"America was made by the railroads. They united the country and then stimulated the economic development that enabled the country to become the world’s richest nation. The railroads also transformed American society, changing it from a primarily agrarian economy to an industrial powerhouse in the space of a few decades of the nineteenth century. Quite simply, without the railroads, the United States would not have become the United States."

So begins Christian Wolmar’s masterful history of the railroad in America. The opening of the first American railroad line in the 1830s sparked a revolution in mode, speed, and convenience that united far-flung parts of the country. As Wolmar describes it, the new means of conveyance “seemed to reflect the pioneering spirit of the age”—indeed, trains “seemed to be tailor-made for the huge American landmass and for the indomitable spirit of its people.” As the country expanded westward, so did the railroad, and by the end of the nineteenth century, cities and towns from coast to coast were connected by railroad lines. The expansion of trade, industry, travel, and communication that the railroads made possible facilitated the American dream and our country’s rise to economic power.

Why, then, do trains seem so irrelevant today? Wolmar explores how, even as technologies—the automobile and the airplane—rose to displace them, the railroads remained a vital part of the supply chain during World Wars I and II. Today, most people consider the railroad to be a failed industry, but trains in fact have maintained their crucial role in transporting freight around our vast nation, and passenger travel on trains is on the rise. “America may have gradually disowned its railroad heritage—but now is the time to reclaim and reinstate it,” Wolmar writes. “This book attempts to do just that.”

Christian Wolmar is a writer, broadcaster, and railway and transport expert. He has written for major British newspapers for many years and has contributed to many other publications, including the New York Times and Newsday. His most recent books are Blood, Iron, and Gold and Engines of War.

For more information or to schedule an interview, please contact Jaime Leifer at 212-340-8183 or jaime.leifer@publicaffairsbooks.com.
MORE PRAISE FOR THE GREAT RAILROAD REVOLUTION

“Christian Wolmar is in love with railways. He writes constantly and passionately about them. He is their wisest, most detailed historian and a constant prophet of their rebirth. So America, from 1830 on, from a few, tentative miles of track to a quarter of a million miles only 80 years later, is a story that grips his imagination… The tangle of failure, frailty and faint-heartedness he unpicks here goes far beyond mere romance: it resonates and crosses borders of national experience; it tells us something vital about the nature of railways we still struggle to learn to this day… If you love the hum of the wheels and of history, then Christian Wolmar is your man.” —The Guardian (UK)

“[A] passionate and masterly history.” — Sunday Times (UK)

“This is the ninth book that Wolmar has written about trains of various kinds. It is certainly among the best, incorporating, alongside some gripping and downright bizarre reports upon a century-long stretch of vastly improved transport and soaring economic growth… an account of the ‘sheer, almost unbelievable scale of corruption and graft’ from which brutal opportunists like Huntington, Stanford and Gould minted their undeserved millions... Enjoyably anecdotal.” —Daily Telegraph (UK)

“In his new book, his ninth, a comprehensive, compulsive and compelling epic story of the American railroad, Christian Wolmar reveals how that revolution actually fuelled the nation’s rise to a world-status power with its new found ability to glue itself together into a cohesive economic force… Wolmar’s magnificent saga tells graphically how it all happened, then collapsed as man’s love affair with trains transferred first to cars, then to airplanes and possibly next lock on to rockets into space….What is outstanding in his fascinating research is the detail, an encyclopedia of railway lore, myth and anecdote that could – and has – sustained many a film, TV series and novel.” —Camden (London, UK) New Journal