

## Kotler in the Soviet Union

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*Philip Kotler has influenced marketing world-wide largely through his textbooks and trade books. Thus the publication of a Russian translation of Marketing Management in 1980 may at first appear to be but one more line on Kotler's lengthy curriculum vitae. The second reaction may be surprise that a book with 'marketing' in the title was published in the Soviet Union at all, at a time when the Soviet Communist Party categorically rejected capitalist economic principles and practices.*

*In fact, Philip Kotler had a major influence on the understanding and application of marketing in the Soviet Union, despite the fact that the 1980 Soviet edition was heavily cut and altered to meet the demands of the official censors.*

*This paper presents in the heretofore-unpublished history of Kotler's Marketing Management, the first Western marketing textbook in the Russian language to be published in the Soviet Union. The 12,000 copies sold out immediately, and the book was never reprinted. A decade passed before the next Western marketing book was published, this too by Kotler—a Russian translation of his 1984 Marketing Essentials.*

*We report on the selection of Kotler's Marketing Management for publication, and on the team of professionals who edited and translated it. And especially we address the impact of censorship on the book's content. We also report on the editorial comments added to assure the book's publication, and what these comments reveal about the mindset of the editor and about his era.*

*To present this first, authoritative history of the Soviet edition, we interviewed not only Igor Kretov, one of the book's five translators, but also others knowledgeable about its preparation. And we interviewed some of those who purchased the first edition in order to learn about their reactions and about the influence of the book. We have also delved deeply into the book itself, and compared it side-by-side with the 1976 US third edition from which it was translated.*

*We report on subsequent Kotler books published in the Soviet Union/Russia. From 1990 Marketing Essentials appeared in various legal and pirated editions, and became the best known Kotler book in the country. Other Kotler titles—and marketing books by other foreign authors—have appeared in Russian translations in the years since 1990.*

*For present readers and future researchers, we provide (in the full paper) a complete bibliography of all Kotler books published in the Soviet Union/Russia in the Russian language through 2004.*

*A unique set of circumstances enabled us to carry out this project: the end of the Soviet Union, the legitimization and expansion of modern marketing and marketing education in Russia, and the advent of open contacts between Russian and Western researchers. Our author team includes two Russian marketing professors personally knowledgeable about developments in marketing and marketing publications in Russian over the past two decades. The American author took her first marketing course at Northwestern in 1978 and used Kotler's Marketing Management, the 1976 US edition that was later translated into Russian. Three Fulbright grants to work in Russia made this bi-national collaboration possible.*

### THE PUBLICATION OF MARKETING MANAGEMENT IN THE SOVIET UNION

*Publishing a book on marketing in the Soviet Union in the late 1970s was a risky undertaking. The fact that Kotler's—or any other foreign—marketing book was chosen, translated, and published in the Soviet Union owes a great deal to one man: Nikolai Smeliakov.*

*Smeliakov was named Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade of the Soviet Union in 1959, and held that post until his retirement in 1986. As Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade, he was responsible for the study and collection of information on foreign markets. He headed a 1959 Soviet trade mission to the United States, and on his return he wrote a book, *Delovya Amerika [Business in America]*, reporting his direct observations of American business practices (Smeliakova 1967). He encouraged publications about marketing as it was carried out in capitalist countries. In 1975 he was an advisor to Leonid Brezhnev, the Communist Party General Secretary. In this role, Smeliakov reviewed the marketing and trade sections of what became known as the Helsinki Accords, and on Smeliakov's recommendation, Brezhnev signed these accords on behalf of the Soviet Union.*

*Smeliakov returned to Moscow and encouraged colleagues interested in marketing to form a 'Marketing*

Section' within the Chamber of Commerce of the Soviet Union. This group, mostly professionals working in foreign trade, became a center for the development and diffusion of knowledge about marketing (Fox, Skorobogatykh, and Saginova 2005a, 2005b). Several members of the Marketing Section were involved in the translation, editing, and publication of the Russian-language version of Kotler's *Marketing Management* in 1980.

Unbeknownst to Kotler and to most Soviet readers, the Soviet edition was heavily cut and altered to conform to the demands of the government censorship office, which in turn operated under the auspices of the KGB. The book's original eighteen chapters were chopped down to nine, and fundamental aspects of marketing were entirely omitted: market segmentation and targeting; product, brand, and new-product strategy; pricing and channel decisions; sales force decisions; and international marketing. Details about the nature and extent of censorship, as well as about the editorial comments added to assure its publication, are included in the full paper (Fox, Skorobogatykh, and Saginova 2005b).

### KOTLER'S INFLUENCE AND REPUTATION

There is considerable irony in the fact that Kotler's reputation in the Soviet Union during the 1990s was based not on the 1980 edition of *Marketing Management*, but rather on a weak translation of his 1984 book *Marketing Essentials*, a book that failed in the US market and was never reissued.

The first Soviet edition of *Osnovy Marketinga* [*Marketing Essentials*] appeared in 1990 and found a ready market. For the book appeared when Gorbachev's policy of perestroika was in full swing, and opportunities to start small businesses inspired interest in learning about business and marketing. The end of the Soviet Union in 1991 further opened the country to foreign literature on

business and marketing. Additional courses in marketing sprung up and expanded in Russian universities and institutes.

In 1998 the first full Russian translation of *Marketing Management* was published in Russia and quickly became the leading guide to marketing. In the same year Kotler made his first trip to Russia. By then an acknowledged marketing guru in Russia, Kotler spoke at the conference of the Russian Marketing Association. Now Kotler titles, including specialized titles, are available in Russian translation within a year of their publication in the United States.

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