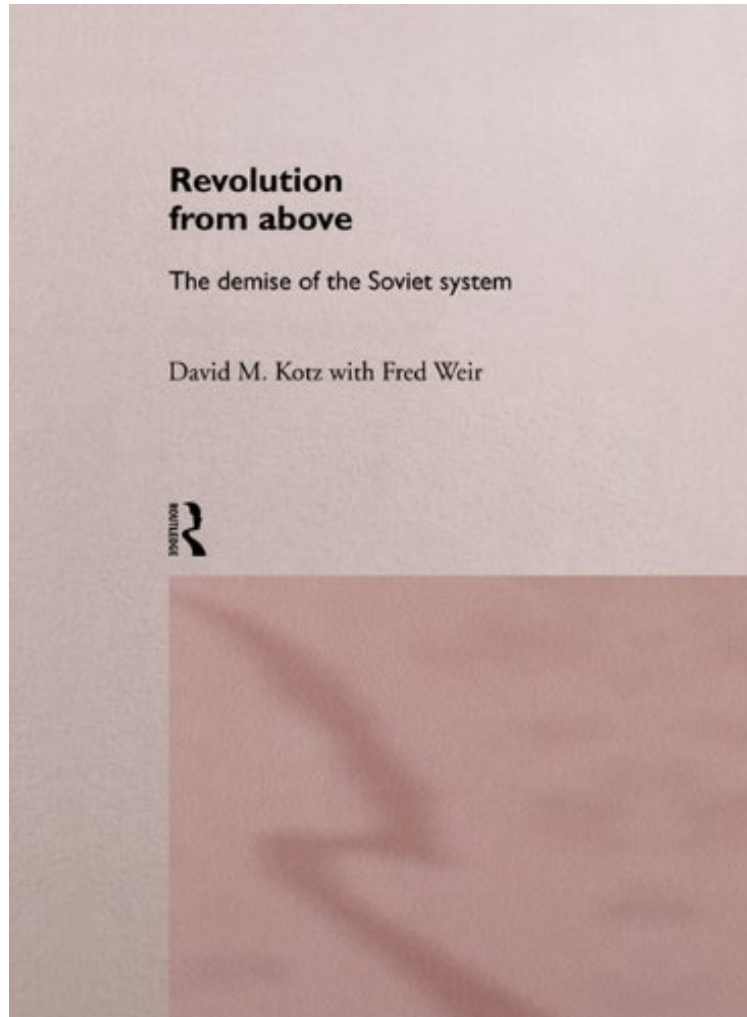


[Free pdf] Revolution From Above: The Demise of the Soviet System

Revolution From Above: The Demise of the Soviet System

David Kotz, Fred Weir

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David Kotz, Fred Weir : Revolution From Above: The Demise of the Soviet System before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Revolution From Above: The Demise of the Soviet System:

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Counter-Revolution From Above By David W. Ewing This is an important book about the cause of the defeat of Soviet Socialism. "Revolution From Above" identifies that cause as the betrayal of socialism by Russia's elite state and party administrators. The Russian elite was ideologically corrupted by western propaganda and they were materially corrupted by their elite privileges over ordinary workers. The defeat had more to do with the pressures of capitalism on the Soviet elite than with the failure of Marxist Socialism. Based on the content of the book, the catchy title is obviously wrong. The end of Soviet Socialism was hardly a revolution. It was, as the authors make clear in all their arguments, a counter-revolution that restored the same system of capitalism

