

Lenin's Tomb: The Last Days of the Soviet Empire Study Guide

Lenin's Tomb: The Last Days of the Soviet Empire by David Remnick

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Plot Summary

David Remnick, a journalist with the *Washington Post* arrives in the Soviet Union in January 1988. Little does he know that, during the four years that he is assigned to Moscow, the country will experience tremendous change, and the Soviet Empire will crumble. Remnick is an eyewitness to a remarkable struggle between the forces of the past and the vision of future. Remnick's Russian heritage, command of the language, and role as a journalist enables him to explore the past, present and future in a way that few Westerners ever could. Remnick lives in Moscow and develops a social network with Soviet friends and colleagues. Through this network, he is able to provide the reader a glimpse of the life of average Soviet people. As a journalist, he interviews some of the most influential figures in the modern Soviet Union and some of the most despised remnants of the Stalin era.

From the early days of the Bolshevik movement, corruption permeates the government and the Communist Party. From its infancy under Vladimir Lenin, the Communist Party employs terror and violence as a means of controlling the population and protecting themselves. During the notorious Stalin era, the art of terror is taken to new heights. Millions of Soviets are brutally murdered and imprisoned in labor camps in Siberia. During the years that follow Stalin's reign, some details about Stalin's campaign of terror begin to surface among the general public but, for the most part, average Soviet citizens remain in the dark about their own tragic history.

After a few years in power, Mikhail Gorbachev begins to show his liberal side and there are signs that the situation in the Soviet Union will improve. Urging glasnost and perestroika, his two most famous reform policies aimed at economic improvement and openness in government, Gorbachev becomes a hero of the common Soviet. As time passes and progress is slow, the hero begins to lose his luster in the eyes of the people, who are hoping for radical change. Wedged between the democratic movement and the old Communist Party, Gorbachev makes serious errors in judgment and nearly destroys any advancements the country has experienced during his term. The internal struggle between the Communists and the democrats in the Soviet Union comes to a head in August 1990, when Gorbachev's own inner circle attempts a coup d'etat to end the era of glasnost and return the Soviet Union to its previous way of life.

In the end, the coup fails and the Soviet Union is dismantled. Although there are various factors that contribute to the Empire's collapse, the most significant factor is the Soviet people themselves. After years of blind obedience and misery, the Soviet people seem to awaken from a miserable dream in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This awakening gives the strength and the courage to face not only their past, but their future. To witness this transformation through Remnick's eyes and words is a remarkable lesson in the power of the human spirit.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

On August 19, 1991, amidst news reports that Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev had "stepped down" due to health concerns, Colonel Aleksandr Tretetsky of the Soviet Military Prosecutor's Office, arrives. His new work site is a series of mass graves in a forest near Kalinin, a town located a few hours north of Moscow. Tretetsky and his crew of Soviet and Polish workers unearth the remnants of thousands of young, promising Polish officers, who were sentenced to death by former Soviet President Josef Stalin, more than a half century before. Not long before this day, most Russians would have denied that their government could be responsible for the death of these men. The purges, executions, and illegal imprisonments were not a part of any history they knew. The success of the Kremlin's propaganda campaigns had provided millions of Soviets with a far more proud alternate version of their history. Now, with Gorbachev's decree that the "blanks" of Soviet history be filled in, the painful truth about the history of their land and government is brought to millions of Soviet people, still reeling from the shock and shame. Tretetsky was one of the millions who had been fooled, but now, as part of a massive investigation to uncover the past, he was seeing the proof firsthand. The assignment at Kalinin is not Tretetsky's first encounter with this sort of evidence; he had already completed similar work at Starobelsk.

At Kalinin, Tretetsky interviews an 89-year-old retired officer of the secret police, Vladimir Tokaryev. Tretetsky hears Tokaryev's account of how, in April 1940, his unit executed 250 Polish officers every night for an entire month. Tokaryev's story is just one more example of the country's tragic past and adds to the tragic present as millions of Soviets realize their own dark history. In a desperate attempt to stop Gorbachev and return the Communist Party to power, Party leaders plan a coup - called a putsch in Russian - to end all hope of a democratic Soviet Union. Tretetsky receives order from the KGB to stop the excavations, but he refuses. Despite numerous Communist Party attempts to sabotage their efforts, Tretetsky and his crew continue digging. After two days of the attempted coup, on August 21, 1991, the coup fails and Tretetsky addresses his men saying: "The criminal investigation ordered by the president of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev, goes on!"

Chapter 1 Analysis

The opening chapter establishes the mood of the Soviet people in the early 1990s. The description of the weather as dreary, dark, miserable, is symbolic of the disposition of the Soviet people. After years of Communist, totalitarian rule, the Soviets have a new hope for their county and future through the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev. However, in order for the Soviet Union to move forward, the people must first come to terms with the past - a past most knew little about. As the truth is revealed, the people must accept their history and choose to rise above it, or be consumed by it. The two main characters



in this chapter represent the average Soviet person and the way in which they deal with the truth. Tretetsky acknowledges that he was fooled by his country and is making amends by working to uncover the truth, while Tokaryev refuses to accept any real responsibility for his actions.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

The author, David Remnick, is a reporter for the Washington Post assigned to Moscow. He visits with his Russian friends Flora and Misha Litinov, a couple in their seventies who survived the Stalin years. Misha Litinov's father was part of Stalin's inner circle, so the family is still considered part of the privileged class. Remnick tells the Litinovs that he is hoping to find Lazar Kaganovich, the last living member of Stalin's inner circle. During Stalin's reign, Kaganovich helped direct the collectivization program that annihilated most of the peasant population and left the villages of Ukraine in ruins. Remnick says he wants to talk to Kaganovich for many reasons, but mostly he just "wants to see what an evil man looks like" and how one lives. The Litinovs tell Remnick that Kaganovich lives in their building, downstairs, so Remnick begins a campaign of phone calls and door-knocking in hopes of reaching Kaganovich. After months of trying, Remnick actually speaks to Kaganovich, who refuses to be interviewed. Remnick shares his frustration with Flora Litinov, and she tells him a story about her son Pavel.

Like most children of privilege in Moscow at the time, Pavel Litinov is trained in school and society in general to almost worship Stalin. Pavel grew up a staunch advocate of Communism and Stalin. However, as he matures, Pavel realizes that Communism under Stalin is not the great society he once believed it to be. He becomes friends with other young people, who share his disdain for the regime. In response to the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, Pavel and his fellow rebels plan a public protest in Moscow's Red Square. The protest is squelched in only a few minutes, but Pavel is arrested and sentenced to five years of exile in Siberia. Upon his release, Pavel realizes that if he continues to fight the regime, his next punishment will be far more severe. Pavel and his wife emigrate to the US believing they will never see their families or homeland again.

Chapter 2 Analysis

Through the lives of Flora, Misha and Pavel Litinov, Remnick further explores the terror of the Stalin regime and is able to show the effect of the Stalin years on the Soviet privileged class. Through Pavel, Remnick demonstrates how young Soviets were indoctrinated early into the Stalin philosophy and how difficult it was to break free of their grip. Remnick uses Kaganovich to further paint a picture of the cruelty of Stalin and his followers. Remnick, who is of Russian descent, ends the chapter with tales of both of his grandfathers' struggles to escape the Stalin regime and similar stories from his wife's family.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

In the post-Stalin era, the Soviet state is compared to a dying old man. Without Stalin, the State barely manages to survive, yet somehow avoids death. The effects of the Stalin years are illustrated through the lives of Russian citizens, this time through its writers and poets. The well-known ones like Brodsky, Solzhenitsyn, Sakharov, and Akhmatova, and the lesser-known ones, like Venedikt "Benny" Yerofeyev. Now in his seventies, Benny was a writer once, but now he is just one of the many survivors, who found comfort in a bottle. In her earlier years, Lydia Korneievna Chukovskaya was a writer. While her husband was in a prison camp, she wrote a novel about the purges. She was courageous, a true rebel against the government. However, mostly, Lydia was a symbol of hope. This type of "anti-Soviet" behavior ended her writing career. Now in her nineties, she talks with Remnick about her younger days and her friends, but the hope she once symbolized seems to be gone. In the middle of this conversation, the lights in the building go out, but Lydia seems not to notice for quite some time. It is Lydia's daughter, Yelena, who tells Remnick about Dmitiri Yuraosv, the young man who gives hope, even to her mother.

Like Pavel Litinov, Dima Curassow was raised to be a good "Soviet man." Born in 1964, the Soviet history he knew, mostly from the Soviet Historical Encyclopedia, was fiction manufactured by the vast Soviet machine. At the age of 11, Yuraosv discovers there is a secret past and begins a lifelong search for the truth. He begins collecting bits and pieces of information that he records on index cards, but his research is limited by a lack of access to most of the information. When he finishes school, he takes a job at the Historical Archives Institute in order to have access to classified documents. At great personal risk, Yuraosv finds and documents details of the purges, and of the torture and executions of thousands of Soviet citizens. Before his work is through, he is drafted into the military but continues his research during his two years of service. Upon his discharge, he takes a job at the archive of the Supreme Court. Here, he is able to collect more information. At the end of 18 months, he has built a collection of more than 100,000 index cards. Each contains details of the fate of one of the victims of the State. Yurasov's unauthorized access to classified files is discovered, and he is fired from his post.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Again, Remnick uses the human stories to illustrate the absolute bleakness that existed in the Soviet Union during the Stalin years, and the darkness that remains decades afterward. The first two main characters in this chapter symbolize the loss of hope of an entire people. Benny lives in a drunken stupor, unable and unwilling to remember the past. Lydia is so consumed by the darkness in her soul that she does not even notice when the lights go out. This despair and hopelessness is surely the greatest cost of the

Stalin years. Yuraosv, however, represents a new generation and new chance for the future of the Soviet people. He brings hope, even to the most hopeless.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

During the first two years of his presidency, Mikhail Gorbachev seems to be yet another "Party" leader, who will offer more of the same to the Soviet people. He praises Lenin and Stalin, denies much of the past, and seems content to continue Stalin's tradition of rewriting history. Although Stalin didn't invent the concept of manipulating the past, he nearly perfected it. In doing so, he set a standard that nearly all of his successors, with the exception of Nikita Khrushchev, would try to emulate. In 1956, Khrushchev publicly criticized Stalin and acknowledged the Soviet government's unsavory past, but Khrushchev's power didn't last long. It is another 30 years before Gorbachev picks up where Khrushchev left off.

As it turns out, one of the most successful means of accomplishing this was through a film entitled "Repentance," written and directed by a well-known Georgian filmmaker, named Tenzig Abuladze. The film featured a ruthless tyrant who, Abuladze says, was not based on Stalin but was more of an amalgamation of Stalin, Lenin, Khrushchev and other Soviet leaders. Abuladze is able to get approval to make the film through the help of his old friend Eduard Shevardnadze, the most powerful man in Georgia. A few years later, it is Shevardnadze who arranges a private screening for Gorbachev (whose grandfathers were both imprisoned during the Stalin era). Gorbachev gives his approval for the film to be released and "Repentance" plays in thousands of theaters around the country in 1986. Millions of Soviet citizens see the film, including Yuraosv Curassow.

The following April, Yuraosv attends a meeting of the Central House of Writers. Inspired by the film and frustrated with the mild speakers of the evening, Yuraosv takes the stage and describes his vast collection of index cards which now numbers more than 120,000. He becomes an instant hero. A few months later, Gorbachev prepares a draft for a speech he will deliver at the seventieth anniversary for the October Revolution. Although in the end, the speech was not nearly as strong as Gorbachev would have liked, it is still the catalyst that begins the process of bringing the truth to the Soviet people.

