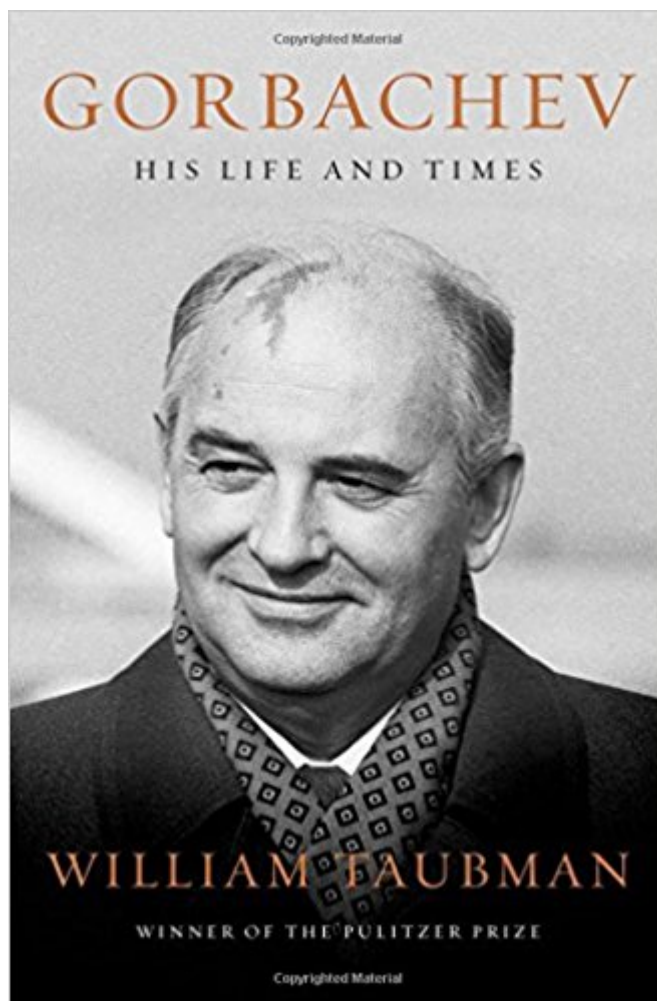


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Gorbachev: His Life And Times



Synopsis

The definitive biography of the transformational world leader by the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Khrushchev*. When Mikhail Gorbachev became the leader of the Soviet Union in 1985, the USSR was one of the world's two superpowers. By 1989, his liberal policies of perestroika and glasnost had permanently transformed Soviet Communism, and had made enemies of radicals on the right and left. By 1990 he, more than anyone else, had ended the Cold War, and in 1991, after barely escaping from a coup attempt, he unintentionally presided over the collapse of the Soviet Union he had tried to save. In the first comprehensive biography of the final Soviet leader, William Taubman shows how a peasant boy became the Soviet system's gravedigger, how he clambered to the top of a system designed to keep people like him down, how he found common ground with America's arch-conservative president Ronald Reagan, and how he permitted the USSR and its East European empire to break apart without using force to preserve them. Throughout, Taubman portrays the many sides of Gorbachev's unique character that, by Gorbachev's own admission, make him "difficult to understand." Was he in fact a truly great leader, or was he brought low in the end by his own shortcomings, as well as by the unyielding forces he faced? Drawing on interviews with Gorbachev himself, transcripts and documents from the Russian archives, and interviews with Kremlin aides and adversaries, as well as foreign leaders, Taubman's intensely personal portrait extends to Gorbachev's remarkable marriage to a woman he deeply loved, and to the family that they raised together. Nuanced and poignant, yet unsparing and honest, this sweeping account has all the amplitude of a great Russian novel. 90 illustrations

Book Information

Hardcover: 880 pages

Publisher: W. W. Norton & Company; 1 edition (September 5, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0393647013

ISBN-13: 978-0393647013

Product Dimensions: 6.5 x 1.8 x 9.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.8 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

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Best Sellers Rank: #11,520 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #6 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Europe > Russia #21 in Books > History > Asia > Russia #41

Customer Reviews

“Masterly....[This] richly layered portrait....will surely stand as the definitive English-language chronicle of this most intriguing figure for many years to come.” - Peter Baker, New York Times Book Review

“[A] deeply penetrating history and engrossing psychological study....Taubman draws on a wide range of sources and interviews...to render every major development of the former Soviet leader’s six-year tenure with depth and completeness.” - Robert Legvold, Foreign Affairs

“William Taubman has now done for Gorbachev what he had previously done for Khrushchev, giving us the full life deeply grounded in the Soviet and Russian archives, here with the added benefit of Gorbachev’s complete cooperation. Perhaps a hundred years from now, when our perspective on Russia’s role in the world has further clarified, another biography will be needed. For now, however, Gorbachev is the closest thing to the final word that history allows.” - Joseph Ellis, author of *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation*

“This is a meticulously researched, carefully nuanced, and immensely readable biography of a remarkable, but insufficiently understood, twentieth-century political leader. Taubman’s book is destined to remain the fullest and most authoritative life of Gorbachev for years to come.” - Archie Brown, author of *The Myth of the Strong Leader and The Rise and Fall of Communism*

“Comprehensive, judicious, utterly absorbing, William Taubman’s *Gorbachev: His Life and Times* gives us rare insight into the man who changed his country and world politics. A model of careful research and compelling narrative skill, this biography is destined to become a modern classic.” - Jack F. Matlock, Jr., author of *Reagan and Gorbachev: How the Cold War Ended*

“I have had the privilege of knowing many of the great men and women who brought momentous change to the last part of the twentieth century. My friend Mikhail Gorbachev was outstanding among them. So this biography, especially with its attention to his early formative years, is a great addition to our understanding of a key historical period.” - George P. Shultz

“William Taubman has written a remarkable book. He has, at once, captured the complexity of the man, while making Gorbachev’s times both frightening and hopeful come alive. The history of the USSR and the world would have been far different if Mikhail Gorbachev had not come to power.” - Susan Eisenhower

“A rich and revealing portrait and a thoroughly engrossing read, Taubman’s penetrating examination of Gorbachev’s rise and fall undermines the argument that Russia can be ruled only by dictators and autocrats--while also

exposing how steeply the odds are stacked against any efforts at real reform. — John Beyrle, Former U.S. Ambassador to Russia, 2008-2011 — “Remarkably, the two most memorable leaders of the Soviet Union in the last half of its existence now have the same superb biographer. William Taubman’s Gorbachev, like his Khrushchev, is an extraordinary achievement, full of new information, filled with shrewd judgments, a two-in-a-row triumph in the writing of great lives. — John Lewis Gaddis, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of George F. Kennan: An American Life — “William Taubman’s biography of Mikhail Gorbachev is a much needed, uniquely sourced account of the life, work, and times of the man who critically shaped a peaceful end to the Cold War and great Soviet experiment. Based on a unique blend of archival sources, personal memoirs, and a not-to-be-repeated set of interviews with key actors, Taubman’s superbly written portrait will become the essential and standard work on his subject and a primary source for any future historians of this period. — James F. Collins, Former U.S. Ambassador to Moscow, 1997-2001

William Taubman is the Bertrand Snell Professor of Political Science Emeritus at Amherst College. His biography, Khrushchev: The Man and His Era, won the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Award. He lives in Amherst, Massachusetts.

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