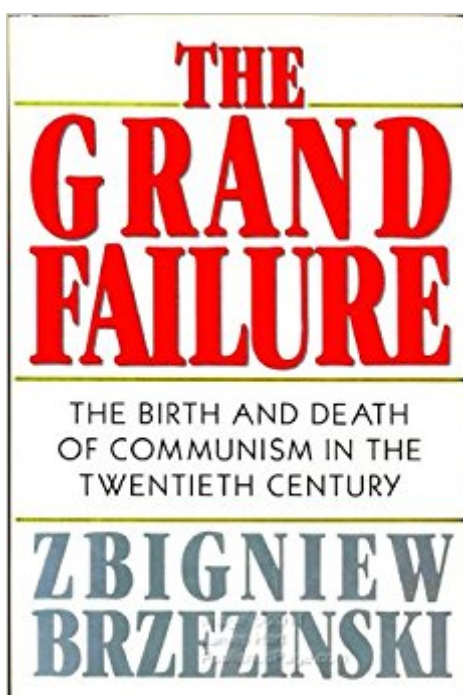


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The Grand Failure: The Birth And Death Of Communism In The Twentieth Century



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Customer Reviews

Analyzing Gorbachev's reforms, the former National Security Council director last year predicted communism's collapse in what PW called a "brisk polemic, an amalgam of wishful thinking and hardnosed analysis." In light of recent upheavals in Eastern Europe, however, readers will likely find the paperback reprint superfluous. Copyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

YA-- An enlightening summary of the events of the past and a likely prognosis of the future of monolithic communism. Divided into six parts, this well-documented, readable book describes Lenin's conspiracy of power to force a destruction of society by mass terrorism; consolidation of one-party rule behind a facade of intellectual and cultural openness; and the creation of a system that allowed Stalin to pulverize society and nurtured Brezhnev's party-boss corruption, economic backwardness, social stagnation, and the vested interests of totalitarian leaders. Brzezinski explores the dilemma of changes confronting Soviet leaders, and explains why he believes that communism will be unable to make these changes. He provides readers with some masterful insights into what has happened and what could happen. --Barbara Batty, Port Arthur Copyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc.

EXCELLENT BOOK.

Perfect

What would you say if in 1989, 3 years into Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev's reign as General Secretary of the Communist Party and 3 years before the collapse of the USSR, a man wrote a book called "The Grand Failure, the Birth and Death of Communism in the Twentieth Century"? What if he got it right, and predicted most of the probable outcomes of the Yeltsin reforms through 2000? Brzezinski is that man - predicting the end of the USSR and the political / economic low point of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic long before it happened. Brzezinski has a thoroughly entertaining history to start the book, explaining the appeal of Marxist/Leninism to the poor, the disenfranchised, the academic, and the war weary. He has a really cogent categorization of the three eras of Soviet politics, and how they differed from each other. Zbigniew also lays out a meaningful and understandable history of Marxism in China and why it was fundamentally different from the rest of the world Communist movement. The meat of the book, though, is in explaining the emergent major trends in Central Europe and Russia, and in China in 1988 and 1989. Here he was dead on, and he and his staff seem to have read everything published in the USSR prior to Gorbachev and up to the publishing date of the book. Brzezinski predicts the fragmentation of the USSR, the huge nationalistic urges that took their toll on the Russian empire, the economic hardships, and the corruption. He laid out the likelihood of China becoming an economic free-zone under a hard core controlling political regime. The only thing that ZB seems to have missed is the resurgence of Russia as the 7th largest economic power under the power of the petro-ruble. Further, he's a bit weak on economics while he's incredibly good at pragmatic, political savvy - George Keenan had nothing on ZB. The third quarter of the book is a bit redundant and pendantic as he displays how all the little republics went their own ways, with variations on hating Moscow and having resurgent national movements. He has an excellent index, uses footnotes and has six-seven pages of graphs to back up his assertions. This is no fly-by-night potboiler written by an ex-Congressman lobbyist - this is scholarly politics that should be used to build USA foreign policy. Brzezinski should be a first-round draft choice for the new White House, whether it is Republican or Democrat.

Any serious student of world affairs should read -- even study -- this book. Brzezinski was director of the National Security Council during the Carter administration so few could write with more authority on the subject of communism in the 20th Century. First he gives detailed background information on the unraveling of the Soviet empire. Beginning with Lenin's concentration of political control and the

use of terror, Brzezinski traces Stalin's total consolidation of power through elimination of rivals and the subjugation of peasantry. Although interrupted by World War II, these tactics were revived in Eastern Europe during the postwar period. Stagnation set in, however, and the system failed to deliver the promised social and economic improvements. After Stalin's death, his repressive regime decayed to a corruption-dominated state under Brezhnev, interrupted only by abortive reform movements during Khrushchev's tenure. By the mid-1980s most top Soviet leaders accepted the need for renewal and began to debate how these reforms were to be accomplished. Brzezinski details emerging unrest, beginning in Poland, and discusses China's "commercial" communism. The events he describes confirm the seriousness of the now often disclaimed Cold War threat and helps the reader to understand what happened, how it happened and what it all means to us today.

Whither communism? is the question, and Zbigniew Brzezinski has the answer. That answer is laid out over two-hundred and fifty pages of fairly technical (but not impenetrable) prose. Since the book was written coeval to the last throes of the USSR, it is interesting to see how Brzezinski's predictions as to the future of communism played out. (Prescient in some areas; not so in others.) This book, because of its professorial style, is not very accessible to the layman interested in the topic, but starting from scratch. Certain chapters are downright dry, but others--such as eighteen and nineteen--are fascinating. This is not a primer, nor a propaedeutic: it's a thorough analytical survey of a disgraced and discredited political system, which scratches deep beneath the surface. It's not an "enjoyable" read, but it is illuminating, and it will help one to understand why communism had such strong appeal to begin with, why it attracted so many intellectuals to its banner, why it was able to end up governing one-third of the world's population, and why it failed so completely to fulfill what it set out to do.

This book was written while CIA analysts and liberal academics (often the same) were still saying that the USSR would carry on forever. While Zbig may have been off on some details of how it would happen, his basic conclusion that the game was over was right on.

Having written in 1989 that Communism would collapse this book is about 80% correct and terribly prescient. Russian bloc communism did collapse in 1990-1991. China has liberalized its economy. Cuba and N. Korea remain the only outliers, soon to collapse. This book gives a quick tour de force for this.

I read this regular book, here in Brazil. This book was written by Zbigniew Kazimierz Brzezinski, a Polish-American, more than 20 years ago. This book did some good prophecies, and showed the failures of Socialist economic system. Even so, I have to give three stars, because this book is now very outdated. It was written even before the fall of Berlin's Wall, in 1989. Populism/Socialism were proclaimed in countries such as Venezuela, Zimbabwe, etc. since this book was written.

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