Chapter 4 Analysis

In the beginning, Mikhail Gorbachev seems to be yet another puppet of the Communist Party. However, after two years, Gorbachev proves his independence and power, as he begins the process of re-educating the Soviet people about their history. As he recognizes how painful this new reality will be for his fellow compatriots, he eases them into the truth hoping they can accept and deal with it in small doses.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

In the early days of Glasnost (openness) Remnick and his wife Esther move to Moscow. The weather is dreadful, gloomy and dark. They live in an overpriced, rundown apartment that is bugged by the Soviet government. As a reporter and resident of the area, Remnick calls on his political representatives, the Regional Communist Party Committee for the October Region (the area where he lives). He complains about the state of his apartment building, but his complaints are met only by the Party officials' own complaints about their terrible plight of long workdays, no weekend breaks, and constant complaints from their constituents.

While walking to the Kremlin, Remnick and Esther meet Yuri Kiselyov, a well-known dissident, who is now without legs. He is pushing himself along the walk in a wheeled cart and is clearly challenged by the lack of conveniences provided for the disabled. Since most disabled people in the Soviet Union had always been institutionalized, these conveniences were not necessary. Kiselyov is on his way to a rally in support of the Crimean Tatars, an entire ethnic population that was collected and exiled to Uzbekistan in 1944. Kiselyov invites the Remnicks to join him at the short-lived, fairly uneventful rally.

Remnick meets Anna Larina, the widow of Bolshevik leader Nikolai Ivanovich Bukharin. Larina is in her seventies now and finally feels her husband's unjust death has been acknowledged. Bukharin was part of the Old Bolshevik leadership - along with Lenin and Stalin. After Lenin's death, Bukharin seems to be in good favor with Stalin, but suddenly he is arrested, tried and executed for crimes against Stalin, spying, and plotting to kill his old friend Lenin. Larina was sent to a prison camp, charged with being the wife of a known enemy of the state. Their 13-month-old son, Kiselyov, was sent to live with relatives. Larina does not see her son again, until he is 20 years old, visits her in exile and asks the name of his father. Kiselyov had only been told that his father was a revolutionary, who was executed by the government. Larina refuses to tell him, but Kiselyov guesses the name Bukharin and Larina confirms it. Larina remains in Siberia until the 1950s. When she returns to Moscow, she tries to win rehabilitation (a sort of official pardon) for her husband, but fails. In 1988, with Gorbachev in power, Bukharin is deemed a victim of an illegal trial and is officially rehabilitated and resumes his rightful place in Soviet history among the Bolshevik heroes.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Remnick continues his vivid description of Soviet life, past and present, through his own experience with the Communist Party officials and through the eyes of the people he meets in this chapter. The story of Anna Larina and Nikolai Bukharin provides a first-hand example of Stalin's questionable behavior and paints a picture of a fairly demented

man. In the previous chapters, Stalin is blamed for the deeds, but someone else is actually doing the dirty work. Through the official rehabilitation of Bukharin, Gorbachev is further established as the man, who can turn the Soviet Union around.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

In 1988, the monthly journal *Znamya* published "*Onward, Onward, Onward*," a play about Lenin and Stalin written by Mikhail Shavtsov. Many readers felt the play falsely represented Stalin and "blackened" Soviet history. The conservative newspaper *Sovetskaya Rossiya* prints a negative review and one reader, Nina Andreyeva, a chemistry teacher from Leningrad, writes a letter in support of the newspaper's critical review of the play. The editor of *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, Valentine Chikin, forwards the letter to Yegor Ligachev at the Party's ideology office. Ligachev advises Chikin to print the letter. Chikin sends science/ideology editor Vladimir Denisov to Leningrad to work with the author to "improve" the letter. With the approval (and encouragement) of Ligachev, the letter is intentionally published on March 14, 1988 when Gorbachev is out of the country. An internal battle, known as the Andreyeva Coup, within the Communist Party ensues, but eventually Gorbachev and his followers succeed.

The letter's author, Andreyeva Andreyeva, is a diehard conservative Stalinist, a long time Party member and an anti-Semite, who truly believes that Gorbachev is leading her beloved country into oblivion. Her husband, Vladimir Klushin, is even more vocal than Andreyeva concerning his support of Stalin and his regime. They are both angry about the terrible lies being printed by the media about the "Great Stalin." Andreyeva was born in 1938 to peasants in the Kalinin region. Famines forced the family to move to the city where her parents and older brother became part of the proletariat (working class). During WWII, Andreyeva's sister, father and brother were killed. In Andreyeva's eyes, Stalin and his socialism gave people like Andreyeva and her family hope of a future. On the other hand, Gorbachev and *perestroika* (economic restructuring) are destroying all hope and future for the Soviet people.

Chapter 6 Analysis

The "Andreyeva Coup" gives the reader an inside glance at the power struggle, deceit and political jockeying that occurred in the Soviet government during Gorbachev's presidency, and the uphill battle Gorbachev and his followers faced on a daily basis. Although an interesting insight into the political system, it is merely a sidebar to the real story of Andreyeva Andreyeva. Andreyeva's devotion and resolute commitment to Stalin and the Party makes it very easy for the reader to understand why so many Soviets supported Stalin and why so many were unwilling to believe the truth about their treasured leader when it was finally unveiled.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

In June 1988, anti-Semitic incidents begin occurring, or reoccurring, in the Soviet Union. Anti-Semitism is not a new phenomenon in the Soviet Union. The pogroms, or state sanctioned massacre of Jews in the late 19th century and early 20th, are fresh in the memories of Jewish citizens. People are worried about the return of the pogroms or new incidents similar to the Doctors' Plot of the 1950s. In 1953, Stalin ordered the arrest of nine prominent physicians, six of whom were Jews. The doctors, accused of conspiring to poison Kremlin leaders, were arrested and imprisoned. Yakov Rappaport, now in his nineties, is the only victim of the Doctors' Plot to survive to see Gorbachev's era of glasnost. When Stalin dies, Khrushchev grants Yakov freedom. Being persecuted for his religion is nothing new to Yakov. He remembers when he was six-years-old growing up in Crimea, and the Cossacks stormed the school he attended, and where his father taught. They killed several Jews and severely injured his father. After the attacks, Yakov's father was shunned by his colleagues and eventually left his teaching position. Yakov's daughter Natasha and his granddaughter Nika must also endure persecution and harassment. Upon graduation, Natasha, a chemist, and other Jews are sent to work in factories while non-Jews were placed at academic institutions. Natasha wants to emigrate, but she will not leave her father, and her father will not leave Moscow. To avoid the same plight as her mother and grandfather, Nika emigrates to Israel.

Chapter 7 Analysis

The chapter opens with details of current protests against Jews, a perfect segue to the long history of anti-Semitism and persecution of Jews in the Soviet Union. Through the lives of all three generations of the Rappaport Family, the plight of Russian Jews is illustrated. Like so many Russian Jews before her, Nika Rappaport leaves the Soviet Union to find a better life where she and her future children will not be persecuted.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

More than two million people died at Kolyma, a prison camp in the Russian Far East. About one hundred of the original inhabitants of the region, the Eveni, still live in Godlya. During collectivism, the indigenous peoples were rounded up and sent to live in villages. In an effort to raise good Soviet Evenis, the state sent the children to boarding schools where they were stripped of their culture and forbidden to speak in their native tongues. Now, most of the townspeople are just perpetually drunk. One of the few sober men in town says they have nothing left. They are finished.

Thousands of miles away from Godlya, Dmitri Likhachev, an 84-year-old scholar of Russian medieval history, remembers his five-year sentence at a labor camp. As a student, Likhachev wrote a humorous essay on why the Soviets should reintroduce the letter "yat" to the alphabet (the letter had been banned by the Bolsheviks as part of a campaign to modernize the language), and for his irreverence, he is sentenced to five years at a labor camp. One night, as he visits with his parents in a room he rented from one of the guards, a fellow inmate tells him the warden is looking for him. Likhachev realizes the warden intends to shoot him, so he hides and listens as 300 shots ring out. The realization and guilt that someone else took his place that night still haunts Likhachev sixty years later. Equally disturbing is the fact that the executioner, who is older than Likhachev, is also still alive.

In 1988, a movement called Memorial emerges in Moscow. Memorial's purpose is to create a series of monuments and research centers dedicated to the memory of the millions of people, who lost their lives under Stalin. Activists are actually collecting signatures on petitions. It's risky business, even during glasnost. The founders realize that the only way for Memorial to succeed is to have recognized historians on their team. Memorial is able to recruit two such historians, in Roy Medvedev and Yuri Afanasyev. Roy Medvedev and his brother Zhores, who was exiled in 1973, are considered enemies of the people. Roy, whose father died in a prison camp in 1941, writes books about Stalin's death camps. Although officially associated with Memorial, Medvedev sees little value in the movement and rarely participates. Afanasyev, on the other hand, is extremely active although his allegiances are sometimes questioned. Afanasyev was a dedicated Communist Party member for many years. In June 1988, Afanasyev publishes "There is No Other Way," a collection of essays in support of glasnost. The essays are written by some of Russia's most well known dissidents, many who had been silenced one way or another for decades, including Andrei Sakharov. Not long after, Gorbachev tells Party leaders that Memorial must be approved.



Chapter 8 Analysis

This chapter illustrates the long lasting effects of the terror that existed under Stalin. One of the cruelest and most heinous was the near genocide of numerous indigenous tribes of the Russian Far East, such as the Eveni. Entire cultures were obliterated in the name of the State. Although on a much smaller scale, the effects on individuals, like Likhachev Likhachev, are tragic. Likhachev has suffered greatly, because he hid from the executioner, because someone else took his place, and his would-be executioner still lives. If Likhachev feels such guilt, one can only imagine (and hope) that the level of guilt born by the executioner is far greater. Finally, the effect on the two historians and their chosen paths is significant, and also positive. The effect of Stalinism on their lives, whether in the form of a dead father, an exiled brother or guilt from years of misplaced loyalty, both Medvedev and Afanasyev are able to make considerable contributions to an improved Soviet Union.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Arnold Yeryomenko, leader of the first non-Communist political group in Magadan, arrives in Moscow. Having grown up not far from one of the many prison camps in the infamous Kolyma region, Yeryomenko witnessed the cruel fate of the many prisoners firsthand. Yeryomenko comes to Moscow to deliver the manifest of the Democratic Initiative (the group he represents) and their numerous signed petitions. Yeryomenko is denied access to the conference and instead watches it on television from his hotel room, delighted to see signs that the Communist Party is falling apart.

Despite the revelations about Stalin, Yeryomenko remains very popular with the masses. Filmmaker Tofik Shakhverdiyev believes this has more to do with the Soviet peoples' need for control and order than it does with Stalin himself. Iosif Vissarionovich Djugashvili was born in 1879, His abusive father died early, so he was raised by his mother. Stalin studied at a Russian orthodox seminary; his mother hoped he would become a priest. In 1932, Stalin and his wife Nadezhda argued over his brutal treatment of Ukrainian peasants. After the argument, she left the room and shot herself. Despite his widely known brutality, Stalin was able to win the respect of more than just his people. Many respected westerners, including the playwright George Bernard Shaw and the author HG Wells, openly admired him.

