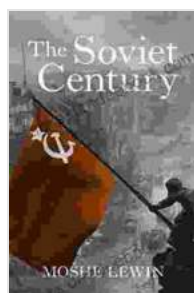


# The Soviet Century: A Revisionist Historiography of the USSR

Moshe Lewin's *The Soviet Century* (1985) is a seminal work in the historiography of the Soviet Union. It is a bold and comprehensive revisionist account of the USSR's history, challenging many of the prevailing assumptions and interpretations of the time. Lewin argues that the Soviet Union was not a monolithic entity, but rather a complex and evolving society with its own unique dynamics. He also emphasizes the role of contingency and unintended consequences in shaping Soviet history.

Lewin's revisionist approach has had a profound impact on the field of Soviet historiography. It has helped to dispel many of the myths and stereotypes that have surrounded the USSR, and it has opened up new avenues for research and understanding. In this article, we will explore Lewin's key arguments, his methodology, and his historiographical legacy.



## The Soviet Century by Moshe Lewin

★★★★☆ 4.3 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 844 KB

Text-to-Speech : Enabled

Enhanced typesetting : Enabled

Word Wise : Enabled

Print length : 495 pages

Screen Reader : Supported

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## **Lewin's Key Arguments**

Lewin's central thesis is that the Soviet Union was a "Soviet civilization," with its own unique set of values, institutions, and social relations. He argues that Soviet society was not simply a product of the Russian Revolution, but rather the result of a complex interaction between the revolutionary legacy and the realities of Russian history and culture.

Lewin identifies several key features of Soviet civilization. First, he argues that it was a highly ideological society, with a strong emphasis on collectivism and social equality. Second, he notes that it was a highly centralized and authoritarian society, with a single-party system and a powerful secret police. Third, he emphasizes the role of the state in Soviet society, which played a dominant role in the economy, the social sphere, and the cultural sphere.

Lewin also argues that the Soviet Union was a constantly evolving society. He identifies several key turning points in Soviet history, including the New Economic Policy (NEP) of the 1920s, the Stalinist period of the 1930s and 1940s, and the Khrushchev era of the 1950s and 1960s. He argues that each of these periods was characterized by its own unique set of challenges and opportunities, and that the Soviet Union responded to these challenges in a variety of ways.

## **Lewin's Methodology**

Lewin's revisionist approach is based on a number of methodological innovations. First, he draws on a wide range of sources, including archival materials, memoirs, and interviews. This allows him to present a more nuanced and comprehensive account of Soviet history than earlier historians who relied primarily on official sources.

Second, Lewin uses a comparative approach, comparing the Soviet Union to other societies, both past and present. This allows him to identify the unique features of Soviet society and to assess its strengths and weaknesses.

Third, Lewin emphasizes the role of contingency and unintended consequences in shaping Soviet history. He argues that the Soviet Union was not the product of a single, predetermined plan, but rather the result of a complex interaction of factors, both domestic and international.

### **Lewin's Historiographical Legacy**

Lewin's work has had a profound impact on the field of Soviet historiography. It has helped to dispel many of the myths and stereotypes that have surrounded the USSR, and it has opened up new avenues for research and understanding.

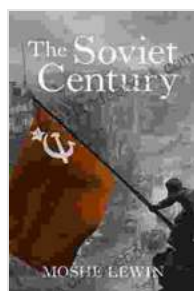
Lewin's revisionist approach has been embraced by many historians, both in the West and in the former Soviet Union. It has led to a more nuanced and complex understanding of Soviet history, and it has helped to bring the Soviet Union into the mainstream of historical scholarship.

Lewin's work has also been criticized by some historians, who argue that he is too sympathetic to the Soviet Union and that he downplays the role of ideology and repression in Soviet history. However, even his critics acknowledge that Lewin's work is a major contribution to the field of Soviet historiography.

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Lewin's revisionist approach has had a profound impact on the field of Soviet historiography. It has helped to dispel many of the myths and stereotypes that have surrounded the USSR, and it has opened up new avenues for research and understanding. Lewin's work is a major contribution to the field of Soviet historiography, and it continues to be a source of inspiration and debate for historians today.



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