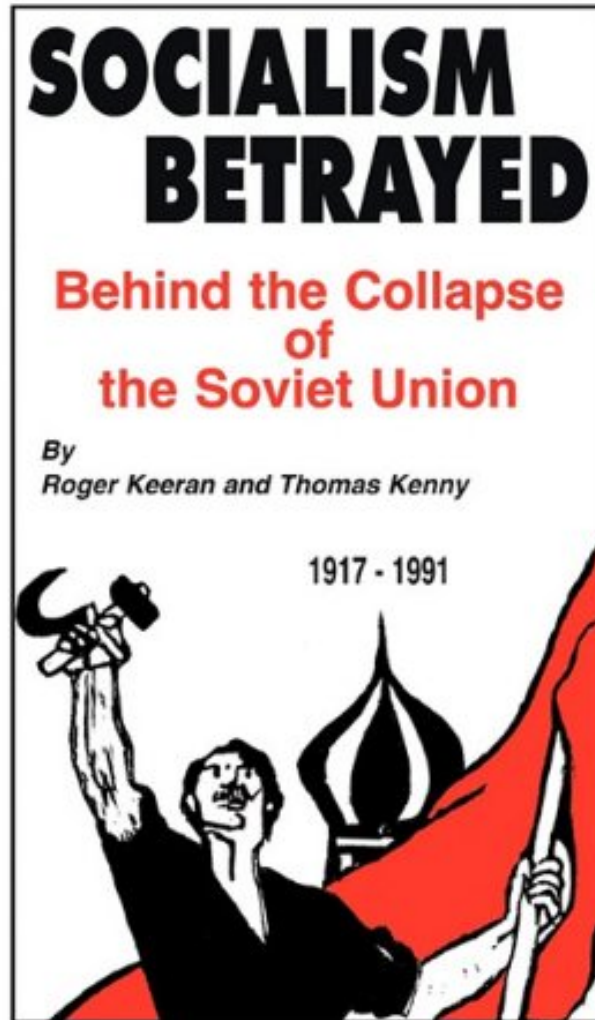


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Socialism Betrayed: Behind the Collapse of the Soviet Union

Roger Keeran, Thomas Kenny

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Roger Keeran, Thomas Kenny : Socialism Betrayed: Behind the Collapse of the Soviet Union before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Socialism Betrayed: Behind the Collapse of the Soviet Union:

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. An Excellent BookBy Gavin O'BrienThe real reasons behind the collapse of the USSR. A tragic account of human greed. Education is a wonderful thing.13 of 14 people found the