Since the onset of glasnost, a retired lawyer named Ivan Shekhovtsov, had filed multiple lawsuits against various organizations asserting they had slandered Stalin. The courtroom was full of Stalin supporters including Kira Korniyenkova. Stalin is Kira's passion, and her apartment is filled with photos and memorabilia of the dead leader. Also in attendance is Yevegeny Djugashvili, one of Stalin's four living grandchildren. Only two of them agree to meet with Remnick. They are Yevegeny and his half-brother Aleksandr Burdansky. Burdansky, a theater director, is not a big fan of his grandfather's, but he says he has tried to understand him. Burdansky compares Stalin to Shakespeare's Richard the III. Yevegeny, on the other hand, adores his grandfather (and despises his half-brother.) While visiting Yevegeny at his home in Georgia, Remnick is obligated to raise his glass in a toast to Stalin.

By the end of 1988, chapters of Memorial were springing up all over the country. The question came up of whether Memorial should limit its focus to Stalin's reign of terror or whether the focus should be on the entire Soviet reign of terror that began with Lenin and ended with Gorbachev. One of Memorial's greatest activists is journalist Milchkov Milchkov. Milchkov's father was part of Stalin's government, so Milchkov had a privileged upbringing. However, Milchkov also remembers when his father was arrested and imprisoned for 15 years. Milchkov takes Remnick and another reporter to several areas of Moscow believed to be the locations where the Moscow victims of Stalin's terror are buried.



Chapter 9 Analysis

In this chapter, Remnick further examines the cruelty of Stalin, but also manages to put a slightly human face on the man. He had a difficult childhood, but so did many other Soviet children, and they didn't all grow up to be brutal tyrants. In fact, several of people Remnick meets in this chapter have horrible childhood memories that are due to Stalin. One of the most remarkable facts about Stalin is his popularity, despite his atrocious behavior. Perhaps filmmaker Tofik Shakhverdiyev is correct when he says the Soviet people need control and order. Stalin provided that with an iron fist.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Mikhail Gorbachev grew up on a collective farm in the southern part of the Soviet Union in the Stravapol Region. He was born during the terror famines of 1931-32, when more than 30,000 people in the region starved to death. His family was poor, and he worked the farm with his father and friends.

At school, "Misha" was popular and did well academically. He was active in theater, and according to most accounts, was quite talented. Gorbachev met his first girlfriend, Yuliya Karagodina, through this past time. He would later find his acting skills to be beneficial to his political career as television became an important tool in communicating with the Soviet people. At the young age of 18, Misha became a candidate for the Communist Party. He studied law at Moscow State University and mourned the death of Stalin while at college. Gorbachev also meets Raisa, his future wife, at a dance lesson while studying in Moscow. The chapter ends with Gorbachev and his college roommates sitting around their room after viewing the dead body of Stalin. Some are crying. Some, including Gorbachev, are not.

Chapter 10 Analysis

In this chapter, the reader is given a brief biography of Mikhail Gorbachev and learns of his poor childhood, the plight of so many of his friends and family members during the terror famines, and how both grandfathers were victims of Stalin's reign. The experiences and memories of his youth help the reader understand the roots of his ideology and explain his less than favorable opinion of Stalin. The reader learns of Gorbachev's commitment to Socialism and his dedication to the Communist Party, despite his doubts about Stalin. While at college, Misha shows early signs of rebellion. He questions authority and goes against the grain. This trait will become critical to him, and the people of the Soviet Union, in the future. The last sentence of the chapter captures the state of the Soviet people. Whether they loved, hated or just feared Stalin, they had grown very used to him and feared the unknown with out him. For a culture that thrives on order and control, the death of Stalin was frightening.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Andrei Sakharov is one of the Soviet Union's most famous dissidents. Sakharov and his wife Yelena spend six years in exile in Gorky until Gorbachev grants them freedom, and they return to Moscow. Following World War II, Sakharov worked at the Installation, a Soviet version of Los Alamos. He was building the Soviet Union's first thermonuclear bomb. The success of his work brought money, privilege and heroism. However, as he begins to realize the danger of his creation, he questions his work and his government. He gradually becomes a dissident and is eventually imprisoned.

Not everyone who contributes to changes in the Soviet Union is a full-fledged dissident. Gorbachev, and many of his top aids, are what Gorbachev's colleague Georgi Shakhnazarov calls "double thinkers." This is a term Shakhnazarov uses to describe the people who doubted Stalinism and the direction of the Party, but kept quiet and appeared to be loyal. These people had power and influence and worked hard to balance truth and propaganda in their own minds. They convinced themselves they were doing the right thing. Len Karpinsky, a columnist and later editor of the Moscow News, is a double-thinker. Karpinsky's parents were Old Bolsheviks. He was named for his father's friend and mentor Lenin. Karpinsky comes from a privileged class and is ambitious. At that time the only reasonable ambitions to have were related to success within the Communist Party. He had a great future in politics within the Party. He was seen by some of Khrushchev's men as the future. Nonetheless, gradually, he finds it more and more difficult to ignore the reality and begins voicing his doubt about the government and Party, in written documents he shares only with his friends. Eventually, he is caught and loses his job and position with the Communist Party. When Gorbachev begins talking about glasnost and perestroika, Karpinsky is able to re-establish himself as a writer and a member of the Communist Party. In June 1988, at the 19th Special Party Conference, Karpinsky is welcomed back into the Communist Party.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Sakharov is the model for all Soviet dissidents. He spoke his mind and paid the consequences. However, most of the people who affected change in the Soviet Union, including Mikhail Gorbachev, were not courageous or outspoken. They were more like Karpinsky than Sakharov. They quietly disagreed and continued to be part of the problem. When the time came, however, they were in positions of power that could affect change.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

After serving 20 years as the Communist Party boss in Azerbaijan, Geidar Aliyev is removed from office because of corruption when Gorbachev takes power. Corruption, however, has dominated the Communist Party, and Aliyev is only one of thousands of people who were taking part in the corruption. The fear tactics used by Lenin and Stalin were similar to those of the mafia. The modern tactics were the same, but the goal is directed more toward getting Party bosses getting rich than preserving the Socialist ideology. Although much of the terror is gone under Brezhnev, economic corruption is at an all time high. Almost no one is left untouched by the Party's corruption. As the "godfather," Brezhnev receives "gifts" from Party leaders in every region of the Soviet Union, including Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and mostly likely Stravapool, where Gorbachev is in charge. The Soviet mafia begins its decline with the death of Brezhnev. His replacement, Afanasyev Andropov, is known for his brutality during the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956 and is by no means free of guilt.

Andropov, however, is disgusted with the Party's current form of corruption. During his short term in office, Andropov orders the arrests of many of Brezhnev's top officials. Several others commit suicide before their inevitable arrests. Andropov becomes ill and asks that Gorbachev serve as his replacement while he is incapacitated. This request is ignored and when Andropov dies, Konstantin Chernenko is named the new general secretary. To appease those who are angry about Andropov's wish for Gorbachev to replace him, Chernenko names Gorbachev his second-in-command. Unfortunately for Chernenko and those who oppose Gorbachev, Chernenko quickly takes ill and Gorbachev, essentially, takes control of the country. Despite great strides at cleaning up the Party, Gorbachev is not able to distance himself from the Party and its corruption, and over time, loses popularity among the Soviet people. When Boris Yeltsin begins his attacks on the Party and its leaders, Gorbachev is not spared. Yeltsin's open attacks on the Party's past and its economic corruption, wins Yeltsin many supporters among the people, who have grown tired of the lies and corruption.

Chapter 12 Analysis

Corruption, in one way or another, has been part of the Soviet Union since the Bolshevik Revolution. First Lenin and Stalin and their campaigns of terror and mass murder, followed by the lesser evil campaigns for economic wealth in a poverty-ridden country. Even the true Leninist, those driven by the dream of a socialist society, are either swayed by the lure of wealth or forced to participate in order to maintain their positions of power and influence within the Party. Meanwhile, the Communist credo, that the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the one, becomes lost in the modern era of the Soviet Union. Party leaders are becoming wealthy at the expense of their fellow

countrymen, and at last, the people are not only willing to accept these truths, they are ready for change.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

In the days of Brezhnev, Andropov and Chernenko, the Soviet Union relied heavily on oil profits to support the state. Nonetheless, when the energy crisis ended and the oil boom was over, the Soviet Union was unprepared for the new era of technology, and the economy suffered severely. Unemployment is high and those who are employed can barely make ends meet. In 1989, nearly half of the people in the Soviet Union fall within the legal, conservative definition of poor.

In Ashkhabad, the capital of Turkmenistan, the people suffer from lack of food and fresh water and poisoning from the pesticides used to in the cotton fields. This monoculture mentality results in tremendous environmental damage that affects the entire population. In a bizarre and ecologically devastating attempt to irrigate the cotton fields, the Aral Sea is drained and virtually destroyed. Mukhamed Velaspar, a young writer from a small town east of Ashkhabad, organizes Ogzibirlik, a democratic advocacy group with a goal of bringing glasnost to Turkmenistan and to encourage radical economic change. In an article in the Moscow News, Mukhamed brought attention to the infant mortality crisis in Turkmenistan, and in the process, humiliates Party leaders from the region.

In northern Russia, the situation is no better. The once thriving farm communities near Vologda are gone. Most of the young people have moved to the cities to find work in factories; a few of the elderly people remain in their villages, but their lives are very difficult. The legacy of collectivization is apparent. The village of Spasskaya, prosperous and thriving before the Revolution, is nearly abandoned, like thousands of other villages across the country. The locals blame collective farming.

During the American depression of the 1930s, John Scott, a young socialist from Philadelphia, moves to the Soviet Union to become part of "the world's most gigantic social experiment." Stalin sends Scott and other American socialists to Magnitogorsk, a steel town in the Ural Mountains. Scott is impressed with the vitality of the people and their willingness to suffer great hardships to produce the steel. Most of these "enthusiastic" workers are there against their wills. They were forced there after being removed from their privately owned farms during collectivization. Its huge volume of steel production made the town a success during World War II, but when the war ended, production in Magnitogorsk did not. When other countries were developing modern steel alloys, Magnitogorsk did not modernize. The State only cared about volume. The more steel the better. It had no regard for environmental degradation or the health risks for the tens of thousands of workers, most who were there against their wills.



Chapter 13 Analysis

Described in this chapter as "the world's most gigantic social experiment," Communism in the Soviet Union proves to be an experiment that exploits millions of unwitting human guinea pigs from across the country. Millions of peasants are forced into State-sponsored slavery, destroying not only their hopes and livelihoods, but an entire culture for generations to come. Millions of others, living in urban areas, are living in substandard conditions, unable to find work. The legacy of the Bolshevik Revolution is becoming evident, and it is not a pretty sight.



Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

In 1989, the Soviet people get their first taste of democracy. The elections for the new Congress of the People's Deputies, which are part of Gorbachev's plan to diminish the power of the old Party establishment while strengthening the government, are held. Although in many districts, the old standby Party candidates run unopposed, in other districts true reformers, like Sakharov, are elected. In the end, more than 80 percent of the elected deputies are Party members, but the other 20 percent add a new dynamic to Congress. For the first time, Soviet people see elected officials (on television no less) asking important questions and publicly denouncing the Party and its leadership.

