



The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917-1991

By Martin Malia

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"*The Soviet Tragedy* is an essential coda to the literature of Soviet studies...Insofar as [he] returns the power of ideology to its central place in Soviet history, Malia has made an enormous contribution. He has written the history of a utopian illusion and the tragic consequences it had for the people of the Soviet Union and the world."

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

If the Bolshevik revolution shook the world, the 74-year reign of socialists in the former Soviet Union certainly changed it. Now that the rule is over--at least for the moment--historians are beginning the process of placing the experience into its political, social and global contexts. Martin Malia, a former history professor at the University of California, Berkeley, has contributed mightily to that process with this comprehensive look at the entire period of socialist rule, from its origins to the roots of its collapse. He leaves no conceptual stone unturned, providing lively insights to ideas and ideologies while offering a complete summary of the complex history.

From Publishers Weekly

This shrewd analysis of the failure of the Soviet experiment dismantles the view that the Soviet regime originated in a genuinely popular revolution rather than a conspiratorial coup and that the Bolsheviks' quest for democratic socialism was derailed by pressing circumstances. Malia traces a direct link between Lenin's monolithic one-party state and Stalin's purges, pulverization of civil society and institutionalization of terror. A former professor of history at UC Berkeley, the author contends that Khrushchev, Brezhnev and Gorbachev oscillated between attempts to reform and to preserve Stalin's legacy, which aggravated Communism's systemic problems. This study closes with a look at post-Communist Russia in near-total economic chaos.

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From Library Journal

Malia's lengthy postmortem scans the entire sweep of applied socialism in Russia--from the glory days of 1917 to high Stalinism and on to its recent collapse. In an almost archaeological sense, Malia (history, formerly Univ. of California-Berkeley) pokes at the various strata of socialism, noting small shifts and subtle changes that become obvious only when he explains them. Yet major observations emerge as well, e.g., that the Communist Party was able to act at will only because of an oppositional void shaped by the atomizing effects of World War I. Unfortunately, Malia energetically smashes and dispenses with any historiographical interpretations that aren't unabashedly anti-Communist. Interesting and frequently illuminating, but don't expect much balance or objectivity; for larger collections.

- *Mark R. Yerburgh, Fern Ridge Community Lib., Veneta, Ore.*

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