that prevailed in WW1 Russia and was overthrown by the REAL revolution of 1917. Throughout this otherwise wonderful book, the authors constantly point out the backward and reactionary character of the 1990s "Revolution" that wrecked the living standards and betrayed the naive expectations of the Russian people. They just can't bring themselves to use the word "Counter-Revolution". Why not? The loss of the USSR triggered the defeat of most of the world's socialist states and led to grave setbacks for workers everywhere. Since the fall of socialism, the capitalist countries, led by the USA, have embarked on new wars of conquest without having to fear a credible military response to their aggression. Coupled with these ever expanding wars, have been worldwide slashes in workers living standards and coordinated repression against organized labor and minorities. Yet all this war and repression has not prevented the implosion of capitalism in 2008. As I am writing this review, in October 2010, workers in France and Italy are in the streets, fighting for their futures against their rulers, who are determined to make the workers pay for this latest collapse of capitalism. If the workers win in Europe, they could rejuvenate labor in the West, and perhaps even stiffen the spines of American labor leaders. The brightest hope for socialists today is the spectacular success of the Peoples Republic of China -- a socialist achievement built on defying the conventional wisdom of the neo-liberal economists of the United States. It is a beacon of hope for humanity and the best verification of the superiority of socialism over capitalism. China has steadily increased state spending and social spending, pushing its economy to record levels of growth and expansion while raising the living standard of the working class, years after year. By contrast, the one-trick-pony of American Capitalism is cutbacks. Slash workers wages, lay them off, fire them, cut production, and wait for wage level to fall low enough for a new profit surge. In the meantime, use state funds to bail out every failed bank speculator and insurance company so that the income of the capitalists is shielded from the crisis. Use the FBI to round up peace protesters and to scare the pants off any worker who would dare imitate his comrades in Italy and France. I read "Revolution From Above" as a warning, and a vital lesson to the few surviving socialist parties and socialist countries. The remaining four socialist states are China, Vietnam, North Korea, and Cuba. All these states are confronted by the huge military and propaganda machines of the USA and Europe. These states, like the far stronger USSR, could fail under the pressure from the West. The lesson from Russia is that the Communist Party leaderships -- the "elite" of the socialist states -- is vulnerable to the kind of corruption that led Russia's elite to choose capitalism. Part of maintaining the survival of socialist states must be vigilance against the elite corruption that doomed socialism in the USSR.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Prophetically Stands Above the Weeds By R. L. HuffKotz and Weir (mostly Kotz) produced a period gem in the late 90s, detailing the evolution of Soviet nomenklatura socialism into a new ruling class of capitalists. This evolution was much like the English landed oligarchy, allied with a rising merchant class, transforming itself into lords of capital through inherited property: though a much slower process than the revolutionary tactic their parallels employed in Russia. Kotz' thesis, though impeccably documented, flew in the face of contemporary Western boosterism that reasoned anything anti-Communist must be for the greater good of mankind (as they once reasoned for the rise of fascism, South African apartheid, and Latin American coups). Only in recent years, long after the fact, has mainstream academia and journalism conceded democratic "defeat" in the post-Soviet reconstruction of Russian authoritarianism; though without this socialist critique and still prone to blame the outcome on "Soviet survivals" rather than intrinsic workings of the New Russia. In a couple respects I'll beg to differ with his theses. Kotz tends to dismiss the value of corruption in leading to free market transformation, blaming the stagnation of the 1970s more on macroeconomic factors of too many rubles chasing too few goods in a constricting global marketplace. There is truth in that, but the closet wheeling-dealing of the Brezhnev years must take precedence in hollowing out the Soviet state and economy. Too much diversion of resources, finished product, and revenue that should have gone back into official channels was traded, bought and sold illegally, or "liquidated" in back-channel banking. It was much as if the management and staff at Walmart were secretly dealing in received merchandise at the loading dock, with the resulting shortage on the legitimate shelves. Further, formal privatizing could only make such a situation worse, and so it did in Russia. The noise of "loyal opposition" within "democratic socialism" was so much rhetorical posturing for most (perhaps Gorbachev included, though not as cynically), made necessary by the strength of the inherited party-state apparatus; but quickly shucked like a boiled crawfish shell as their power grew. Kotz' book describes how such a cynical, self-serving Sunday-go-to-meeting elite could morph into an "apparatus of capital" without breaking stride: recalling Orwell's conclusion in "Animal Farm," of pigs transformed into real men of property at the banquet table of foreign investors. On another point, democratization in the Soviet era and in Russia did not first emerge in the 1980s, thanks to Gorbachev. The 1917 revolution was decidedly libertarian, more so than the democratic wave of glasnost. The heritage of autocracy was so sharply rejected that anything smacking of official, traditional authority was thrown in the mud; so much so that Russian state and society were on the verge of unraveling. Lenin's genius was to restore central authority *with* the revolution, not against it, offering the ultra-democracy of the soviets to bait his hook. Yeltsin did the same with his libertarian posturing in the early 90s. The finished product of both revolutions bore little resemblance to the original surge of liberation, thanks to well-placed "vanguards." Kotz was certainly spot-on with his variable trajectories for Russian evolution. Under Putin it is the first, authoritarian track that has triumphed, which Kotz labelled "neofascist" and with which many Western critics of Putin would agree. This entailed the "Third Worldization" of a pauperized Russia under a narrow state and private oligarchy. Much of the angst

originally expressed in the Zhirinovsky movement has been officially embraced some two decades later. Yet it must be borne in mind that this process began under Yeltsin, by making himself Tzar-President, shelling the Russian parliament, and launching a war of conquest in Chechnya against public opinion: all with cynical Western support, as with Pinochet, Chiang Kai-Shek, and other "Free World" authoritarians. Putin's real sin has not been the steady castration of democracy, but closing the once-open door of Western money and control. Kotz' book is well-researched. His interview list comprised all the core persons (outside of Gorbachev) involved in the transformation process. Despite my disagreements it remains essential reading for all those seriously interested in the evolution of the revolution of the late 20th century, and still stands tall above the jungle of weeds still sprouting in Western reportage. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Simple Chinese version has drawn a great deal of attention By LU XIASimple Chinese translation version of this important book has been published by Renmin University of China Press in 2014, and it has been listed in the Key Publication Project of the Twelfth-Five-Year-Plan, which is the top plan compiled by the Central Committee of the CCP for the entire country every five years, covering major aspects of social, economic, political, and cultural development. Books written and translated in this field has attracted a great deal of attention from all walks of Chinese society, especially from the elites, who have been encountering the similar situations since the great Chinese reform was launched in late 1970s.

Controversially this book argues that the ruling party-state elite in the USSR itself moved to dismantle the old system. Topics discussed include: * the beginnings of economic decline in 1975 * Gorbachev's efforts to democratize and decentralize * the complex political battle through which the coalition favouring capitalism took power * the flaws in economic policies intended to rapidly build capitalism * the surprising resurgence of Communism. Research includes interviews with over 50 former Soviet government and Communist party leaders, policy advisors, new private businessmen, trade union leaders and intellectuals.

"Readers...will find a great deal of information on the real state of affairs in the Russian economy and the results of "shock therapy"; on the transformations post-Soviet society has undergone; and on the government and the opposition.... "Revolution from Above will be as valuable for Western radicals as for Russians and students of Russian history."-"In These Times ..."one of the best books yet to appear about what has happened in the former Soviet Union in this last tragic decade.... It is a good book because it is based on a careful, scholarly analysis of a laboriously collected treasury of facts.... This book is an eye-opener for anyone who is tired of the prevailing wisdom about today's Russia."-"Monthly "The account is distinguished from many others by its critical perspective, which is to be welcomed...."-Simon Clarke, University of Warwick, "Contemporary Sociology From the Back CoverThis book gives a new interpretation of the disintegration of the USSR. It challenges the widespread belief that the demise of the old regime was caused by the collapse of the Soviet economy, accompanied by public demand that socialism should be abandoned.