In July 1989, coal miners in Siberia walk off the job to protest a lack of soap. There are countless other issues, including failing equipment, unsafe conditions, low pay, no benefits. However, the fact that they cannot get soap to clean the dirt and grime from their bodies is the final straw. Moscow promises to meet their demands and the miners return to work, reveling in their victory, yet convinced Moscow will not come through. When it becomes clear that Moscow will in fact renege on the deal, the miners once again feel betrayed by their government. What they do not realize is that this first small step - a miners strike in Siberia - would actually be the first and one of the most dramatic steps in bringing together the key players in the quest for democracy - the workers, the republic nationalists, and the urban intelligentsia.

Chapter 14 Analysis

The first sign of democracy in the Soviet Union, or the elections, demonstrate the Soviet people's complete lack of understanding of the basic principles of democracy and the long road ahead of them. When Soviet citizens begin to question the authority of the government, it's something they have never considered before. The masses begin the long struggle to regain control of their lives. The Siberian coalmine strike could not have occurred at a better time in history. The symbolism represented by the workers is reminiscent of the Old Bolshevik cause and is a powerful reminder of the philosophy on which the Soviet Union was founded. Armed with this renewed vision of what it means to be a Soviet, the people are ready to make right what has gone astray in the years since the October Revolution.



Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

In the late 1980s, as multiple eastern European nations abandon Communism for democracy, the Soviet leadership is worried, but determined to keep the Soviet Union together. The Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia are demanding their independence, claiming they are occupied countries and were never part of the Soviet Union to begin with. Back in 1939, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact divided Europe into Soviet and German spheres of influence. These 'secret protocols,' as they came to be known, gave Moscow control over Latvia and Estonia and parts of Poland and Romania. Fifty years later, the Kremlin acknowledged the existence of the secret protocols, and after much debate, the Baltic States re-gained their independence in 1991.

Meanwhile, a similar battle was brewing in Czechoslovakia. Public protests with citizen participation in excess of 200,000 were led by Vaclav Havel, who had been imprisoned following the Prague Spring in 1968. In November 1989, the entire Czech Politburo resigned and Havel was later elected president of the Czechoslovakia.

As it became clear that the Soviet empire was crumbling, the infamous nuclear reactor disaster at Chernobyl occurred. The State's denial of the accident and the danger it posed, and its failure to react swiftly to protect the people, was the catalyst for the Ukrainian independence movement.

Chapter 15 Analysis

With the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe, the Soviet government desperately tries to hold on to the Soviet Union. The lies and deception of more than 70 years of Communist rule has finally caught up with the State. However, rather than learn from those mistakes, the arrogant Party bosses dig an even deeper hole for themselves and the empire, as they lie about the Chernobyl disaster and allow hundreds of thousands of innocent people to suffer severe radiation poisoning, rather than admit a mistake. Perhaps because a nuclear disaster, and its numerous victims, is difficult to hide from outsiders, the Soviet people can no longer turn their eyes on their government's actions. The explosion at Chernobyl is the perfect symbolism for the end of the Soviet empire and the legacies of Lenin and Stalin.



Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

In the spring of 1988, the first signs of political unrest reached Sakhalin Island in the Russian Far East. The small, isolated fishing community was a penal colony before the Bolshevik Revolution. A few hundred locals stage a small demonstration to protest the local Party chief, and they are promptly ignored by the Party. Soon after, however, an even larger demonstration is held. With no support from the Central Committee, the Party chief flees to Moscow. In a classic demonstration of their lack of understanding of their constituents, the Party replaces the former chief with a new one, Viktor Bondarchuk - who is no different from the previous chief. When the elections for the Congress of the Peoples' Deputies are held, Bondarchuk is easily beaten by a local journalist named Vityaly Guly.

Chapter 16 Analysis

As the Soviet government continues to operate business as usual, they lie, deny and ignore the voices of the people. The people, in turn, begin to take back control of their lives and destinies. The Party gradually loses power and influence. When the democratic process (in the form of public protests) reaches the absolute edge of the Soviet Union, or the Sakhalin Island, it is clear that Communism will not survive. As in Moscow, the Baltic States and Eastern Europe, the Kremlin is unable or unwilling to acknowledge the needs of the people. This path of denial will lead to the end of the Party and the empire.



Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary

As fear about the future grows among the Soviet people and the economy suffers severe decline, Anatoly Kashpirovsky becomes a national hero or savior for the common Soviet. The Communist's Party's state-run television begins airing Anatoly's "tele-seances," in which he heals millions of people via the airwaves. Desperate and hopeless, millions of Soviets tune in regularly. While Anatoly becomes very rich and very famous, millions of his viewers remain poor, sick and disillusioned. Most critics believe that Anatoly is tool of the Communist Party to distract the public from their real problems.

Chapter 17 Analysis

History is full of unsavory characters that prey upon the downtrodden when they are at their weakest. In 1989, the Soviet people were weak. After seventy years of terror and lies and several years of digesting the truth, these people, who had every aspect of their lives controlled for them by the state, were terrified of the future. Like children abandoned by their parents, they are frightened. When the friendly stranger Anatoly Kashpirovsky offers them miracles (courtesy of the State-run television station), they are more than eager to accept them and whole-heartedly believe in them. The Communist system is falling apart around them, yet the Party leaders continue their legacy of lies and deception by diverting the attention of the masses.



Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary

While leading a tour of the small museum dedicated to her father, the popular children's book author, Yelena Chukovskaya is asked why Solzhenitsyn just doesn't come back. What is he waiting for?" the visitor asks. Yelena realizes that most Soviet people have no idea how complicated this would be. Even worse, Yelena realizes that most of the country's youth have no idea who Solzhenitsyn is and why he was exiled. Yelena writes a brief article about Solzhenitsyn suggesting it is high time the government returns his citizenship. The editor at Book review goes out on a limb and published the article before it is approved by State censors. The public shows its support for Solzhenitsyn by writing thousands of letters to the Party demanding the rehabilitation of Solzhenitsyn and his works. After some intense negotiations, Solzhenitsyn's masterpiece, "The Gulag Archipelago," is published in *Novy Mir*, a popular magazine and millions of Soviets read it for the first time.

A few days later, Remnick and his friend Lev Timofeyev, see a small production of Solzhenitsyn's "A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich." The actor who portrays Denisovich (a labor camp inmate) tells Remnick the role comes easy to him, because his father was imprisoned at Kolyma for ten years. Lev can also relate; he spent two years at Perm in the Urals.

Perm-35 was the last of the labor camps. While there, Remnick tours the camp and meets with several prisoners, including Valery Yasin, who claims he is being beaten. The commandant rolls his eyes, making a gesture that implies Valery is crazy. Before leaving, Remnick asks to see the isolation cells. Reluctantly, the commandant complies. The cells, three meters long, one meter wide and two meters high, are where some prisoners, including Remnick's friend Lev, spent many months of their imprisonment.

Chapter 18 Analysis

In his books and other writings, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn blatantly attacks the Communist Party and Lenin. These writings, especially "The Gulag Archipelago," make him Enemy #1 in the eyes of the Party. When his "blasphemous" writings are legally published and read in the Soviet Union, it is clear that times are changing. Ironically, as Solzhenitsyn's books become available to the Soviet people, the Communist gulag system - the subject matter that brought about Solzhenitsyn's exile - has been reduced to a single camp with only a few prisoners and appears to have a limited future. Although it has taken more than a decade, Solzhenitsyn and his work are once again welcome in the Soviet Union. As the Soviet empire falls, so does the gulag system, or the instrument so vital to its control and power. A barbaric government tool that has in some way touched the lives of nearly everyone in the Soviet Union, from scientist and writer Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn to journalist Lev Timofeyev to Perm-35 inmate Valery Yasin.



Chapter 19

Chapter 19 Summary

By the end of 1989, Andrei Sakharov has become a mythic hero in the eyes of the Soviet people. As a People's Deputy, he tirelessly fights for the rights of Soviet people and publicly challenges and prods Gorbachev and the Party. Sakharov realizes that the Soviet Union is on the slow road to perestroika and urges Gorbachev to pick up the pace before it is too late. When Gorbachev ignores his pleas, Sakharov, Yeltsin, Anfanasyev and economist Gavriil Popov form the Inter-Regional Group, a radical opposition in the legislature. Sakharov pushes for the repeal of Article 6 of the constitution, which guarantees the Communist Party will have a monopoly on power. On Dec. 14, 1989, after a long, difficult day, Sakharov tells his wife, Yelena, he is going to take a nap. When she goes to wake him, she finds him dead in the hallway.

Sakharov's death was a blow to the Soviet people. In recent years, they had lost faith in Gorbachev. However, Sakharov, the former enemy of the state, was now their knight in shining armor. Thousands of people endured bitter cold temperatures to pay their respects as Sakharov's body lay in state at the Palace of Youth. More than 50,000 people participated in the funeral procession. As Boris Yeltsin walked closely behind the coffin of his friend and colleague, it was clear he would be the one to continue Sakharov's struggle and take the lead in the political opposition.

Chapter 19 Analysis

The Soviet people are devastated by the death of Sakharov. Many feel a strong sense of guilt and shame for what the Motherland did to this great man and their unwitting participation. When Stalin died, the people were also devastated, because they were afraid of what the future would bring. Sakharov showed them a glimpse of what the future could be, and now that they had seen it, they were ready for change. His death recalls those old feelings of fear, but their respect and love for the man are stronger than their fears. The death of Sakharov represents the rebirth of the Soviet spirit. The funeral also provides a glance into the future, as Boris Yeltsin assumes a role that will forever change his life and the lives of Soviet people.



Chapter 20

Chapter 20 Summary

As a young Soviet marine during World War II, Aleksandr Yakovlev nearly died when he was wounded outside of Leningrad. He was saved, because Soviet marines have a tradition that they will not leave dead or injured comrades on the battlefield. Four of Yakovlev's comrades lost their lives trying to retrieve him. The fifth was successful. After his recovery, he joins the Communist Party and is an active and loyal member. Like many other Soviets, Yakovlev is loyal to the Party and Stalin, despite the fact that his father was nearly one of Stalin's millions of victims. During the Stalin regime, Yakovlev's father is tipped off by his former civil war commandant, that the Party is coming for him. He disappears for a few days and avoids death, or at least a prolonged prison sentence.

During the Khrushchev era, Yakovlev is one of the brightest most successful young Communist in the Party. He is rewarded with the opportunity to study abroad in the US for one year. While in New York, Yankovlev is exposed to a great deal of western books and writings. During the Brezhnev era, Yakovlev falls out of favor when he publishes an article criticizing nationalism. He infuriates Brezhnev and the Party. Realizing his future in Soviet politics is limited, he asks for a diplomatic position and is named the Soviet ambassador to Canada. In Canada, Yakovlev has even greater access to western works on philosophy, government and economics. In 1983, Yakovlev entertains a visiting leader in the Politburo, Mikhail Gorbachev. Yakovlev and Gorbachev travel throughout Canada and find they have much in common. Gorbachev returns home and arranges for Yakovlev to become the director of one of the most prestigious and liberal think tanks in the Soviet Union.

From the moment Gorbachev takes power, Yakovlev is his right-hand man. He helps draft foreign policy and is one of the primary engineers of glasnost. In the early years of perestroika, Yakovlev fully supports Gorbachev and his policies. As time passes, however, and progress proves to be extremely slow, Yakovlev begins speaking out in public about the need to move forward. When he criticizes Lenin publicly, the long-time relationship between Yakovlev and Gorbachev suffers. Although Yakovlev remains loyal to Gorbachev the man, he and his old friend have clearly chosen different ideological paths. Despite the convincing arguments of Sakharov and Yakovlev, Gorbachev is still unwilling to repeal article 6 of the constitution. However, after a visit to Lithuania in 1990, where he experiences first-hand the anger of the people, Gorbachev changes his mind and begins to push the issue of Article 6. The repeal is approved by the Central Committee on Feb. 7, 1990.

