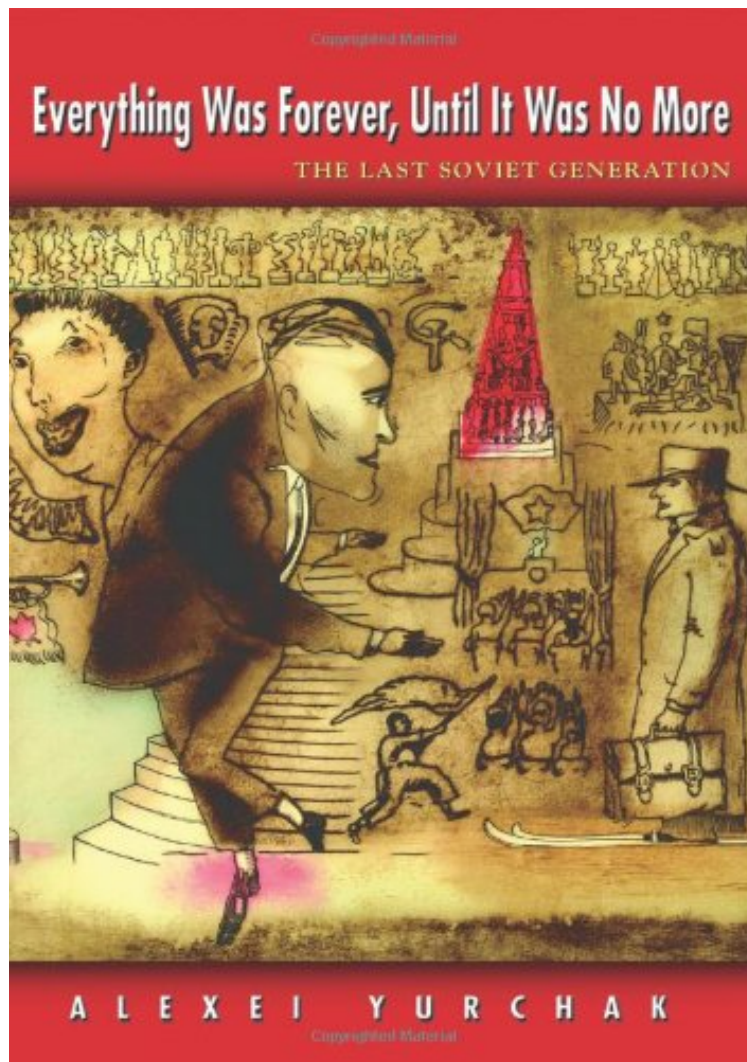


(Download pdf) Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation (In-Formation)

Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation (In-Formation)

Alexei Yurchak

ePub | *DOC | audiobook | ebooks | Download PDF



DOWNLOAD



READ ONLINE

#269051 in Books Alexei Yurchak 2005-10-23 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.18 x .88 x 6.12l, 1.11
#File Name: 0691121176352 pages Everything Was Forever Until It Was No More The Last Soviet
Generation | File size: 46.Mb

Alexei Yurchak : Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation (In-Formation)
before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Everything Was
Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation (In-Formation):

12 of 12 people found the following review helpful. A brilliant account of the interior meaning of everyday life for
ordinary soviet citizens By Nils Gilman Just loved this -- a brilliant study of how everyday citizens (as opposed to
active supporters or dissidents) cope with living in a decadent dictatorship, through strategies of ignoring the powerful,

