



A History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to the End

Peter Kenez

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An examination of political, social and cultural developments in the Soviet Union. The book identifies the social tensions and political inconsistencies that spurred radical change in the government of Russia, from the turn of the century to the revolution of 1917. Kenez envisions that revolution as a crisis of authority that posed the question, 'Who shall govern Russia?' This question was resolved with the creation of the Soviet Union. Kenez traces the development of the Soviet Union from the Revolution, through the 1920s, the years of the New Economic Policies and into the Stalinist order. He shows how post-Stalin Soviet leaders struggled to find ways to rule the country without using Stalin's methods but also without openly repudiating the past, and to negotiate a peaceful but antipathetic coexistence with the capitalist West. In this second edition, he also examines the post-Soviet period, tracing Russia's development up to the time of publication.

A History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to the End Details

Date : Published May 1st 2006 by Cambridge University Press (first published March 13th 1999)

ISBN : 9780521682961

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Format : Paperback 342 pages

Genre : History, Cultural, Russia, Nonfiction, Politics, Russian History

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From Reader Review A History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to the End for online ebook

Katherine Schmitt says

This managed to feel like a very surface level history of the USSR, but it also seemed to take for granted that the reader already knew basic dates and facts. Somehow I feel like I didn't really learn very much.

Nicholas says

Kenez gives a thorough rendering of the domestic history of the Soviet Union from 1917 to 1991. Though he uses charged language at times, he remains relatively unbiased compared to Malia and co.

Steve says

This is a very detailed, in-depth analysis of the Soviet Union from a political and economic perspective. It is a bit dense at times, and assumes some prior knowledge on the origins of the Bolsheviks to fully comprehend the early sections. After that, however, it is a very descriptive, elucidating, and relatively balanced view on what happened under the various leaders of the USSR, why those things happened, and what the effects were on the common people, the leadership, and the world.

Overall, a very good book. Only down sides are the aforementioned density, initial lack of clarity at the very beginning, and somewhat awkward phrasing, requiring a close re-read to ensure understanding.

Daniel Almeida Leon says

I was a bit skeptical of what I thought to be unnecessary nuance about the Bolshevik seizure of power. At times Kenez seems a bit too sympathetic to the amount of worker consciousness associated with the Bolshevik parties take over, but overall the book is very good in its linear analysis of Soviet history. At other times it seems a bit too neutral in tone but over all does give a refreshing perspective of the Soviet regime that is complemented by other literature. An enjoyable book of scholarly merit.

Alyssa Alekseeva says

I was looking for a certain USSR ebook and couldn't find it. Instead, this caught my eye, so I downloaded it and started (rather slowly) reading.

Since there is an abundance of information on pre-October Russia, the Lenin era, and the Stalinist era, one would assume there to be a wide-ranging abundance on the following eras, the eras of Khrushchev and the "era of stagnation" under Brezhnev. Sadly, it seems like most of the historical perspectives on those two eras are rather muddled and harder to define in concrete terms.

This work, while obviously not the most unbiased or "even", is an excellent historical perspective on Russia's 20th century history, and especially on a lot of the easily-overlooked details.

Starting with the characters of October, one gets a sense of just how idealistic and ideologically pure the Bolsheviks believed themselves to be. Following the legendary October, one gets a feel for politics in the Lenin era and how they came to be increasingly manipulated by Joseph Stalin. As it carries on from Trotsky's deportation into the purges and forced collectivization, the mood starts to change into something growing drastically more "evil", if you will. When Stalin's era has come to a close, the Soviet Union has been ravaged by war and the aforementioned purges. The really interesting stuff comes with Khrushchev's political maneuvers around other potential leaders of the time, and gives a window into his ideological confidence in a more or less Old Bolshevik vision.

While much less is to be said of the "era of stagnation" and the USSR under ill-fated leaders Andropov/Chernenko, it seems relatively fitting. These leaders were the conservatives, those unwilling to act as reformers to meet an ideological vision that was by all means becoming somewhat exhausted.