Chapter 20 Analysis

Yakovlev's life is a series of lessons in loyalty. First, his father is saved by the loyalty of his former commandant. Then, Yakovlev is saved by his loyal marine comrades. His



own loyalty to the Party shapes his career and his loyalty to Gorbachev provides him with some of the greatest opportunities of his lifetime. It is easy to understand why such a loyal man would have difficulty accepting the truth about his country, his Party and his leader. It is also very difficult for Yakovlev to denounce his Party and profess his differing views with his friend Gorbachev. Perhaps his loyalty to himself and his Soviet brothers and sisters is stronger than his loyalty to Gorbachev and the Party. This Soviet loyalty forces him to do what he thinks is best. This decision may be rooted in his early Communist teachings, remembering the needs of the many.



Chapter 21

Chapter 21 Summary

As Communism collapses, the Soviet Union begins its long and difficult transition to a free market economy. In March 1990, local elections are held. Democratic Russia and hundreds of other reformist groups are victorious in the elections. Boris Yeltsin is elected to parliament, Gavriil Popov (the economist from Sakharov's Inter-region Group) is elected mayor of Moscow, and Anatoly Sobchak, a law professor and star of congress, is elected mayor of Leningrad. In the October District of Moscow, Ilya Zaslavsky is elected to the regional council and is voted its chair. Zaslavsky's campaign platform is based on making his region a capitalist region. It doesn't take long for Zaslavsky to realize it will be difficult for him to make good on this promise. After months of little successes, Zaslavsky's economic plan for his district finally begins to pay off. The regional council passes laws to make it easier for businesses to register in the October District and within a year, more than 4,500 new businesses are established.

With the new market economy, also comes crime and corruption. Many entrepreneurs take advantage of the collapsing Soviet system and begin dealing in much-needed commodities (bricks, lumber, food, etc). While most Soviets continue to stand in line for food, a few are becoming very rich. The early stages of this new society based on accumulation of wealth also bring with it what Marx called "morbid symptoms." In the Soviet Union, the most obvious morbid symptom is organized crime, in the form of protection rackets, murder, and cops on the take. The mob had arrived in the Soviet Union.

By the summer of 1990, Communist newspapers were hinting at a counter-revolution. The people, unhappy with the lack of progress, were angry and felt betrayed, once again, by their leaders. This time, their elected leaders are at the receiving end of their anger. Zaslavsky receives a great deal of hate mail and much of it carries anti-Semitic messages. As the gap between the rich and poor widens, groups like Motherland, Unity and United Workers Front call for class wars. Zaslavsky's goal of creating a single capitalist district in Moscow is failing. Zaslavsky is losing popularity quickly and his fellow council members have lost patience with him. In February 1991, Zaslavsky's opponents call for a no-confidence vote. Although lacking the necessary number to achieve a quorum, the council votes anyway and 78 members vote for Zaslavsky's resignation.

Chapter 21 Analysis

The October District is a microcosm of the Soviet Union during the transitional period between Communism and a free market economy. The crime, corruption and other challenges that face Zaslavsky and his team are the same in nearly every other district in Moscow and other urban areas around the country. The Soviet people expect results



quickly and when they don't see them, they turn on those they elected. With so many years of deception and oppression behind them, the Soviet people are suspicious and impatient. The transition itself is a very different endeavor. However, when crime, corruption and angry masses are added to the mix, it is nearly impossible. Meanwhile, the Communist Party, probably quite satisfied with the perceived failure of democracy, wait in the wings to seize the opportunity to return the Soviet Union to its previous form of government.



Chapter 22

Chapter 22 Summary

On May Day 1990, the regular May Day Festival of labor is held. Although a little less "Communist" than previous years, the parade is light-hearted and festive. About an hour into the parade, however, the democrats arrive and begin marching onto Red Square. Carrying anti-Communism banners and pro-Yeltsin/Sakharov posters, more than 10,000 democrats crowd onto the square, facing Gorbachev and the other Party leadership positioned on the Lenin Mausoleum. Gorbachev and the others watch quietly - as if the activities were a normal part of the festivities--as the protesters shout "Down with the Party," "Down with Gorbachev." After about 25 minutes, Gorbachev and the other Party leaders leave the celebration.

A good part of the May Day protest crowd is composed of young people. They did not grow up under Stalin's terror like their parents or grandparents, and they were not affected by the mass spell the Party had over the people. The younger generation distanced themselves from Communism. They found comfort in their friends rather than their Party. The Afghan invasion gave many young Soviets a recent reason (as if they needed one more) to despise the system.

Chapter 22 Analysis

As the Soviet Union undergoes dramatic changes, the younger generation shows they are ready for change and are willing to take on the system to secure those changes. As they have less guilt and less fear than older Soviets, it is easier for them to adjust to the new Soviet Union. They never really bought into the old Soviet Union, like their parents did. Therefore, they do not suffer from a feeling of loss or nostalgia for the old ways. The May Day protest shows the Party that the new generation of Soviets will not be so easily fooled or controlled, and that the younger generation is a force to be reckoned with.



Chapter 23

Chapter 23 Summary

In 1988, Vladimir Kryuchkov, the new chief of the KGB decides to launch a public relations campaign to improve notorious secret police's image. Despite the fact that Kryuchkov was part of the planning committee for the violent invasions of Budapest and Prague, he decides that a "nice guy" image would work for him and the KGB. As part of the PR campaign, the KGB insists they are no longer involved in any subversive activities such as spying, torturing or killing. In an effort to publicly convey this new image, the KGB hires a new spokesperson, a beautiful young agent called Miss KGB, who provides KGB updates on the evening news.

The new KGB feeds the media with espionage stories that they find hard to resist. One of the most famous spy stories of the mid-1980s is that of former CIA agent Edward Lee Howard. In 1983, Howard is fired from the CIA after failing several polygraph tests and for questionable behavior. Howard defects to the Soviet Union in 1986. In 1990, he is still living in Moscow and is well-taken care of by the KGB. The questionable behavior of a drinking problem still exists, although Howard denies it. Howard provides Remnick with an unconvincing tale about his freedom and happiness in the Soviet Union.

Sakharov had always said that the KGB was a possible breeding ground for reformers. Although it seems a contradiction, Sakharov argued that KGB men had spent a lot of time beyond the Soviet borders, exposed to different ways of life and thought, and had also witnessed first-hand (and often inflicted) the horrors that many Soviets faced at the hands of their government. In June 1990, Oleg Kalugin, a former major general in the KGB, became a living example of Sakharov's theory. As a speaker at a meeting of the Democratic Platform, Kalugin describes his career in the KGB. He has a clear message for the audience: the KGB has not changed and it continues to do exactly what it has always done. Two weeks after the speech, Kalugin is stripped of his military rank and honors by Mikhail Gorbachev.

Chapter 23 Analysis

Since the October Revolution, the KGB has enforced the policies of the Party whether it meant spying on foreign governments, murdering and torturing suspected dissidents, or bugging the homes of Soviet citizens. The fact that the leadership believes that they can change their public image with a simple and fairly weak public relations effort, is further evidence that they have very little respect for their citizens. The Party believes that 70 years of terror can be erased from the minds of people by simply using a pretty girl on the television to represent the agency. When Kalugin is fired and dishonored for his speech that may have damaged the KGB's public relations efforts, it is clear that either Gorbachev is gradually leaning to the right or perhaps he is no longer in control at all.



Chapter 24

Chapter 24 Summary

In September 1990, the future is beginning to look promising in the Soviet Union. Throughout the summer, Gorbachev has given indications that he will accelerate reform. Gorbachev teams with Boris Yeltsin to develop an economic plan, "The 500 days Plan," to stimulate the economy and redistribute power to the republics. Gorbachev has stated publicly that will support the plan, despite pleas from top Party leaders, who say the plan is clearly influenced by the west, and it will surely mean the end of the Soviet Union. In the next few months, three events will change the future of Soviet Union forever.

The first omen of things to come is the murder of Father Aleksandr Men, a Russian Orthodox priest found dead near his home in the small village of Semkohz, about 30 miles from Moscow. Father Men, born a Jew, had spent his life teaching Soviet citizens about the religion their ancestors had practiced before the Revolution. More recently, Men had become a spiritual leader in the new, more liberal Soviet Union. He preached openly in public venues, spoke on the radio, and was even being considered for his own religious television program. Father Men was brutally killed with an ax - the traditional Bolshevik symbol of revolt and the symbolism was lost on no one. It was clear that the murder of Father Men was not a random act of violence.

The second omen comes the day after Men's funeral. Soviet military planes and airborne divisions begin maneuvers north of Moscow. The military claims they are helping with the potato harvest, however, their AK-47s and bulletproof vests make their story hard to believe. People all over Moscow and beyond are speculating about a military coup.

The third omen arrives in the morning paper when millions of Soviets wake up to an essay written by Alexandr Solzhenitsyn. "How we can Revitalize Russia," details steps to save Russia from total collapse including clear instructions that independence should be granted to the Baltic republics, the Transcaucasian republics and the Central Asian republics. Without naming names (although they are obvious), Solzhenitsyn insults Gorbachev and the Party, and pokes fun at perestroika. Less than a month later, Gorbachev receives the Nobel Peace Prize. The following day, after the leaders of the KGB, military, defense industry, and others make it clear they will not tolerate any radical change in policy or economy, Gorbachev withdraws his support for the economic plan. It is clear now, that Gorbachev had, in fact, moved to the right.

Chapter 24 Analysis

In September 1990, it is clear that something radical is going to happen in the Soviet Union. The obvious state-sponsored murder of a popular priest and the threatening

display of force by the military are reminiscent of the old days. As the people seem to be moving further and further away from the past, the government seems to be regressing. When Gorbachev withdraws his support for the economic plan, all hope for a peaceful transition is lost. It appears a counter-revolution is inevitable.



Chapter 25

Chapter 25 Summary

In December 1990, Eduard Shevardnadze resigns as foreign minister. For the Lithuanian independence movement, Shevardnadze's resignation is a disaster. Shevardnadze is the only Soviet leader they can trust. In his resignation speech, Shevardnadze warns a dictatorship is coming. Shevardnadze's resignation coincides with several bombings on war memorials and monuments in Lithuania, orchestrated to appear as the work of the Baltic independence movement. During this time, newspapers assume a more important role in the Soviet Union, becoming a vital information source for the Soviet people. No longer controlled by the state, there is now a paper for every ideological view. A new newspaper, *Nezavisimay Gazeta*, is launched by Vitaly Tretyakov, the former deputy editor of *Moscow News*. Tretyakov says he wants to start "the first western-style, respectable, objective paper in the Soviet era." The newspaper is staffed by young, fearless reporters, who excel at investigative reporting.

On Jan. 13, 1991 at 2 a.m., Soviet tanks roll into the Lithuanian capitol, Vilnius. At least 14 people die. At first, some Moscow television stations try to run uncensored stories on the invasion, but tight state controls quickly put an end to that. Although covered by the western media, the US Gulf War in Iraq overshadows the vents in Lithuania. For its part, the Party makes good use of its control over television by using the host of a popular true crime show to convey its messages. As the golden boy of the Party's television propaganda program, Aleksandr Nevzorov gains popularity in the Party. In one program, Nevzorov, who was reporting from Lithuania, says that the people allegedly killed in the invasion were not killed by Soviet guns or tanks, but instead in car accidents and from heart attacks.

