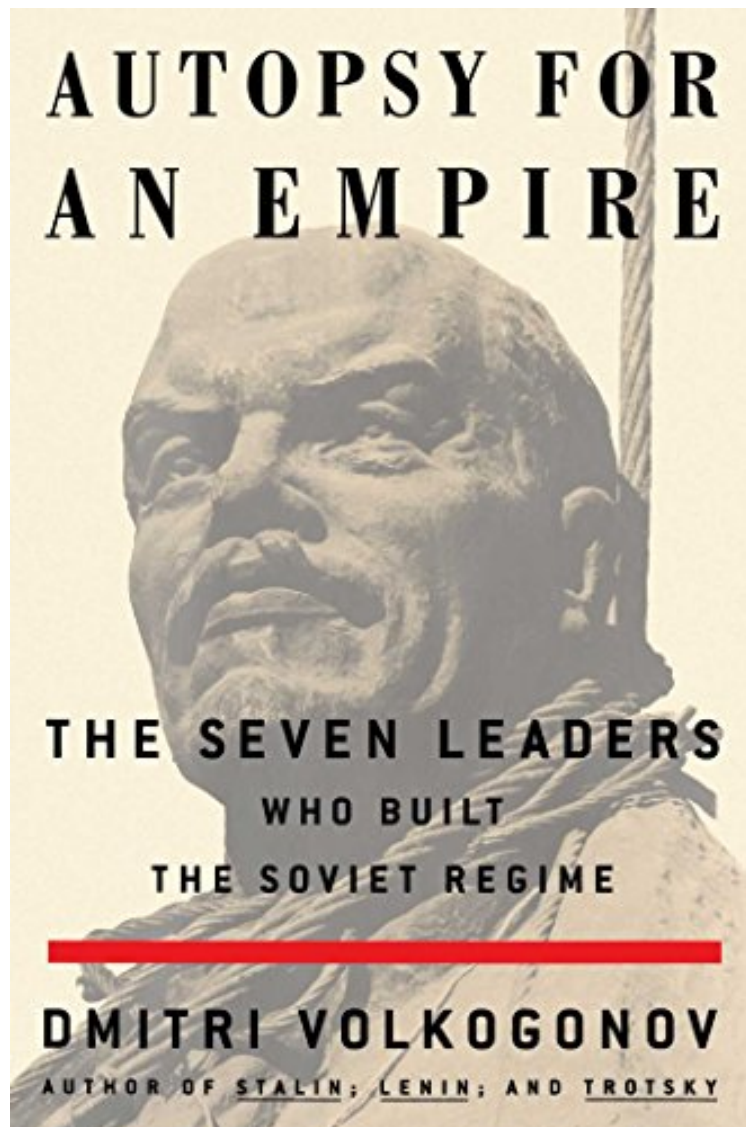


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Von Dmitri Volkogonov

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Von Dmitri Volkogonov : Autopsy For An Empire: The Seven Leaders Who Built the Soviet Regime (English Edition) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Autopsy For An Empire: The Seven Leaders Who Built the Soviet Regime (English Edition):

Kundenrezensionen Hilfreichste Kundenrezensionen 0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. 5 stars

for research; 1 star for ideological fact handling Von Scott Crawford-Edgington (scrawfo@msn.com) I found Volkogonov's book to be full of facts. It was definitely not for someone who has no idea of Soviet history, as he doesn't stop to tell who (for example) the NKVD or Smersh were. If you don't already know, you aren't going to be guessing it from context. I have three major issues with this book:

1. It is not easy to read because there is no real structure to the way he tells the story. It is not completely chronological. As an example, with almost every leader he talks about the events leading up to their death. You figure the chapter is soon to be finished. Nope. 20 more pages later after having changed from the subject numerous times, then the chapter finishes.
2. There is a lack of hard economic data. This is a failure of most books on Soviet history. For some reason, most books seem to believe that the Soviet Union disintegrated because the Communists were evil people. Yet plenty of horrible governments last a long time. There is rarely any discussion of the real reason for the failure of the Bolshevik experiment: the Bolsheviks/Communists had absolutely no idea about economic realities. Thinking economics could just be made up and completely controlled by communist ideology, decision after horrible decision was made. In an economy the size of the Soviet Union's, you can only abuse the market so long before it brings you down. At least this book wasn't filled with the traditional American nonsense that the U.S.'s military spending destroyed their economy. While trying to keep up with the U.S. certainly did devastate their standard of living, the fact is that by the 70s the Soviet Union could no longer feed itself because of too much ideological tinkering with the economy and agriculture made it impossible for them to produce enough grain (let alone anything else). They were spending all of their hard currency just trying to stay alive. The military spending was just another nail in the coffin, but not the cause of death.
3. While painstakingly researched and documented, certain issues make me skeptical of the presentation of the facts in this book. Firstly, there is a real definite trend in books of this sort since the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Call it the 'Winners write history' syndrome. As in point two, the Communists seemed to have failed because they were 'bad' not for any real reasons, such as economics. Secondly, facts about the author which appear in both his and the editor's introductions should really raise some eyebrows. During his researches, the author discovers that his father was 'purged' for owning a pamphlet written by an enemy of the state. The author also relates that "...the only thing I achieved in this life was to break with the faith that I had held for so long." The "faith" he had held was communism. It is also stated that late in life he became a Christian. This makes the book seem less a history than a convert repudiating his previous beliefs. Again, I won't argue with his facts, but his presentation of them. As an example: page after page bemoaning the foolishness of Khrushchev and the Cuban missile crisis. Within the pages, one parenthetical reference to the fact the U.S. had missiles in Turkey before that. Again, they were "bad" people, but somehow the U.S. was justified in the exact same behavior.