Though like early leaders there is a wealth of information on the Gorbachev era, this work dedicates significantly less to Gorbachev's administration, and tends to focus on the currents developing right under his nose - that of Yeltsin's increasing anti-communist belligerence. Once more, it seems relatively fitting given the circumstance.

As for the final parts, covering the democratization of Russia, the dissolution of the USSR, and privatization, this is where the book really shines. It gives a seemingly balanced treatment to both the good and bad sides to modern Russia. While Yeltsin's reforms are acknowledged to have been disastrous at the time, the balance is pointed out in the declining living standards of late period USSR. The notes regarding Vladimir Putin's authoritarian tendencies also paint a fair picture of a dictator in training who is actually applauded by his people.

All in all, this is a fascinating work that covers a lot of ground. While there is some left to be desired, particularly regarding the Brezhnev/Andropov/Chernenko years, this is one seriously intellectually satisfying read for anyone wanting to know more about the USSR, whether first timers, communists in training, capitalists in dire need of ammo, or seasoned USSR veterans. I can only give it the highest recommendations!

Paul Bryant says

Yeah, but it wasn't all bad! Here's a guy with the worst ever toupee singing his bizarro Russian heart out on some Soviet tv show - this is a gift to all my goodreads friends. Note - he doesn't appear immediately, you have to wait 17 seconds. He's worth the wait.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oavMtU...>

Bubba says

I was assigned to read this for a course in grad school, but had to drop the class, so I never began it. I didn't think much of it, b/c, at first glance, it seems like the 10,000 other surveys of Soviet history with similar titles. A few weeks ago I saw it in a used bookstore for \$1. I figured for a buck it might be worth reading.

Once I actually got into it I was very surprised by the depth of the author's research and analysis. He makes so many insightful points. For it's slim size, it is one of the best surveys of Soviet history I've ever come across.

Ali says

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Marcel Patulacci says

A good account on the history of the soviet union from its premises in the last Tsartist years until its fall and even beyond, to the first election of Vladimir Putin. Economical, political, social aspects, international relations and even cultural life are evoked. However, it's somehow a pity, that the Afghan War is so briefly approached, though it was one of the main elements (among many others) that lead to the final collapse of the USSR.

Diogo Jesus says

Poor narrative.

Some good points and observations but very limited in its explanations and rare in the whole (not very inovative or well put together).

Good division of chapters and personal division in 3: the 20's, growth-stagnation and fall.

Overall: not bad but frustrated my expectations.

Sarah says

As far as genre go's, I'd consider this the perfect mix between popular and academic history. Kenez presents the Soviet Union in a completely accessible way and with a touch of humour which is often missing from even the best historical discourse. A comparatively easy but complete and informative read that I'd recommend to anyone interested in the foundation, collapse and all over affairs of the former Soviet Union.

Ângela Serrão says

Um livro extremamente completo sobre toda a história da União Soviética (acho que o título diz tudo, certo? ;))

Gostei da organização do livro, os capítulos estavam bem divididos, estruturados e havia um bom fio condutor - não senti que a informação estivesse dispersa. Gostei também do facto de apresentar várias teorias e visões possíveis em relação à URSS e, em particular, à Guerra Fria; não assumiu automaticamente 1 posição anti-Rússia, aceitando também a parte culpada dos EUA na construção destas divergências. Um livro essencial para consultar caso estejam interessados na temática! É relativamente caro mas a edição é fabulosa, o papel tem extrema qualidade e toda a obra é acompanhada com algumas fotografias.

Shari says

A History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to the End by Peter Kenez (1999)

Kathy says

Very interesting. I was led to this after reading about Nikolai Vavilov. I wanted to know more about Stalin. I read the first half of the book through Stalin and learned a lot. I am sure that the rest of the book is good too but chose not to read it at this time. So many books. So little time!

Mark Singer says

A surprisingly thorough and comprehensive history of the Soviet Union! This was a required reading in a course I took in the Spring of 2009 at Temple University called "Revolutionary Europe: From the French Revolution to the Collapse of the Soviet Union".