The events in Lithuania are a turning point for many Party members, who still believe in a humane socialism and in Gorbachev. After the failed coup attempt in Lithuania, these disillusioned socialists accept that the democratic movement may be the only viable alternative. Gorbachev claims he was unaware of the planned coup and says he was actually sleeping when it occurs. Later, when asked if Gorbachev truly slept through the invasion, his former economic adviser Nikolai Petrakov says, "Don't be napve."

Chapter 25 Analysis

As Aleksandr Yakovlev told Gorbachev years before, the television image is everything. This had never been truer in the Soviet Union than it was during the Lithuanian attempted coup, and the Party was obviously aware of that. They tried desperately (and successfully) to conceal the truth and sway public opinion through the use of Nevzorov and the State-run stations. Although the Party's broadcasts might convince some of the people, those who had tried for so long to believe in the system could no longer deny their loyalties had been misplaced. The invasion of Lithuania resulting in the killing of

innocent people is a significant event for many Party members, creating a distinct division between the Party and everyone else.



Chapter 26

Chapter 26 Summary

In 1991, it is clear that Gorbachev is no longer in control of the country. The KGB, the military-industrial complex, the generals and the old guard Party members are calling the shots and Gorbachev is merely a figurehead. The Party blames Gorbachev for everything: the loss of Eastern Europe, the destruction of the Party and the success of the US and Germany. However, with their leadership, the generals are so confident in their future triumph, they decide it is time to rewrite Soviet history, repairing some of the damage done in recent years. They realize the new updated version will have to include some of the truth uncovered in recent years, including the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. The single most important aspect of Soviet history is the great patriotic War, World War II. For the people, the war represents the strength of the little people, a true David and Goliath story. For the Party, the war validated the efforts of the Communist Party, in industrialism and collective farming. If it weren't for these great visionary ideas, after all, the Soviets could not have beaten the Nazis. The Ministry of Defense appoints General Dmitri Volkogonov as the lead on the project.

Volkogonov was born in Siberia. His father was shot for possessing written materials of questionable political origin and his mother is sent to a labor camp. The orphan Volkogonov joins the military and makes it a career. He is a true Stalinist and is prepared to do anything for the Motherland. He works in the Department of Propaganda and earns a doctoral degree in history. Volkogonov decides to write a historical trilogy on Stalin, Lenin and Trotsky and begins with Stalin. When his research is deemed inconsistent with his work in the Propaganda Department, he is demoted and sent to the Institute of Military History, where he has much more time for research and writing. When he is asked to lead the effort to rewrite history, he is ready. With access to all of the secret Soviet files, Volkogonov uncovers volumes of information about Stalin and the Party. His draft of the first volume of the new Soviet history is brutally honest and critical of Stalin. Worse yet, Volkogonov suggests that the Soviet Union won the Patriotic war by chance. Needless to say, Volkogonov's draft is not appreciated by the Minister of Defense or his official reviewers. Despite Volkogonov's attempts to point out his draft contains only the truth, he is dismissed from the editorial committee.

Chapter 26 Analysis

Volkogonov's life mirrors the lives of the Soviet people. In his youth, despite the fact that his parents die at the hands of the State, he is completely loyal to Stalin and the Party. Like the Soviet people, he accepts their fates as necessary. After spending most of his life as a loyal Stalinist, he realizes the truth about his country, his history and himself. Faced with this reality, he writes the truth about Stalin and the Great patriotic war, and in doing so, begins the process of clearing his own conscience tainted by his involvement

with the vast machine. At the same time, the majority of Soviet people are doing the same thing, cleansing their minds and consciences in their own small ways.



Chapter 27

Chapter 27 Summary

A year and a half after the Siberian miners went on strike, they strike again in the winter of 1991. This time the stakes are greater. They are asking for a little more than soap; this time they want Gorbachev's resignation. The striking miners terrify the Kremlin. Not only do they symbolize the very roots of Bolshevism, but they also actually have the power to do something. The miners can actually cut power to the Kremlin and wreck havoc on industry. There are rumors that Gorbachev is planning to send in the military to end the strike.

This would not be the first time this tactic is used in Soviet history. In June 1962, workers at the Electric Locomotive Works in Novochoerkassk, strike over food price hikes and wage reductions. The military is put on alert and when the striking workers march toward Party headquarters in the small town, the military commander orders the soldiers to attack. Despite the pleas of General Matvei Shaposhnikov, who argues his Soviet brothers are unarmed, the soldiers fire upon the miners. In the end, 24 miners are killed and dozens are wounded. General Shaposhnikov, a loyal communist convinced this is all a terrible mistake, writes to Party officials and the Writer's Union. His letters are turned over to the KGB and Shaposhnikov is sent into early retirement.

Military force, in the form of the Moscow police force, is once again called for in March 1991. Elections are approaching and Boris Yeltsin is successful in adding a referendum to the ballot asking if the Russian people want to vote directly for their president. The people respond with a resounding yes. Gorbachev bans all public demonstrations between March 26 and April 15. Yeltsin, who is convinced he will be elected president, defies Gorbachev and calls for a demonstration on March 28. Despite fears it would get ugly, the demonstration is peaceful. When it becomes clear that Yeltsin will win the election, becoming the first president of Russia, Gorbachev begins to lean to the left again. He signs an agreement to work with the republics to create a new treaty that will give them more power.

As expected, Yeltsin is elected in June. Gorbachev seems to be willing to work with Yeltsin, which angers the Party hardliners. Prime Minister Pavlov suggests he assumes some of Gorbachev's duties in an effort to "help" the tired leader, but several leaders of the radical Soyuz faction demand Gorbachev's resignation. Gorbachev faces parliament and then dismisses Pavlov's suggestion as "not well thought out." Laughing, he tells the press, that the coup is over.

Chapter 27 Analysis

The Soviet people are finally realizing their power and are ready to stand up for their rights. They have lost all respect for Gorbachev. In Russia, the election of well-known

democrat Boris Yeltsin sends a message to Gorbachev and the Party. Gorbachev responds by showing he is willing to work with Yeltsin and the republics. The Party responds by trying to impeach Gorbachev. Although Yeltsin may finally have the support of Gorbachev, it appears as though Gorbachev no longer has any power and is really of little value to Yeltsin and the democrats.



Part IV

Part IV Summary

In the summer of 1991, rumors of a coup d'etat circulate throughout the Soviet Union, from the halls of parliament to southern farmlands. Some feel a coup is inevitable, while others believe it is merely a scare tactic. The real political insiders on the democratic side, Boris Yeltsin, Aleksandr Yakovlev, and foreign minister Aleksandr Bessmertnykh, see a storm coming. All three men try and warn Gorbachev of the danger and the betrayal of his trusted inner circle, but Gorbachev ignores them. On Aug. 6, shortly after Gorbachev and his family leave for summer vacation in the Crimea, KGB chief Kryuchkov tells his aides to prepare a detailed report of the situation of the country in order to justify a state of emergency. Kryuchkov reminds them of the urgency of the matter. When Gorbachev returns from vacation, he intends to sign the Union Treaty. After the treaty is signed, it will be too late for a state of emergency (or a coup).

On Aug. 16, with the state of emergency documents in his hand, Kryuchkov tells his deputy to form a group to go to Gorbachev's house in the Crimea and cut off communication lines. Kryuchkov then calls a meeting of his co-conspirators: Defense Minister Yazov, Prime Minister Pavlov, Politburo Chief Oleg Shenin, Military Industries Chief Oleg Baklanov and Gorbachev's Chief of Staff Valery Boldin. Boldin is selected to go to the Crimea and deliver an ultimatum to Gorbachev: Either support the state of emergency decree or step down. When Boldin presents Gorbachev with his options, he refuses to cooperate. Gorbachev and his family are left in the Crimea under the watch of the KGB and without any form of outside communication. The conspirators convince Vice President Yanayev that Gorbachev is ill and that he must sign the decree, and he does so reluctantly.

The next morning, the state of emergency is announced on the morning news and the military is called into action. Yeltsin heads to the white house and along with his prime minister drafts a plea to the citizens of Russia asking them to resist the coup. From a tank positioned in front of the white house, Yeltsin rallies his supporters and addresses a crowd that has gathered outside. His plea is broadcast over the radio. Yeltsin's defense minister convinces the military positioned at the white house to defend it, rather than attack it and the crowd goes wild when the troops turn their guns away from the white house.

Throughout the city, ordinary Russian citizens are standing their ground, protecting Russia and Yeltsin. Press operators at the newspaper *Izvestia* refuse to print the newspaper unless Yeltsin's statement runs along with the statement from the emergency committee. The next day's edition contains both. At the State-run television station, Sergei Medvedev is told to film a short piece called "Moscow Today." Medvedev includes all the usual daily aspects of Russian life, and also includes footage of Yeltsin on the tank and the barriers protecting the white house. Medvedev's editor, Valentin Lazutkin, decides to air the piece, angering the conspirators.



As time passes, more and more Russians join the barricades at the white house. Just for midnight on three protestors are killed by the military, bringing even more citizens to the defense of their country and their Russian brothers and sisters. The Emergency Committee is planning to storm to the white house, but even as they speak, they realize the coup is failing. Three days into the coup, Kryuchkov calls Yeltsin and suggests they go see Gorbachev in the Crimea. Just like that, the coup is over. Gorbachev, Yeltsin and the others return to Moscow, where Kryuchkov, Yazov and Tizyakov are arrested.

Part IV Analysis

The attempted coup happens because of numerous mistakes on the part of Gorbachev, primarily his trust in the inner circle despite warnings from trustworthy sources. Whether Gorbachev is too trusting, too arrogant or too ignorant to see what is coming is unclear. The coup fails, because it is poorly planned and poorly initiated, but more so, because once again, the Party sells its citizenry short. When the conspirators begin to plan their coup, they expect that the Russian people will lie down and allow them to takeover their government and country. They do not expect the masses to fight back, and this is their fatal mistake. The fact that so many ordinary Russians turn out to fight and even die for their rights and their country is a definite sign that times have changed. These changes in attitude and spirit bode well for the future of Russia, and the Soviet Union as a whole.



Part V

Part V Summary

As thousands of protestors march against the Communist party, demanding its destruction, hundreds of Party members and their aides begin their own process of destruction. Members of the Central Committee desperately try to destroy records and archives of the Party's seventy-year history. As the battle between Yeltsin and Gorbachev continues, Yeltsin humiliates Gorbachev at a meeting of the Russian Parliament by forcing him to read aloud transcripts that detail how all of the members of Gorbachev's inner circle supported the coup. Yeltsin then announces it is time to vote on a decree to suspend all activities of the Russian Communist party. Gorbachev is shocked, but powerless. On Aug. 24, 1991 Gorbachev resigns as general secretary and the Central Committee is resolved. Gorbachev, once the face of hope for millions of Soviets, is now an outcast in his own country. Although to the Western world, Gorbachev remains the symbol of democracy in the Soviet Union, the people of Russia see it differently. For them, Yeltsin is their hero.

