



Failed Crusade: America and the Tragedy of Post-Communist Russia

By Stephen F. Cohen

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What really happened in Russia after the end of the Soviet Union, and how badly experts and the media misjudged it. *Failed Crusade* is a deeply informed and passionate call for a fundamentally different American-Russian relationship in the post-Yeltsin era. Author Stephen Cohen shows that what US officials and other experts call "reform" has for most Russians been a catastrophic development—namely the unprecedented demodernization of a twentieth-century country—and for the United States the worst foreign policy disaster since Vietnam. What emerges is an alarming analysis of nuclear-laden Russia after 1991, representing an even greater threat to our national security than during the Cold War, and an indictment of American journalists and policy makers who failed to see or report the truth about the complicity of U.S. policy in a great human tragedy. This paperback edition has been updated to reflect the events of the last year.

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Bibliography

- Rank: #7099848 in Books
- Published on: 2001-10-17
- Format: Bargain Price
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.30" h x .90" w x 5.50" l,
- Binding: Paperback
- 320 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

When the Soviet Union collapsed nearly a decade ago, the U.S. adopted a policy of activist support for the successor regime of Boris Yeltsin and rarely questioned that strategy. Today, Russia is burdened with an economy in shambles, an alarming national health crisis and, many fear, nuclear insecurity. Anti-Americanism is on the rise and a career secret policeman heads the Kremlin, yet Washington has still not reassessed its Russia policy. That worries Cohen, a Russia scholar with a track record for contrarian views. The end of the Cold War, he argues, exacted a harsher penalty on the Russian people than any military loss could have, and the "aid" proffered by the U.S., in the form of technocratic blueprints for free markets, is much to blame. In a chilling analogy, Cohen notes that the traditional role of the U.S. as ally to Russia is one in which Washington "pressured a collapsing Russia to remain in the carnage." Russia survived the allied blood-lettings of two World Wars, but Cohen sees the U.S.-prescribed "shock-therapy" as fatal. The result: societal and economic devastation so severe that it warrants a new Marshall Plan and threatens U.S. national security more than the Cold War ever did. Cohen's criticism is sharp and angry. He targets policy-makers and economic advisers for their ignorance of Russian history; he lambastes scholars for their misguided prognosis of Russia's progress; and he scorns foreign journalists for a more unforgivable sin: Atouting the "Washington Consensus" in spite of the growing catastrophe surrounding them. (Sept.)

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From Library Journal

Cohen (Russian studies and history, New York Univ.) here presents an opinion not held by most U.S. officials and Russian "experts": that the so-called democratization of post-Soviet Russia has been a failure. The author lays out his theories in three parts: he describes how these experts crusaded for a Russia they wanted and, in doing so, managed to overlook what was really taking place in the country. Next, he includes a series of articles he has written since 1992, which further describes the actual political and economic upheaval that has been taking place there. Finally, he presents solutions to remedy Russia's woes and help bring it into the 21st century. Although Cohen is an accomplished author (*Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution*; *Sovieticus: American Perceptions and Soviet Realities*), his style tends to be gloating and melodramatic. However, this is a good collection that offers varying opinions of modern Russian history. For academic libraries. AJill Jaracz, Chicago

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From [Booklist](#)

As a CBS News consultant, New York University professor Cohen is among the more visible Russia watchers. He is also an unapologetic critic of U.S. policy; the disastrous results of that policy are *Failed Crusade's* subject. In part 1, Cohen describes the arrogant missionary crusade to impose U.S. political and economic institutions on the former Soviet Union--a crusade led by American policy makers, with journalists and academics as cheerleaders--and the desperate consequences for the Russian people of their elected leaders' acceptance of this program. Part 2 gathers 10 Cohen critiques of this American crusade published between 1992 and 1998; postscripts update each article. In part 3, Cohen urges that the goal of U.S. policy should be to reduce the risk of nuclear disaster by stabilizing this giant nuclear power. This can be accomplished, he argues, only by acknowledging our crusade's failure, providing massive aid and debt relief to allow the Russian people to develop political and economic institutions that serve their needs, and truly cooperating with Russia in its efforts to define its future. Mary Carroll

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Users Review

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