following review helpful. A Powerhouse of a Book By Isaac Rounseville Socialism Betrayed is a highly unusual book, at least for this US reader. I found its premise, that the Soviet Union was a fully functioning state whose accomplishments for humanity outweighed its failures, pretty shocking at first. I feel like I speak for a lot of Americans in saying that when debating issues of world history and the global economy, any view that doesn't vehemently condemn the Soviet Union as a violent, parasitic, cruel, despotic empire built off of genocide and coercion can't be taken seriously. Ever since 6th or 7th grade, when we started to discuss the Soviet Union seriously in my history classes, the term was always synonymous with horrific repression, starvation, violence, cruelty, etc. etc. The "fact" that the Soviet Union was inherently evil seemed as fundamental an idea as $2 + 2 = 4$. So, needless to say, I was a little confused when I approached this book. Two authors -- of seemingly sound mind -- with solid academic credentials writing a thoroughly researched book that positions the Soviet Union in history as a positive good for humanity! Nevertheless, I was eager to read the book once I got started. Despite your initial views on communism, capitalism, the US, or the USSR, Keeran and Kenny's work has many interesting insights and perspectives to offer. I wholeheartedly agree that after reading all the information that's been so well organized throughout Socialism Betrayed that "it is unlikely the winners of 1991 will have the last word." The authors set the historical record straight with a wealth of data that none of my teachers bothered to address in their condemnations, such as the popular support throughout the USSR population for maintaining the Soviet Union (even in its death throes in 1991); or the statistics of wealth and income equality in the USSR that put those of western economies to shame; or the unprecedented increase in living standards and economic output that brought the SU from backwards, feudalistic serfdom to world-superpower status within 50 years; or the information that shows how planned economies grew faster than market economies throughout the 20th century; or the widespread political participation in the USSR in the form of trade unions, workers assemblies, production conferences, industrial enterprises, and the Communist party itself; or the horrific economic collapse and ensuing hardships that millions of former Soviet citizens had to go through and are still enduring to this day since 1991. Yes, this book definitely should alter one's perspective on the effectiveness and overall impact of the Soviet Union throughout the 20th century, as well as its ability to function as a state. But one thing I appreciate so much about the author's presentation in the book is that they aren't rabid defenders of Soviet socialism. While it is clear they have an axe to grind with Mikhail Gorbachev, the main initiator of reform policies that reintroduced markets, expanded corruption, diluted party influence in government, and ultimately destroyed the Soviet Union in the late 1980s/early 1990s, they don't hold back in criticizing what was wrong with the Soviet system in its heyday. They point out that corruption, party privilege, economic inefficiency, unnecessary media censorship, and many other flaws were endemic in Soviet socialism. But all these problems, as they point out, by no means generated an unmanageable crisis that would lead to collapse. They also don't shy away from addressing the heated allegations surrounding Joseph Stalin, the main figure the west loves to associate with the inherent "evil" of the Soviet system. So much of the "facts" surrounding the Soviet ruler reek of inflation, exaggeration, propaganda, vitriol etc. etc. spewed by western media/academia that it is almost impossible to have a rational discussion about his rule and its place in history. Does anyone, for instance, find it strange that death figures people cite in denouncing Stalin invariably range anywhere between 4 and 100 million people? Or that people don't seem to take into account that the Soviet Union had suffered the greatest of all the allied powers in WWII in terms of civilian and military death toll and sheer economic destruction? Clearly, Stalin was no angel, as the authors are quick to point out, and we shouldn't avoid unflattering information about him and his record when it comes up. But, like any other leader, he deserves to be judged fairly for both his accomplishments and failures, with external pressures on him and the USSR being taken into account (like the horrors of WWII and European Fascism). According to Kenny and Keeran, we should wait until more information emerges from sources that aren't obviously pro-western/anti-Soviet, some sources of which the authors make frequent note of throughout the book. Along with a trove of valuable historic information, Socialism Betrayed also offers a lot of interesting thoughts about the difficulties of effectively managing socialist systems and their qualitative differences from capitalist systems. The book really helps broaden one's mind on a subject that so many American writers, pundits, economists, and yes, educators, would like to keep bottled up. The simple fact that the Soviet Union collapsed as a result of conscious reforms, and not because of its inherent instability and inefficiency as a system, carries with it many implications on human nature and the "innate" character so many people ascribe to capitalism. Ultimately, Socialism Betrayed is a refreshingly useful, well-organized, and thought-provoking work. It opens the doors to many new explanations of global events, and leaves the reader with a variety of alternative sources to help foster discussion and exploration of the Soviet Union's place in history. The fact that I was able to read it so easily and quickly speaks to the authors' passion on this subject: there's no pointless bloviating, obscure references, or economic jargon. It's simply just a focused presentation of the sobering facts surrounding the last century's arguably most important event. Hopefully we'll have more books of this nature in the future on similar subjects, either by the same authors or different ones with the credentials and desire to speak out on issues that too many people are willfully ignorant of.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Fine Marxist analysis with a few shortcomings. By J. Sarles Generally an excellent analysis of how the proponents of "the second economy" (i.e., private ownership) undermined and eventually destroyed the Soviet Union and its socialist framework. I think the authors underestimate the extent to which this and

related problems were rooted in the Stalin era. In addition, the book would have benefited from an analysis of the devastating impact of the Sino-Soviet split on the global struggle against capitalism and imperialism and on the prospects for resisting the unrelenting attacks against the socialist camp by the U.S. and its allies.

"A fresh multi-faceted look at the overthrow of the Soviet State, the dismemberment of the Soviet Union, and the campaign to introduce capitalism from above. Roger Keeran and Thomas Kenny have given us a clear and powerful Marxist analysis of the momentous events which most directly shaped world politics today, the destruction of the USSR, the 'Superpower' of socialism." -Norman Markowitz, author of *The Rise and Fall of the People's Century* "I have not read anything else with such detailed and intimate knowledge of what took place. This manuscript is the most important contribution I have read." -Phillip Bonosky, author of *Afghanistan-Washington's Secret War* "A well-researched work containing a great deal of useful historical information. Everyone will benefit greatly from the mass of historical data and the thought-provoking arguments contained in the book." -Bahman Azad, author of *Heroic Struggle Bitter Defeat: Factors Contributing to the Dismantling of the Socialist State in the USSR*