While democrats and Russian citizens celebrate, several members of Gorbachev's team including Interior Minister Boris Pugo and military adviser Marshal Akhromeyev commit suicide. Other suicides are rumored, but not substantiated. Anatoly Lukyanov is sent to jail. The Constitutional Court, designed in essence, to decide whether the Communist party is a constitutional political party or not, convenes in July 1992. During the trial, volumes of documents and testimonies paint a fairly clear picture of the Party's activities. In the fall, the Constitutional Court of Russia rules that communists may meet at the local level, but the Communist Party is, in fact, illegal.

Part V Analysis

The Communist Party and its leadership are exposed for its history of terror and crimes against the Soviet people. Although some are brought to justice and the Party is banned, one cannot help feeling that most of the villains in this story get away with murder. They are not imprisoned or even tried for their crimes against humanity. Many of these people, in fact, are successful businessmen. Others, due to their experience, remain active in the new political structure. Mikhail Gorbachev, who must be given credit for his early efforts at liberalization, fares much worse than many of the criminals. Although this may seem unfair, the Russian people no longer care. They are too busy adjusting to the new world and looking to the future to dwell on the tragedy of the past. They have earned the right to move on.



Characters

David Remnick

Remnick, the author, is a young Washington Post journalist assigned to the Soviet Union. Remnick is of Russian descent and Jewish. He speaks Russian and is able to integrate with the local Soviets, making friends and learning about the Soviet culture. As a writer for the Washington Post, Remnick also has access to some of the most influential people in the Soviet Union, including Gorbachev, Yeltsin, and Sakharov, as well as some of the most notorious characters in Soviet history. Both of Remnick's grandfathers were imprisoned during the Stalin era, so he is no stranger to the subject. Remnick lives in Moscow and writes about the Soviet Union for four years.

Joseph Stalin

Iosif Vissarionovich Djughashvili was born in 1879 in Gori, a small village in the Georgia. Stalin studied at a Russian orthodox seminary; his mother hoped he would become a priest. While studying at the seminary, Stalin becomes a Communist and is expelled from the seminary because of his activities. He works in the Socialist underground movement and is imprisoned and sent to Siberia several times. In 1913, he changes his name from Djughashvili to Stalin, which comes from the Russian word for Steel. He works his way up in the Party and, after Lenin's death, Stalin is named general secretary of the Central Committee. During his reign of terror, millions of Soviets are imprisoned, murdered and tortured.

Stalin had cult-like status in the Soviet Union for decades. It was not until the late 1980s that Soviet people began to realize the ruthlessness of their once beloved leader.

Vladimir Lenin

faction when the party split. In 1917, Lenin led the Bolshevik Revolution and became the father of the Soviet Union. Although there were multiple attempts on his life, one assassin hit Lenin with several bullets including one lodged in his neck that could not be removed. It is believed that this bullet contributed to a stroke that led to his early death in 1921.

Since 1917, Lenin has been the symbol of Communism and Bolshevism in the Soviet Union. He claimed to represent the workers and the peasants, and he was a staunch opponent of anti-Semitism. When the truth about Stalin was finally revealed, Lenin's reputation remained unscathed for many years. In the end, however, most people believe Lenin was as ruthless and evil as his successor.



Mikhail Gorbachev

Mikhail Gorbachev was the leader of the Soviet Union from 1985-1991, replacing Konstantin Chernenko. In the early years of his leadership, Gorbachev appeared to be another Party hardliner, who would continue to provide the same leadership as most of the men before him. He tried to improve the Communist Party's image within the Soviet Union and the world and improve the Soviet economy by introducing new reforms. The two most famous reform policies, glasnost and perestroika, were welcomed by the Soviet people but angered the Party hardliners. During his term, Gorbachev wavered between liberalism and strict Communism. His general indecisiveness and the slow pace of progress angered the Soviet people and made him unpopular. He made numerous mistakes, including trusting his inner circle, which attempted to overthrow him in the August Coup of 1991. When the Soviet Union dissolved, Gorbachev resigned.

Boris Yeltsin

Boris Yeltsin worked most of his life in the Communist party. He gained popularity among Soviet citizens with his public criticism of Mikhail Gorbachev during the perestroika years. With the death of Andrei Sakharov, Yeltsin became the leader of the democratic movement and in 1991 was elected president of the Russian Federation.

Andrei Sakharov

Andrei Sakharov was a Soviet physicist, who created the Soviet Union's first thermonuclear bomb. Once he realized what damage could be done with his device, Sakharov became an advocate for human rights and eventually one of the greatest Soviet dissidents of all time. Due to his public protests against the Afghanistan invasion in 1979, Sakharov and his wife spent six years of exile in Siberia. Allowed to return to Moscow by Mikhail Gorbachev, Sakharov continued his fight for human rights and was elected to parliament where he became the leader of the democratic movement. Sakharov died in 1989.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

Soviet novelist and historian, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn is best known for his novels "A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich" and "The Gulag Archipelago." Both books shed light on the Soviet labor camp system where Solzhenitsyn had spent a great deal of time. In 1974, Solzhenitsyn was deported from the Soviet Union, and he and his family moved to the US. In 1990, Solzhenitsyn's Russian citizenship was restored and in 1994, he and his wife returned home. Solzhenitsyn's writings had been banned in the Soviet Union for decades, but during glasnost, his works were published in Soviet newspapers and magazines for the first time and Soviet people began to understand the extent of Stalin's terror.



Nikita Khrushchev

Nikita Khrushchev assumed power after Stalin's death in 1953. Under his leadership, the Soviet Union experienced the "thaw," a time when liberal policies made their way into the Soviet system. Khrushchev also spoke out against Stalin and granted amnesty to thousands of Soviet prisoners. Unfortunately, Khrushchev's liberal policies and erratic behavior led to his overthrow in 1964. After he was removed from office, he spent the remaining seven years of life under house arrest.

Leonid Brezhnev

Leonid Brezhnev succeeded Nikita Khrushchev in 1964. A long time friend and colleague of Khrushchev's, Brezhnev was involved in the plot to overthrow him. Brezhnev reversed most of Khrushchev's liberal policies and returned the Soviet Union to the Stalin era. Brezhnev died in 1982.



Objects/Places

Moscow

The capital of the Soviet Union and Russian Federation, Moscow is the largest city in the Soviet Union and the center of trade, commerce and politics.

Russia

Prior to the Bolshevik revolution, Imperial Russia was ruled by a czarist monarchy. After the Revolution, Russia became the dominant region of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). In 1991, when the Union dissolved, Russia became an independent country.

Soviet Union

Following the Bolshevik Revolution and the Russian Civil War, the Soviet Union (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) was formed in 1920.

Communism

Communism is based on a principle of socialism, whereby the citizens of a society share ownership of the means of production.

Stalinism

Stalinism describes the form of Communism enforced by Joseph Stalin during the 1940s and 1950s. Stalinism is based on Stalin's interpretation of the ideas and theories of others such as Karl Marx, Joseph Engel, Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky.

Bolshevik Revolution

Led by Vladimir Lenin and the Bolsheviks (who claimed to represent workers and peasants,) the Revolution successfully overthrew the czar's government and brought about the Russian Civil War of 1918-1920. After the civil war, the USSR, a socialist country, was formed.

Collectivism

Under Stalin, the Soviet Union assumed control of all privately owned farms and forced peasants into collective farms where they basically worked in exchange for food. The



collective farms were supposed to boost agricultural production, but they were not very successful and many people, mostly peasants, starved.

Kremlin

Although the term refers to any palace or fortress in Russia, it is used most often to describe the government of the Soviet Union. After the Union dissolved, the Kremlin became the office of the President of the Russian Federation.

Russian Far East

The Russian Far East is the most eastern region of the Soviet Union, stretching from the eastern border of Siberia to the Pacific Ocean. During the Soviet era, the sparsely populated region was rich in natural resources, which were heavily mined.

Siberia

A vast region of the former Soviet Union, Siberia now accounts for more than half of the territory in the Russian Federation. During the Stalin era, the term Siberia was used interchangeable with labor camps, as most of the camps were located in the frigid, sparsely populated region.

Budapest, Hungary

Budapest is the capital of Hungary and the site of the Hungarian Uprising of 1956. Thousands of Hungarians rose up against the Communist government.

The Prague Spring

Lasting from January through August of 1968, the Prague Spring was a short period in Czechoslovakian history when liberal leader Alexander Dubcek tried to liberalize the Communist country. The Soviet Union and some of its Communist allies invaded the country. More than 70 people were killed, hundreds wounded, and Dubcek was arrested.

Baltic Republics

The Baltic Republics refers to the three independent republics along the Baltic Sea, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, which were occupied and annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940. The three republics regained their independence from the Soviet Union in 1991.

Eastern Europe

During the Cold War, Eastern Europe usually implied the countries that were under the influence of the Soviet Union. In the late 1980s and 1990s, many of these countries abandoned Communism for democracy.

Glasnost

In English, glasnost translates to openness. Glasnost was Gorbachev's reform policy to make the operations of the Soviet government public and open to debate.

Perestroika

In English, perestroika translates to restructure. Perestroika was Gorbachev's reform policy to restructure the economy of the Soviet Union



Themes

Truth

The concept of truth is a foreign concept to most Soviets. They have been lied to for their entire lives by nearly everyone, including their government, teachers and families. The entire Soviet cultural foundation was based on lies. All of the significant events and figures that shape the Soviet Union's modern identity, including the Bolshevik Revolution, the great founder Lenin, the brave leader Stalin and the Great Patriotic War, are all lies.

For seventy years, the Communist Party has deceived the people of Soviet Union. Now, the lack of truth has brought the Soviet Union to its knees and is nearly the cause of its total collapse. The people of the Soviet Union are looking for truth and it seems they are denied at every point.

There are many people in the book who know the truth, but most of them have been lying to themselves in order to accept the situation or protect themselves. Those who refused to accept the lies were killed, exiled or imprisoned.

Hope

Years of oppression and fear have taken their toll on the spirits of the Soviet people; hope is not an option. During the seventy years of Communism in the Soviet Union, hope appears among the people for a short time, then just as quickly it vanishes. When the Bolsheviks took over Russia, they said it was for the benefit of the workers and the peasants. The people had hope then, but it was quickly extinguished. When Stalin led the country to victory against the Nazis in World War II, there was hope. Again, it was doused. For awhile, there was some hope under Khrushchev, but that fades with his removal from office. When Gorbachev begins talking about glasnost and perestroika, not only do those terms represent openness and economic restructuring - they represent hope for a better, safer life for millions of Soviets. After years of dashed dreams, hope finally returns to the people, and it is nearly lost during the August coup. Perhaps, it is this last ditch effort, their last chance at hope, that drives the people to find their strength and resist the Party.

Fear

The Communist Party's power is completely based on fear. They control everything and everyone with fear and terror. For seventy years, they have maintained control and kept the masses at bay through the effective use of fear. Of course, fear is only effective if you can back it up; the murders of millions of people certainly helped the Party drive that point home. A few among the millions are not quieted by fear. People like Sakharov, Solzhenitsyn, and Medvedev are the exception to the rule for the better part of seventy



years. However, as the Soviet people awaken from what must have seemed like a long and terrible nightmare, they are no longer easily subdued by fear tactics. When this happens, their futures are altered forever. Without the ability to terrify and frighten the people into submission and oppression, the Communist Party no longer has a means of controlling the situation or the country. Political change, in the form of democracy, is inevitable.

