



Return to the NEP: The False Promise of Leninism and the Failure of Perestroika

By Oscar J. Bandelin

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No scholar denies Mikhail S. Gorbachev's role in developing a new approach to Soviet socialism, but most writers emphasize the radical departure from traditional Soviet ideology that *perestroika* seemed to represent. This work presents *perestroika* as part of the continuum of European intellectual history. It examines the sources of Gorbachev's thinking and action in 19th-century thought, the development of Russian Marxism through the intellectual crisis at the turn of the 20th century, the pragmatic and philosophical challenges to the Marxist-Leninist paradigm, Stalinism and its critics, and reform Communism in post World War II Eastern Europe. Against this background, the book argues that the decline and fall of Soviet Communism was much more deeply connected with ideological issues than most scholars have realized.

Bandelin presents fresh analyses of the impacts of major works and ideas, such as Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, the neglected Marxian concept of the Asiatic mode of production, and the underlying relationship of East European reform Communism to *perestroika*. He analyzes the major intellectual trends of *perestroika* in terms of these and other currents. This study offers a perspective that challenges most of current scholarship on the issues it raises, suggests new avenues for research, and contributes to a broader overall understanding of the problems of Soviet socialism and Gorbachev's effort to solve them.

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Return to the NEP: The False Promise of Leninism and the Failure of Perestroika By Oscar J. Bandelin Bibliography

- Rank: #10610441 in Books
- Brand: Oscar J Bandelin
- Published on: 2002-12-30
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.02" h x .56" w x 5.98" l, .93 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 192 pages

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Review

"[I]t has great material to work with and its central argument is compelling."-Slavic Review

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"[The book] contributes enormously to understanding the failure of perestroika, and more broadly of twentieth century communism....it will be must reading for anyone who really wants to understand Gorbachev and his momentous era."-Herbert Ellison Professor of History, University of Washington

"Bandelin has written an important book on the Leninist origins of Gorbachev's reforms and the Soviet Union's collapse. It is important to be reminded by timely works like [his] that from the beginning Communism was a heady and toxic mixture of utopian idealism, repressive epistemology, and deeply flawed pseudo-science. Its implementation in the former Russian Empire and Eastern Europe brought about disasters from which these societies are only in the first stages of recovery."-David Curp Assistant Professor of History, Ohio University

About the Author

OSCAR J. BANDELIN received his Ph.D. in History from the University of Washington, Seattle.

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