0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. A big disappointment. Von Ein Kunde Unfortunately Volkogonov's book fails to live up to its publisher's and other reviewers' claims. First of all its structure is incoherent and the writing is rambling; that makes it look like a hurried undergraduate essay not a well researched book. It also lacks good biographical data on the leaders it purports to preview. My other issue with the book that it really does not provide any new information. It is but a repetition of well-known facts, self-evident truth (eg. Stalin was evil... Communism is bad). On a professional level there are major deficiencies as well:

1. There is nothing (really) on the power struggle that followed Stalin's death.
2. Volkogonov does not mention the reassessed view on Beria - this must have been known to him since the research went on in the archives that he supervised.
3. Presents a shallow and wrong picture of Khrushchev as a reformer.
4. Contrary to his claims (misinformation?) Imre Nagy was NOT an NKVD agent and material that used to back up this claim is well known to be fabricated by the KGB.
5. What about the role of the VPK (The military industrial complex of the Soviet Union)? After all Volkogonov was a member of it. Nevertheless he tries to purvey the impression that it was the Party or a dictator like Stalin who controlled everything.

To sum it up: Not worth reading it. Those who know the subject will gain nothing just be presented with a barrage of outdated and false information. Those who are not well acquainted with the Soviet Union will be deceived and because of the book's poor structure it does not lend itself as a good introduction even to the basic facts. Ultimately it seems that Volkogonov's role was that of the gatekeeper at archives. He was there not to monopolize them for himself but to keep real sensitive information from other (real) researchers.

0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. A Superb Analysis Of The Soviet Power System Von Irish Reviewer This Book will Take you inside the Kremlin where for seventy years a handfull of men decided the fate of millions of soviet citizens. It explores in great detail the power struggles which brought Stalin to power despite his unpopularity amongst his comrades. It also examined how and why khrushchev was deposed in a Kremlin style Coup and replaced by an extremely weak man Leonid Breshnev. However the most striking aspect to the book is its theme, it being the argument that the system had failed and could neither be reformed to a halfway house between a western style capitalist democracy and its previous existence under the the CPSU. I have to say that even Gorbachev comes under close scrutiny for his acquiescence at least to previous policy decisions like the Soviet Excuse for Shooting down the Korean Airliner in 1983. All in all A Fasinating Insight into a world rarely before seen.

Kurzbeschreibung The late Dmitri Volkogonov emerged in the last decade of his life as the preeminent Russian historian of this century. His crowning achievement is the account of the seven General Secretaries of the Soviet Empire in *Autopsy for an Empire*, a book that tells the entire history of the Soviet failure. Having utilized his still-unequaled access to the Soviet military archives, Communist Party documents, and secret Presidential Archive, Volkogonov sheds new light on some of the major events of twentieth-century history and the men who shaped them. We witness Lenin's paranoia about foreigners in Russia, and his creation of a privileged system for top Party members; Stalin's repression of the nationalities and his singular conduct of foreign policy; the origins and conduct of the Korean War; Khrushchev's relationship with the odious secret service chief, Beria, and his handling of the Cuban Missile Crisis; Brezhnev's vanity and stupidity; a new view of Poland and Solidarity; the ossification of Soviet bureaucracy and the cynicism of the Politburo; and Mikhail Gorbachev's Leninism and his role in history. By profiling the seven successive Soviet leaders from Lenin to Gorbachev, Volkogonov also depicts in painstaking detail the progressive self-destruction of the Leninist system. In his clear-eyed character assessments and political evaluations, lucidly translated and edited by Harold Shukman, Dmitri Volkogonov has once again performed an invaluable service to twentieth-century history.

de In accordance with his belief that "it is often easier to become acquainted with the history of a period if it is seen through the lives of individuals," Dmitri Volkogonov's last book before his 1995 death addresses the lives of the seven men who ruled the Soviet Union during its seven decades of existence. Making full use of the access granted to him as a high-ranking officer of the Soviet Army (and later as military advisor to Boris Yeltsin) to the secret archives of the Communist Party, he amplifies and expands upon the themes of his full length biographies of Lenin and Stalin, then proceeds to take on their successors up to Mikhail Gorbachev. With painstaking details drawn from a true insider's perspective, he recreates both the stagnation of the Soviet bureaucracy and the collapse set in motion by perestroika. "Perhaps the only thing I achieved in this life," Volkogonov wrote, "was to break with the faith I had held for so long." That is untrue; he also brilliantly chronicled how that faith came to impose itself upon an entire society. *Autopsy of an Empire* is a fitting conclusion to that legacy.

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