focusing on hyperlocal socialities, treating ritualized support for the regime as little more than an annoying chore, and withdrawal into subcultures. Yurchak demolishes the view that the only choices available to late Soviet citizens were either blind support (though his accounts of those figures who chose this path are deeply chilling) or active resistance, while at the same time showing how many of the purported values of Soviet socialism (equality, education, friendship, community, etc) were in fact deeply held by many in the population. While his entire account is a tacit meditation on the manifold unpleasantnesses of living under the Soviet system, Yurchak also makes clear that it was not all unpleasantness and that indeed for some people (such as theoretical physicists) life under Soviet socialism was in some ways freer than for their peers in the West. All of which makes the book function (sotto voce) as an explanation for the nostalgia that many in Russia today feel for Soviet times - something inexplicable to those who claim that Communism was simply and nothing but an evil. The theoretical vehicle for Yurchak's investigation is the divergence between the performative rather than the constative dimensions of the "authoritative discourse" of the late Soviet regime. One might say that his basic thesis is that, for most Soviet people, the attitude toward the authorities was "They pretend to make statements that corresponded to reality, and we pretend to believe them." Yurchak rightly observes that one can neither interpret the decision to vote in favor of an official resolution or to display a pro-government slogan at a rally as being an unambiguous statement of regime support, nor assume that these actions were directly coerced. People were expected to perform these rituals, but they developed "a complexly differentiating relationship to the ideological meanings, norms, and values" of the Soviet state. "Depending on the context, they might reject a certain meaning, norm or value, be apathetic about another, continue actively subscribing to a third, creatively reinterpret a fourth, and so on." (28-29) The result was that, as the discourse of the late Soviet period ossified into completely formalist incantations (a process that Yurchak demonstrates was increasingly routinized from the 1950s onwards), Soviet citizens participated in these more for ritualistic reasons than because of fervent belief, which in turn allowed citizens to fill their lives with other sources of identity and meaning. Soviet citizens would go to cafes and talk about music and literature, join a rock band or art collective, take silly jobs that required little effort and thus left room for them to pursue their "interests." The very drabness of the standardizations of Soviet life therefore created new sorts of (admittedly constrained) spaces within which people could define themselves and their (inter)subjective meanings. All of which is to say that the book consists of a dramatic refutation of the "totalitarianism" thesis, demonstrating that despite the totalitarian ambitions of the regime, citizens were continually able to carve out zones of autonomy and identification that transcended the ambitions of the Authoritative discourse.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Interesting, but not descriptive enough
By antithesis
I was born in Soviet union (not Russia) and was looking for a deeper insight into what the life was like back then (I only got to experience very few years of it). The book does give part of impression of this, however it is very focused on Russia and only looks at very few very specific topics. I missed more descriptive rather than analytical parts. Analysis is interesting, but sometimes comes too deep for somebody who has not have full background of what happened and what was the setting. I would only recommend this book for somebody who has deep knowledge and possible first-hand experience of the collapse of Soviet union.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Praise but a smidgeon of critique too
By Sonya
Beautiful, sensitive, and insightful. At times the analysis can be a bit wishy washy, with overstretched metaphors and repetition. However it is still a marvelous book, one which I strongly recommend for people whose societies have recently or are currently in the process of political transition.

Soviet socialism was based on paradoxes that were revealed by the peculiar experience of its collapse. To the people who lived in that system the collapse seemed both completely unexpected and completely unsurprising. At the moment of collapse it suddenly became obvious that Soviet life had always seemed simultaneously eternal and stagnating, vigorous and ailing, bleak and full of promise. Although these characteristics may appear mutually exclusive, in fact they were mutually constitutive. This book explores the paradoxes of Soviet life during the period of "late socialism" (1960s-1980s) through the eyes of the last Soviet generation. Focusing on the major transformation of the 1950s at the level of discourse, ideology, language, and ritual, Alexei Yurchak traces the emergence of multiple unanticipated meanings, communities, relations, ideals, and pursuits that this transformation subsequently enabled. His historical, anthropological, and linguistic analysis draws on rich ethnographic material from Late Socialism and the post-Soviet period. The model of Soviet socialism that emerges provides an alternative to binary accounts that describe that system as a dichotomy of official culture and unofficial culture, the state and the people, public self and private self, truth and lie--and ignore the crucial fact that, for many Soviet citizens, the fundamental values, ideals, and realities of socialism were genuinely important, although they routinely transgressed and reinterpreted the norms and rules of the socialist state.

Winner of the 2007 Wayne Vucinic Book Award from American Society for Eastern European, Eurasian and Slavic Studies (ASEEES) for best book of the year. Winner of the 2015 Enlightener Award (Prosvetitel), Russia's most prestigious award for the best non-fiction book of the year. For the revised and expanded Russian edition of this book. Nominee, Alexander Piatigorsky Book Prize (Russia), 2015-2016 Nominee, Eurasian Book Prize (Russia),

