

The first of these books is presented as a successor to *New Thinking in Soviet Politics*, published in 1992. The chapters in that earlier volume written by the late Alexander Dallin and the late Alec Nove are included in this collection. With due respect to the memory of those two remarkable scholars, one might still question the decision to reprint their contributions in this volume, since valuable primary source materials have become available and important secondary works on the subjects covered in their chapters have appeared. All the chapters reflect more recent research, and all explore the interaction between developments in theoretical thinking and changes in the political system during Gorbachev’s time in power.

Archie Brown’s introductory essay deftly sketches the outlines of the main themes delineated in the following chapters. Brown points out that the innovations in thinking under Gorbachev had been preceded by writings from Soviet scholars that had gradually undermined tenets of ideological orthodoxy in the decades since Stalin’s death in 1953. He also notes that after Gorbachev created a climate more conducive to the open questioning of orthodoxy, “a conceptual revolution occurred” (p. 14) with startling rapidity.

The second chapter in this volume, also contributed by Archie Brown, reviews the progressive radicalization of challenges to established thinking after 1985, as the scope of permitted debate widened and many members of the Soviet intelligentsia arrived at positions more radical than even they might have expected a few years before. Reformist intellectuals who began by posing questions within the framework of Marxism-Leninism ended by rejecting key principles of that ideology. An interesting sub-theme of this book is that Mikhail Gorbachev himself moved to conclusions that were increasingly radical as the implications of restructuring became fully apparent. Brown is correct, in this reviewer’s estimation, in arguing that ideas, which had played a key role in creating the Soviet state in Lenin’s time, also “played a decisive role” in dismantling that state (p. 36). That conclusion may seem unexceptional today, but those of us whose writings dealt with ideological thinking in the Soviet Union in the 1970s and early 1980s can remember vividly how often we were told that ideology was of no importance at all in that political system.

Igor Timofeyev’s chapter on the development of Russian liberal thought since the mid-1980s is a well-informed and convincing analysis of trends among some segments of the Russian intelligentsia. What could hardly have
been anticipated is the way that the thinking of many liberals became more radical as the boundaries of discourse were widened and the interaction among opposing viewpoints evolved. Yet Timofeyev perceptively senses the restraints that the liberals eventually placed on themselves, stemming from "the Russian intelligentsia's traditional elitism and paternalism" (p. 55). As change moved beyond familiar limits, they displayed a lack of confidence in the judgment of the mass of the population and fell back into their habitual reliance on the leadership of the state to guarantee the success of reforms. As the disintegration of the Soviet Union neared, the apparent consensus of the liberal intelligentsia was revealed to have agreed only on opposition to the status quo under Communist control and the liberals fragmented into different intellectual currents and organizational structures, with far-reaching consequences in the post-communist period.

Gail Lapidus' well-reasoned chapter on nationalism in the Soviet Union and post-communist Russia reminds us that Gorbachev did not expect to confront serious questions concerning relationships among nationalities in the Soviet Union, even though the increasing political pluralism that he encouraged soon brought those questions into the open. Lapidus adds that "the dissolution of the Soviet Union left in its wake a massive ideological and political void and a Russian state lacking any clear and coherent conception of its national and state identity" (p. 163).

The concluding chapter by T. H. Rigby skillfully weaves together the main strands of analysis in the book. Rigby accurately asserts that, just as Marxist-Leninist ideology was the "cement that held the monolithic order" in the Soviet Union together, in the end it became "a potential source of its disintegration" (p. 207) as orthodoxy was shattered. Rigby stresses that the roots of the new thinking of the perestroika period can be traced back to the death of Stalin. Rigby affirms that it is unlikely that any Soviet leader other than Gorbachev would have launched the country on such a path into uncharted areas of change. He concludes that "Marxism-Leninism has no future in Russia" (p. 221). That is almost surely true in terms of explicit ideological tenets. Whether the cultural influence of elements of the Soviet system persists in a more subtle fashion beneath the surface of formal pronouncements is a more complex question, however.

That is a question that one would have hoped the book edited by Slater and Wilson would have addressed extensively, since its title promises an exploration of the legacy of Soviet institutions in the post-Soviet states. In fact, however, this volume gathers essays on diverse but somewhat interrelated topics without attempting to delineate common themes. A major flaw in the volume is the lack of a genuine introduction or conclusion.

Sheila Fitzpatrick discusses changes in the interpretation of the history of the Soviet Union that have become evident since 1991. Two interesting changes she highlights are, first, a heightened emphasis on the First World War, which has entailed a decrease in attention to the Bolshevik Revolution;