



The Struggle to Save the Soviet Economy: Mikhail Gorbachev and the Collapse of the USSR (The New Cold War History)

Chris Miller

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The economic system forged by Stalin had many faults--the abuse of workers and the waste of resources on a massive scale among them. But for half a century the Soviet economy was stable. Why, then, did it suddenly collapse in the late 1980s, only a few years after Mikhail Gorbachev came to power? In this groundbreaking study, Chris Miller shows that although Gorbachev and his allies sought to learn from China's economic reforms under Deng Xiaoping, their efforts to revitalize Soviet socialism proved much less successful.

Making use of never-before-studied documents from the Soviet politburo and other archives, Miller argues that the difference between the Soviet Union and China--and the ultimate cause of the Soviet collapse--was not economics but politics. The Soviet government was riven by bitter conflict, and Gorbachev, the ostensible Soviet autocrat, found himself unable to outmaneuver the interest groups that were threatened by economic reform. Miller's analysis settles long-standing debates about the politics and economics of perestroika, transforming our understanding of how Soviet policymakers might have prevented economic collapse.

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