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The Russian Revolution



Synopsis

The Russian Revolution had a decisive impact on the history of the twentieth century. Now, following the collapse of the Soviet regime and the opening of its archives, it is possible to step back and see the full picture of this event for the first time. Impeccable in its scholarship and objectivity, this superb volume tells the gripping story of a Marxist revolution that was intended to transform the world, but instead visited enormous suffering on the Russian people, and, like the French Revolution before it, ended up devouring its own children. The author offers insightful descriptions of the February and October Revolutions of 1917, the Civil War, the interlude of NEP, Stalin's "revolution from above," the various Five-Year Plans, and the Great Purges--all treated as discrete episodes in a twenty-year process of revolution. The book incorporates data from archives that were previously inaccessible not only to Western but also to Soviet historians, as well as drawing on important recent Russian publications such as the memoirs of one of the great survivors of Soviet politics, Vyacheslav Molotov. In the Select Bibliography, the author highlights the most important of the recent scholarly works, directing readers to the burgeoning Western scholarship on the Russian Revolution in the last ten to fifteen years. Shelia Fitzpatrick is an internationally known expert on Soviet history. This lively and readable Third Edition uses newly available Soviet archival material and the latest Russian and Western research to provide an authoritative, compact account of one of the key events of modern history.

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Customer Reviews

In 1656, Pascal wrote, "I would have written a shorter letter, but I did not have the time". In other

words, it's easy to be prolix but time, intellect, application and clarity are needed to be concise yet simultaneously informative. In this book, Steve Smith has achieved the "impossible": a perfect example of lucid concision in which he distills books that run to a thousand pages into around 180. "A Short Introduction" is just that and yet, Smith allows for statistical data (e.g., Red vs. White casualty figures, percentages of proletariat vs. peasants, etc) where necessary while also including his own enlightened perspective on the Bolshevik enterprise and yes: there are both good and bad points which should be acknowledged, regardless of one's own political philosophy. By necessity, the story of the Revolution requires contextualization. Perhaps the prime catalyst was Russian involvement in WW-I. Russia was unequipped for battle against a sophisticated, determined professional army (Kaiserine Germany) backed by a large, modern, industrial economy. Yet, despite disaster after disaster, the Great Autocrat, Tsar Nicholas II, this arrogant, benighted and "divinely anointed" ruler was both intractable and sufficiently obtuse as to not recognize the unfolding debacle. A few concessions were made and then recanted. Thus, the stage was set. Kerensky's successor government was limited and ineffectual in dealing with soldier and peasant demands and, fatally engaged with General Kornilov to maintain power. By dint of iron willpower and absolute adherence to a carefully defined program, Lenin succeeded in undermining the Provisional Government. He was masterfully aided by the Petersburg Soviet under the brilliant and supremely capable Trotsky.

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