Anti-Semitism

A deep hatred for people of the Jewish faith is a common theme in the histories of many countries. Russia has a long history of Jewish persecution. In Russia in the late 1800s and early 1900s, pogroms (targeted attacks on Jews) were commonplace. Under the last czars, the Black Hundreds carried off dozens of pogroms of Jews. During the October Revolution and the Russian Civil War, hundreds of thousands of Jews were slaughtered. The fact that Lenin, the founder of the Soviet Union, was against the persecution of Jews seems to get lost somewhere along the way. Whenever there is an economic crisis, the Jews are blamed. Throughout his journeys in the Soviet Union, Remnick meets numerous, unabashed anti-Semites from all walks of life and backgrounds. The most vocal, destructive group is Pamyat, a group of teachers, factory workers and other ordinary citizens. During glasnost, when emigration restrictions were loosened, hundreds of thousands of Soviet Jews applied for visas. In 1989, 100,000 Soviet Jews moved to Israel and the West.

Style

Point of View

The book is written in first-person from the perspective of David Remnick, an American journalist assigned to the Soviet Union during the years in question. Although throughout the book his personal views are apparent, the majority of the book is based on interviews and conversations with Soviet people he meets during his time there. Remnick uses their experiences and stories to illustrate life in the Soviet Union, and to a very great extent, excludes himself from the heart of the story. By using the Soviet people's own words, Remnick makes their stories more credible and tragic.

Setting

The book's primary setting is Moscow, the Soviet Capitol, where the Kremlin, parliament, the Communist Party and most other major political entities are headquartered. Remnick lives in Moscow and many of the people he meets in the book are also Muscovites. Moscow is described as a dreary, overcast and polluted industrialized city. There is a continuous lack of food and other supplies in the stores and people often stand in long lines to get the basic necessities like bread and milk.

In the six years that Remnick is assigned to the Soviet Union, he travels extensively throughout the country meeting people of all walks of life and all social and ethnic backgrounds. Many of the stories Remnick hears from the Soviet people take place in other parts of the country, including Siberia, the Ukraine, the Russian Far East and the Baltic and Central Asian republics. Many of the primary characters in the story of the final days of the Soviet Union have come from every corner of the country either as elected officials or advocates for democracy.

Language and Meaning

The book is written in simple, clear English. Throughout the text, Russian terms are used fairly regularly, but for the most part they are explained by the author. Readers may find the numerous Russian surnames a bit of a challenge as they are unfamiliar to Westerners and many of the names may appear to be similar to one another from an English reader's perspective. The book is not written in chronological order and many of the chapters jump from the past to the present and then back again. Although a great deal of Soviet history is provided in the text, readers with a good understanding of Soviet and Bolshevik history will probably enjoy the book more than those who are to the subject.

Readers must keep in mind that the book is written from an American perspective. Although Remnick is of Russian descent and is fluent in the language, he is still an outsider. His Jewish faith may also affect his perspective.

Structure

The 530-page book is divided into five parts. Part I, which contains nine relatively short chapters, deals with the past, particularly the Stalin era. Part I also provides the background necessary for the reader to fully understand the political and economic situation in the Soviet Union. Part II, also containing nine chapters, illustrates how democracy slowly begins to infiltrate the Soviet Union and how the people and the government are affected by it. Part III, again nine chapters, addresses the internal political battle within the Soviet Union, including the independence movements of the various republics. Chapter IV has no chapters, just a single focus on the August Coup. Finally, Part V...

The book is not written in any chronological order and tends to jump around from location to location and past to present fairly regularly. Although some readers may find this bothersome, the technique of presenting historical data along side current events is an effective one.



Quotes

"Imagine being an adult and nearly all the truth you know about the world around you and outside your own country has to be absorbed in a matter of a year or two or three. The entire country is still in a state of mass disorientation." (*Grigori Pomerants, Chapter 1, Page 7.*)

"The farther away you keep from the Czar, the longer you stay alive." (*An unnamed Byelorussian woman, one of Kaganovich's oldest neighbors. Chapter 2, Page 12.*)

"You know, when we talk about all these people, I know now that they are all gone. It is horrible to say, but you must imagine a state that used every means to kill the best among us." (*Lydia Korneievna Chukovskaya, Chapter 3, Page 29.*)

"Compared to Lenin, Stalin was a mere lamb." (*Vyacheslav Molotov, Chapter 4, Page 45.*)

"During that time, a man's life was not as valuable as it is now. In this country, we had war from 1914-1917, and then again in 1918-1921. In wartime, when perhaps a simple punishment is enough, people are executed. This is very cruel...but had there not been such cruelty, everyone would have just run around in different directions. Sometimes brutality can be justified." (*Vladimir Klushin, Husband of Nina Andreyeva, Chapter 6, Page 80.*)

"In the past, a person going to bed at night knew that in the morning he'd go to work and have free medical care - not very skilled care, but free nonetheless. And now we don't even have these guarantees." (*Nina Andreyeva, Chapter 6, Page 82.*)

"Meanwhile the shooting was in full swing. I was not found. It meant that I was also included in that number, I was also meant to be one of those three hundred. So, they took somebody else instead of me. And, when I emerged from my hideout the next morning, I was a different man. So many years have passed since then, more than half a century, sixty years in fact, and I still cannot forget it. Exactly three hundred people were mowed down just like that, as a warning...Three hundred shots, one per man. The executioner was drunk, so he did not manage to kill them all immediately. But all the same, they threw all the bodies in a big pit. The executioner is older than me, and he is still alive." (*Dmitri Likachev, Chapter 8, Page 104.*)

"We were told that Stalin was doing everything perfectly, and we believed it all. That was our level of understanding, and Mikhail Sergeyevich (Gorbachev) was no exception. None of us ever thought twice about it." (*Afanasyev Serikov, childhood friend of Gorbachev, Chapter 10, Page 154.*)

"What are we going to do now?" (*One of Gorbachev's roommates at college on the death of Stalin, Chapter 10, Page 161.*)



"But, on the other hand, no provincial Party secretary could survive, much less advance, by ignoring the birthdays and so on of those superior to him. Even an 'honest' Party secretary coming to Moscow would have to bring gifts for his superiors: a few cases of good wine. You couldn't get away from that. Gorbachev included. That was life in the Communist Party." (*Arkady Vaksberg, Chapter 12, Page 193.*)

"So what have we achieved after all these years? Only 2.3 percent of all Soviet families can be called wealthy, and about 0.7 percent of these have earned that income lawfully...About 11.2 percent can be called middleclass or well-to-do. The rest, 86.5 percent, are simply poor. What we have is equality in poverty." (*Anatoly Deryabin, Economist, Chapter 13, page 203.*)

"This is not Africa - children are not starving to death in the same blatant way - but there is no way to hide it anymore: we are poor and we are suffering. Of course, we need to educate people on birth control and all the rest. But as a Party member - and it hurts me to say this - the truth is that poverty here is tied to politics. Ninety percent of the blame lies with the system, the bureaucracy, the command system, the centralization of control. There is no escaping that." (*Afanasyev Kirichenko, Chapter 13, Page 206.*)

"Let us admit it: we have not matured enough to march into the squares and shout the truth out loud, or to express openly what we think. It is not necessary. It is dangerous. But let us refuse to say what we do not think. This is our path, the easiest and the most accessible one, which allows for our inherent, deep-rooted cowardice." (*Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn in "Live not by Lies," Chapter 18, Page 266.*)

"If we had only listened more carefully to Andrei Dmitriyevich (Sakharov), we might have learned something." (*Mikhail Gorbachev, three years after Sakharov's death, Chapter 19, Page 282.*)

"Forgive us for all the misfortune that we caused you. Forgive us for the fact that now only good things will be said of you by those who did not do so while you were alive. Words will not help, and we did not safeguard your life. But I believe we will safeguard your memory. Forgive us." (*Message left by a mourner at Sakharov's doorstep the day after his death, Chapter 19, Page 285.*)

"When we say that we are rehabilitating someone, as if we are mercifully forgiving him for the sins of the past, this smells of cunning and hypocrisy. We are not forgiving him. We are forgiving ourselves. It is we who are to blame that others lived for years both slandered and oppressed. It is we who are rehabilitating ourselves, not those who held other thoughts and convictions. They only wanted good and freedom for us, and the leadership of the country answered with evil, prisons, and camps." (*Aleksandr Yakovlev, Chapter 20, Page 304.*)

"We never understood just how deep the psychology of Bolshevism is in every one of us. The harder we try to push, the harder that psychology pushes back." (*Ilya Gezentsevei, Chapter 21, Page 312.*)



"I see that you are an emperor and a pope at the same time. How useful." (*Napoleon to Aleksandr I, Chapter 25, Page 361.*)

"I am the Defense Minister of Russia and not a hand will be raised against the people or the duly elected president of Russia." (*Konstantin Kobets, Part IV, Page 466.*)

"No! Russia will not fall again on her knees for interminable years, with us are Pushkin, Tolstoy. With us stands the whole awakened people. And the Russian parliament, like a wounded marble swan of freedom, defended by the people, swims into immortality." (*Yevengy Yevtushenko, Part IV, Page 476.*)

"We have known each other for forty years. Cut the bullshit. Stop hanging noodles on my ears." (*Mikhail Gorbachev, Part IV, Page 488.*)

"I want to breathe the air of freedom in Moscow." (*Mikhail Gorbachev, Part IV, Page 490.*)

"The Party is dead. Why can't you see that? Talk about its 'renewal' is senseless. It is life offering first aid to a corpse." (*Aleksandr Yakovlev, Part V, page 495.*)

"I'll start by squeezing the Baltics and other small nations. I don't care if they are recognized by the UN. I'm not going to invade them or anything. I will bury radioactive waste along the Lithuanian border and put up powerful fans to blow the stuff across the border at night. I'll turn the fans off during the day. They will all get radiation sickness. They'll die of it. When they either die out or get down on their knees, I'll stop it. I'm a dictator. What I'm going to do is bad, but it'll be good for Russia. The Slavs are to get anything they want if I'm elected." (*Vladimir Zhirinovsky, Part V, Page 524.*)

"Even now Gorbachev talks about our 'socialist choice'...But we cannot speak of a socialist choice in this country. Our experience, our 'choice,' is not socialist and never was. We had a slave system here. Who can talk about a socialist choice? Maybe Germany, or Israel, or Spain. But not us...But Gorbachev could not overcome his mentality. In general, this power, the concept of power, acts like a poison on a person." (*Aleksandr Yakovlev, Part V, page 529.*)



Topics for Discussion

Discuss the book's title, and how it relates to the 70 years of Communist rule in the former Soviet Union.

How does a nation succeed in deceiving more than 300 million citizens for 70 years? Discuss the tools and techniques used by the government to maintain its hold on information. What happens that finally changes this?

Explore the element of fear employed by the Communist party, and why it is successful.

Discuss how human emotions and attributes contribute to the fall of the Soviet Empire.

Courage is demonstrated at great levels by some of the players in the story. Discuss which characters you feel were most courageous and why.

What is the role of Soviet people in their history? Discuss how the actions of common citizens contribute to both the rise and fall of the Soviet Empire.

In the early days of the Bolshevik movement, the rebels seemed to be genuinely concerned with creating a better place for the people of Russia. When and where did this go awry? Discuss how a movement aimed at equality and socialism becomes the tragedy of the Soviet Union. What are the major factors that contributed to the transformation of the original vision?

Two key elements of change were glasnost and perestroika. Discuss their significance in bringing changes to the Soviet Union.

The sheer vastness of the Soviet Union is often blamed for the success of Stalin's reign of terror. Discuss how the geographic characteristics are factors in the story of the Soviet Union. Could a similar situation happen in a smaller, less isolated country?