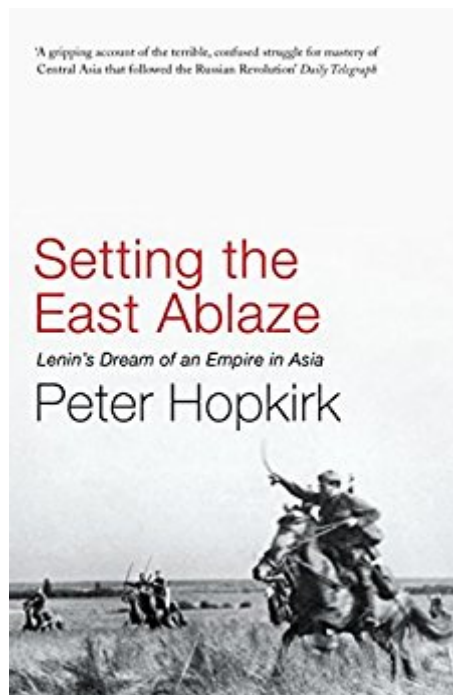




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Setting The East Ablaze: Lenin's Dream Of An Empire In Asia (Not A Series)



Synopsis

'Let us turn our faces towards Asia', exhorted Lenin when the long-awaited revolution in Europe failed to materialize. 'The East will help us conquer the West.' Peter Hopkirk's book tells for the first time the story of the Bolshevik attempt to set the East ablaze with the heady new gospel of Marxism. Lenin's dream was to liberate the whole of Asia, but his starting point was British India. A shadowy undeclared war followed. Among the players in this new Great Game were British spies, Communist revolutionaries, Muslim visionaries and Chinese warlords - as well as a White Russian baron who roasted his Bolshevik captives alive. Here is an extraordinary tale of intrigue and treachery, barbarism and civil war, whose violent repercussions continue to be felt in Central Asia today.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Peter Hopkirk's books on Central Asia are very good. Begin with The Great Game, go on to On Secret Service East of Constantinople, and follow with Setting the East Ablaze. Hopkirk was apparently inspired by Fitzroy MacLean's Eastern Approaches, to do much research and write his own books set in Central Asia. MacLean, after his diplomatic service in Moscow, with accompanying

forays into 'Central Asia,' went to join The Phantom Major (David Stirling) in North Africa, before being sent by Churchill to 'Yugoslavia' to discover which resistance group was the strongest, and the one most likely to help drive the Germans and Italians out of the Balkans -- this group, then, Britain would send supplies to. MacLean and Churchill recognized that they would be choosing to help a Communist resistance group (The Partisans), and that there would be 'problems' related to the choice at the end of the war. [Read Nikolai Tolstoy's books *The Minister and the Massacres* and *The Secret Betrayal: 1944-1947*. Also, Nicholas Bethell's *The Last Secret*.] For fans of John Buchan's novels, Hopkirk says that *On Secret Service East of Constantinople* is the "true story" which lies behind Buchan's novel *Greenmantle*. Readers of *On Secret Service East of Constantinople* may want to read next, *The Spy Who Disappeared*, by Reginald Teague-Jones...along with Hopkirk's *Setting the East Ablaze*. These writers give a reader so many "ends of golden strings," that to follow them all, would take many months, and the reading of a good many books! Hopkirk is a good writer, whatever he is writing about.

With the East truly ablaze these days I am grateful to British historical fiction author Antoine Vanner ("*Britannia's Reach*," "*Britannia's Wolf*") for introducing me to the works of Peter Hopkirk. While not written in chronological order, this book could be considered the third of a trilogy of works by Hopkirk that provide a very thorough, historically sound, yet highly readable introduction to the "Great Game" of territorial rivalry between Britain (ever concerned for the future of India, the jewel in the crown of the British empire) and Imperial and later Soviet Russia over influence in central Asia. One cannot hope to understand current events and passions in this region without at least an introduction to this history of Western intervention in the region.

This is another of Peter Hopkirk's wonderful books about Central Asia, mostly dealing with players in the Great Game. This volume takes up the story after World War One, when the Bolsheviks decided they would attempt to keep the provinces of Tsarist Russia intact and part of the Soviet Union, all in the name of anti-imperialism. There were also various Chinese, Turkic, and British forces at work in the power void which resulted in Central Asia after the collapse of the Russian Empire. Like other Hopkirk books, this is not dry history, but a series of compelling portraits of individual players in the intrigues of the time. These include the "Mad Baron", von Ungern-Sternberg, a White Russian who thought he was the reincarnation of Genghis Khan, and attempted to recreate the latter's Empire in an orgy of murder and destruction. There is also the British super-spy Bailey, who survived for months behind Bolshevik lines as they actively pursued

him. At one point he assumed the disguise of an Albanian (correctly assuming that there would likely be no one in Central Asia to check his linguistic bona fides), became a Soviet agent, and was given as one of his tasks gathering information about the British spy Bailey. Another character was Enver Pasha, the cosmopolitan former Ottoman leader, who tried to create a pan-Turkic state in central Asia, to stretch from Anatolia to Chinese Turkestan. An excellent book.

Perfect combination of history but written as adventure. I can't recommend Peter Hopkirk enough for both the casual reader and historian. His Great Game is the finest example written about that particular time. Setting the East ablaze fills in the story just after the Russian revolution. Well worth the time and money.

Must read for travelers and adventurers everywhere. The darting, cunning, endurance and treachery of the stories are not to be missed. Highly recommend

This is the way i like history to be written. It reads like a novel, but stays true to the record. You feel like you're there in the action with the main characters, but you also get an understanding of the historic events surrounding and influencing them. The history is what it is, without a whitewash, without an ideological bent; and i love the use of the gossip of the time. Peter Hopkirk is right there with Hampton Sides. Marvelous book.

An Engaging Read - Reading the series of three books by Peter Hopkirk brings to light the extensive history of politics, power plays, and use of religious fervor as means to an end in this region. The interest comes from the stories being told through actions and thoughts of the individual players in the "Great Game." The information is well outside of anything I learned in school - so if you have an interest in the region and politics - I think this understanding of some of the history is very useful.

Mr. Hopkirk does it again in this great book about Asia in the wake of the Russian Revolution. Well-written, Setting the East Ablaze reads like an adventure novel, discussing the initial efforts of the Bolsheviks to secure the Muslim territories of the Tsar for themselves and then attempting to spread their communist creed to India, Mongolia, Sinkiang and China itself. The story is a fantastic one of secret agents, revolutionaries, gentlemen-explorers, warlords, madmen and opportunities lost and found. Lenin wanted to use Asia to trigger a communist revolution in Europe but in the end the most significant accomplishment the Reds had to show for their efforts was to turn the central

Asian territories of the Russian Empire into Soviet Republics of the USSR. Illustrated with maps and photographs.

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