

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910777355703321
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Titolo	Einstein and Soviet ideology / / Alexander Vucinich
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Stanford, Calif. : , : Stanford University Press, , 2001 ©2001
ISBN	0-8047-6459-X
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (303 pages)
Collana	Stanford nuclear age series Einstein and Soviet ideology
Disciplina	530/.0947/0904
Soggetti	Communism and science - Soviet Union - History Communism and science Soviet Union Politics and government
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Bibliographic Level Mode of Issuance: Monograph
Nota di contenuto	Front matter -- Preface -- Contents -- Introduction -- 1 The Early Soviet Reception of Einstein's Theories -- 2 The Scientific Community and the Theory of Relativity -- 3 Early Stalinism and Einstein's Theory -- 4 Stalinism After the War: The Climax of Marxist Attacks -- 5 Turning Points -- 6 Accommodations to Einstein's Theory of Knowledge -- 7 Approaches to the General Theory of Relativity and Cosmology -- 8 Einstein's Humanistic Influence -- 9 Einstein in the Light of Perestroika -- Conclusion -- Notes -- Glossary -- References Cited -- Index
Sommario/riassunto	This book traces the historical trajectory of one of the most momentous confrontations in the intellectual life of the Soviet Union—the conflict between Einstein's theory of relativity and official Soviet ideology embodied in dialectical materialism. Soviet attitudes toward Einstein's scientific and philosophical thought passed through several stages. During the pre-Stalin era, Marxist philosophers clashed over the problem of defining dialectical materialism in relation to the ongoing revolution in science. This controversy produced a full spectrum of Marxist attitudes toward the theory of relativity, ranging from complete acceptance to total rejection. Disunity also prevented Marxist writers from interfering with the work of those Soviet physicists who produced a rich literature extolling the theory of relativity. During

the Stalin era (1929-1953), conflicting forces in Marxist thinking were eliminated, and complete unity was established and firmly guarded by the state. Marxist theorists declared war on "idealistic" principles built into Einstein's scientific work. State harassment of leading physicists accused of idealistic digressions persisted throughout the Stalinist era. Several leading proponents of Einstein's ideas perished in political prisons. Despite all these pressures, some leading physicists used every opportunity to reaffirm their fundamental agreement with the theory of relativity as one of the fundamental contributions to twentieth-century scientific thought. The post-Stalinist period (1953-1985) gradually evolved into a profound transformation of every domain of social and cultural life, and Einstein's scientific and philosophical legacy was no exception. Whereas Stalinist writers tried to reformulate Einstein's principles to accommodate dialectical materialism, post-Stalinist thinkers, much more familiar with modern physics than their predecessors, attempted to make Marxist philosophy sufficiently flexible to absorb the guiding principles of the theory of relativity. A wide range of Einstein's ideas, previously regarded as symptoms of bourgeois decadence, was now hailed as a cornerstone of the Marxist philosophy of science. The post-Stalinist era also produced an extensive and appreciative literature on the humanistic aspect of Einstein's thought. The short-lived period of perestroika (1985-1991) accelerated the de-Stalinization process, post-Stalinist gains were solidified, and the theory of relativity was increasingly shorn of ideological burdens, thus removing one of the last remnants of the Stalinist war on science.