2015 Nominee, Association of Russian Book Publishers (ASKI) Book Prize, 2015 "Alexei Yurchak's *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More* immediately seduced me by its very title with a profound philosophical implication that eternity is a historical category--things can be eternal for some time. The same spirit of paradox runs through the entire book--it renders in wonderful details the gradual disintegration of the Soviet system from within its ideological and cultural space, making visible all the hypocrisy and misery of this process. I consider Yurchak's book by far the best work about the late epoch of the Soviet Union--it is not just history, but a pleasure to read, a true work of art." (Slavoj Žižek, author of *In Defense of Lost Causes*) If there is a prize for best title of the year, this book surely deserves it. Alexei Yurchak . . . has written an interesting and provocative book about the way young Soviet Russians talked in the Brezhnev period and what they meant by what they said. (Sheila Fitzpatrick, *London of Books*) *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More* is an important book. . . . *Everything Was Forever* provides fresh paradigms that pack a hefty explanatory punch both with regard to its immediate subject matter and beyond. Its publication means that discussions of Soviet life, culture, and literature that rely on the old, rigid binarisms are going to seem instantly dated. . . . [T]his study is a must-read. (Harriet Murav *Current Anthropology*) Amidst these prolix transformations in Russian language and civilization, Yurchak's contribution has come in the form of a deep listening. (Bruce Grant *Slavic*) The strength of Yurchak's study is in its methodological-analytical grasp of the seemingly contradictory nature of everyday existence. . . . Yurchak provides an elegant methodological tool to explore the complex, intersecting and often paradoxical nature of social change. (Luahona Ganguly *International Journal of Communication*)

From the Inside Flap"In this remarkable book, Alexei Yurchak asks: How can we account for the paradox that Soviet people both experienced their system as immutable and yet were unsurprised by its end? In answering this question, he develops a brilliant, entirely novel theory of the nature of Soviet socialism and the reasons for its collapse. The book is must reading for anyone interested in this most momentous change of contemporary history, as well as in the place of language in social transformation. A tour de force!"--Katherine M. Verdery, author of *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?* "Alexei Yurchak brilliantly debunks several widely held misconceptions about the lived experience of late socialism in Soviet Russia, and does so through a compelling dossier of materials, all creatively conceived, organized, and analyzed. The writing is fluid, accessible, interesting, and beautifully structured and styled."--Nancy Ries, Colgate University, author of *Russian Talk: Culture and Conversation during Perestroika* "This ambitious book admirably combines a new theoretical approach with detailed ethnographic materials. Written in a clear and engaging style, it is both thorough and precise, and provides a new and convincing insight that will definitely be central to all serious discussions of Soviet-type systems for years to come--namely, that the shift in Soviet life from a semantic to a pragmatic model of ideological discourse served to undermine the ideological system."--Caroline Humphrey, University of Cambridge, author of *The Unmaking of Soviet Life* "This book makes an important contribution not only to anthropological studies of the former Soviet Union but to the broader discussion about Soviet power, ethics, and public space. Yurchak provides a subtle alternative to traditions of debate in Sovietology that counterposed an analysis of totalitarian accounts of Soviet power to the 'revisionists' of the 1970s who saw a much more dynamic space of social maneuverings. What is more, he persuasively shows a level of commitment to Soviet ideals that has rarely been appreciated in scholarship. Indeed, he makes the important point that many Russians actually have memories of being much more critical of the Soviet Union than they actually were when it existed."--Stephen Collier, New School University

From the Back Cover"In this remarkable book, Alexei Yurchak asks: How can we account for the paradox that Soviet people both experienced their system as immutable and yet were unsurprised by its end? In answering this question, he develops a brilliant, entirely novel theory of the nature of Soviet socialism and the reasons for its collapse. The book is must reading for anyone interested in this most momentous change of contemporary history, as well as in the place of language in social transformation. A tour de force!"--Katherine M. Verdery, author of *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?* "Alexei Yurchak brilliantly debunks several widely held misconceptions about the lived experience of late socialism in Soviet Russia, and does so through a compelling dossier of materials, all creatively conceived, organized, and analyzed. The writing is fluid, accessible, interesting, and beautifully structured and styled."--Nancy Ries, Colgate University, author of *Russian Talk: Culture and Conversation during Perestroika* "This ambitious book admirably combines a new theoretical approach with detailed ethnographic materials. Written in a clear and engaging style, it is both thorough and precise, and provides a new and convincing insight that will definitely be central to all serious discussions of Soviet-type systems for years to come--namely, that the shift in Soviet life from a semantic to a pragmatic model of ideological discourse served to undermine the ideological system."--Caroline Humphrey, University of Cambridge, author of *The Unmaking of Soviet Life* "This book makes an important contribution not only to anthropological studies of the former Soviet Union but to the broader discussion about Soviet power, ethics, and public space. Yurchak provides a subtle alternative to traditions of debate in Sovietology that counterposed an analysis of totalitarian accounts of Soviet power to the 'revisionists' of the 1970s who saw a much more dynamic space of social maneuverings. What is more, he persuasively shows a level of commitment to Soviet ideals that has rarely been appreciated in scholarship. Indeed, he makes the important point that many Russians actually have memories of being much more critical of the Soviet Union than they actually were when

it existed."--Stephen Collier, New School University