislav Zubok (LSE); Matthew Jones (LSE); Victoria Phillips (LSE and Woodrow Wilson Center)

8.00pm: **Dinner** (Brasserie Blanc – Chancery Lane, 119 Chancery Ln, London WC2A 1PP)

WEDNESDAY – 13 DECEMBER

(LSE Life Workspace 4, Lionel Robbins Building, LSE)

9:30am – 10:00am: **Breakfast**

10.00am - 11:30am: **Twin Tracks and Zero Options: The Euromissiles Crisis in long-term perspective**

Chair:

- *Sergey Radchenko (SAIS, Johns Hopkins)*

Speakers:

- *Susan Colbourn (Duke University)*
- *Ollie Barton (DSTL)*
- *Leopoldo Nuti (Universita Roma Tre)*

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WEDNESDAY – 13 DECEMBER (continued)

11:30am – 11.45am: **Tea/Coffee Break**

11:45am – 1:15pm: **Protest and Survive? Anti-nuclear activism in retrospect**

Chair:

- *Margaret Peacock (University of Alabama and Woodrow Wilson Center)*

Speakers:

- *Luc Brunet (Open University)*
- *Victoria Phillips (LSE and Woodrow Wilson Center)*

Discussant:

- *Carol Gluck (Columbia University)*

1:15pm – 2:00pm: **Lunch**

2:00pm – 3:15pm: **Women, Children, and the Propaganda Battles of 1983**

Chair:

- *Frank Costigliola (University of Connecticut)*

Speakers:

- *Margaret Peacock (University of Alabama and Woodrow Wilson Center)*
- *Dina Fainberg (City University)*

Discussant:

- *Tony Shaw (University of Hertfordshire)*

3:15pm – 3.30pm: **Tea/Coffee Break**

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WEDNESDAY – 13 DECEMBER (continued)

3.30pm – 5:00pm: **How close to the Brink? The Able Archer Controversy revisited**

Chair:

- *David Holloway (Stanford University)*

Speakers:

- *Simon Miles (Duke University)*
- *Ben Griffin (Department of History, West Point)*

Discussant:

- *Leopoldo Nuti (Universita Roma Tre)*

5.00pm – 5.45pm: **Roundtable on interrogating the archive: Hard and soft power perspectives on 1983**

- *Victoria Phillips (LSE and Woodrow Wilson Center)*
- *Christian Ostermann (Woodrow Wilson Center)*
- *Susan Colbourn (Duke University)*
- *Simon Miles (Duke University)*
- *Margaret Peacock (Alabama and Woodrow Wilson Center)*
- *Tony Shaw (Hertfordshire)*

6.30pm – 8.00pm: **Keynote Lecture: Frank Costigliola (University of Connecticut): George F. Kennan and the end of the Cold War** (MAR.1.04, Level 1, Marshall Building, LSE) chaired by Vladislav Zubok (LSE)

8.00pm – **Dinner** (The Ship Tavern, 12 Gate St, London WC2A 3HP)

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THURSDAY – 14 DECEMBER

(LSE Life Workspace 4, Lionel Robbins Building, LSE)

9:30am – 10.00am: **Breakfast**

10:00am – 11:30am: **The Global Cold War in 1983: Africa, Central America and Afghanistan**

Chair:

- *Christian Ostermann (Woodrow Wilson Center)*

Speakers:

- *Sue Onslow (SAS, University of London)*
- *Eline van Ommen (Leeds University)*
- *Elisabeth Leake (Tufts University)*

11:30am – 11.45am: **Tea/Coffee Break**

11:45am – 1:15pm: **Scientists and Star Wars**

Chair:

- *Victoria Phillips (LSE and Woodrow Wilson Center)*

Speakers:

- *Aaron Bateman (George Washington University)*
- *Matthew Evangelista (Cornell)*
- *Tony Shaw (Hertfordshire)*

1:15pm – 2:00pm: **Lunch**

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THURSDAY – 14 DECEMBER (continued)

2:00pm – 3:30pm: **The Soviet Union and the question of decline in 1983**

Chair:

- *Sue Onslow (SAS, University of London)*

Speakers:

- *Vladislav Zubok (LSE)*
- *Sergey Radchenko (SAIS, Johns Hopkins)*

Discussants:

- *David Holloway (Stanford)/Matthew Evangelista (Cornell)*

3:30pm – 3:45pm: **Tea/Coffee Break**

3.45pm – 5:15pm: **Roundtable: Was 1983 a Turning Point in the Cold War?**

Participants:

- *David Holloway*
- *Leopoldo Nuti*
- *Christian Ostermann*
- *Susan Colbourn*
- *Frank Costigliola*
- *Elisabeth Leake*
- *Vladislav Zubok*
- *Margaret Peacock*
- *Sue Onslow*
- *Sergey Radchenko*

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THURSDAY – 14 DECEMBER (continued)

6:30pm – 8.00pm: **Closing lecture:** *Carol Gluck (Columbia University): Nuclear Holocaust and Historical Memory, chaired by Victoria Phillips (LSE and Woodrow Wilson Center)*

(MAR.1.04, Level 1, Marshall Building, LSE)



**Cold War
Studies Project**
Department of
International History