A History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to the End

Second Edition

Peter Kenez's *A History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to the End* examines not only political change but also social and cultural developments. The book identifies the social tensions and political inconsistencies that spurred radical change in the government of Russia, beginning at the turn of the twentieth century, culminating in the revolution of 1917. Kenez envisions that revolution as a crisis of authority that posed the question, "Who shall govern Russia?" This question was resolved with the creation of the Soviet Union.

Kenez traces the development of the Soviet Union from the Revolution, through the 1920s, the years of the New Economic Policies — which he sees as crucial to any interpretation of the history of the Soviet Union — and into the Stalinist order. He shows how post-Stalin Soviet leaders struggled to find ways to rule the country without using Stalin's methods but also without openly repudiating the past, and to negotiate a peaceful but antipathetic coexistence with the capitalist West. In this new edition, he also examines the post-Soviet period, tracing Russia's development up to the present day.

Peter Kenez received his B.A. from Princeton University and his Ph.D. from Harvard University. He is the author of many articles and books, including *Cinema and Soviet Society, 1917–1953*, and *Varieties of Fear*. He is currently Professor of History at the University of California, Santa Cruz.
A History of the Soviet Union
from the Beginning to the End

Second Edition

PETER KENEZ
University of California, Santa Cruz
To P.K., as always
# Contents

*Acknowledgments*  page ix

1 Introduction  1

2 The revolution, 1917–1921  14

3 New Economic Policies, 1921–1929  41

4 The first five-year plan  80

5 High Stalinism  103

6 A great and patriotic war  132

7 The nadir: 1945–1953  160

8 The age of Khrushchev  184

9 Real, existing socialism  214

10 Failed reforms  243

11 Leap into the unknown  278

12 Afterthoughts, 2005  303

*Chronology*  305

*Bibliography*  315

*Notes*  330

*Index*  335
Acknowledgments

I am grateful to my friends Professors Norman Pereira, Denise Young-blood and Hugh Ragsdale, who read the entire manuscript and made helpful comments.