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Russia Under the Old Regime (The History of Civilization Series)

Richard Pipes

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Richard Pipes : Russia Under the Old Regime (The History of Civilization Series) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Russia Under the Old Regime (The History of Civilization Series):

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Russia under the Old Regime is the sine qua non introduction to the history of an enigmatic and tragic nationBy C. M MillsDr. Richard Pipes is a professor emeritus of Russian History at Harvard University. Pipes, a native of Poland, is the author of many books,articles and lectures on the rise of the Soviet state. The book under review is the first in his trilogy of works dealing with modern Russian history: 1. Russia under the Old Regime; 2. The Russian Revolution; 3. Russia Under the Bolshevik Regime. This volume is the shortest in the series. Unlike the other two books, it has no illustrations. The print used is very small making it hard for baby boomer eyes to read. The style is very dry which makes the volume read like a textbook(it is often used in college classrooms on Russia). Despite these caveats the book is well worth reading. It explains such matters as:a. How Russia's short growing season and inclement weather led to a poor standard of living for the population and how Russia lagged behind nations of Western Europe in industrialization.b. Russia has always been ruled by absolute leaders who regard the population as their slaves. From Ivan the Terrible to Stalin the vast land has been ruled by cruelty. Democracy and individual rights have not been practiced in this cruel land.c. Over 80% of the population in Russia has been made up of peasants.d. Communal rather than individually owned farms have been the norm in the long history of Russia.e. Rulers like Peter the Great and Catherine the Great sought to increase Russia's trading and

industrial growth but met with mixed success. Peter the Great was also important in creating the civil bureaucracy and organizing Europe's largest armed forces. f. The middle class was always small and subservient to strong absolute leaders. g. The intelligentsia was the class from which revolutionaries such as Lenin and Trotsky grew to adulthood. This element of society would launch the Russian Revolution of 1917. The book is hard reading but if you want to learn more about Russia it might be your cup of tea. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A deep pre-Lenin history of the Russian people. By Pipes nails it. Good pre-Lenin history to help you to culturally understand a people that have been conquered and sold into slavery by the Vikings, then conquered for a long duration by the Mongols. What happens when you blend Slavs with Nordic and Eastern Peoples and put them on poor soils with bad growing seasons? The liturgical Russian Orthodox church that morally looked the other way at critical junctures in Russian History. A hard people living in a hard landscape. It makes me appreciate what we have in North America in terms of the people, the history, the land, and the climate, and the incredible value that the Puritans brought to the New World. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Excellent, well-written book about how Russia came to be. By Pipes This book greatly expanded my knowledge of Russian history. It was as though the country was cursed from the beginning: poor land for farming; lack of primogeniture; enslavement for 150 years by the Mongols; a system in which all property belonged to the tsar. Reading Tolstoy, I'd come to regard pre-Soviet Russia as Victorian England East but, having read *Russia Under the Old Regime* it seems an alien, despotic place. I really like Pipes' writing. It is scholarly to the extent that I occasionally had to look up words, but never dry or boring. Written in 1977, he has a cold war, anti-communist point of view that emerges from time to time. Given the horrors that the Revolution of 1917 brought to Russia, I don't think that this attitude is unwarranted. I'm now reading Orlando Figes' "A People's Tragedy" which covers some of the ground in *Old Regime* and goes on through the Revolution. By contrast with Pipes, Figes seems less judgemental to the point where you sometimes wish that he would be a little irate about the events he chronicles. When revolution breaks out and the mobs are torturing and killing people in Petrograd, Figes essentially says "well, these things are bound to happen in a social revolution." I'd expect Pipes to be a bit harsher in his treatment of those events. I'll read Pipes' next book, *The Russian Revolution* when I'm finished with "People's Tragedy."

For anyone who wants an insight into the nature of Russian society before the revolution, there is no doubt that Professor Pipes has written the book. Lionel Kochan, *Jewish Chronicle* This highly acclaimed study from Richard Pipes analyzes the evolution of the Russian state from the ninth century to the 1880s and its unique role in managing Russian society. The harsh geographical conditions and sheer size of the country prevented the creation of participatory government, and a patrimonial state emerged in which Russia was transformed into a gigantic royal domain. Richard Pipes traces these developments and goes on to analyze the political behavior of the principal social groupings: peasantry, nobility, middle-class, and clergy and their failure to stand up to the increasing absolutism of the tsar. In order to strengthen his powers, legal and institutional bases were set up that led to the creation of a bureaucratic police state under the Communists. A brilliant and provocative analysis . . . learned, judicious, witty and full of common sense. John Keep, *The Times Literary Supplement* A lively, profound, often extremely subtle account of the making of the Russian state . . . For the serious student it is required reading which is also a delight. For the general reader with a minimal knowledge of Russian history and puzzled as to what makes the Russians tick, it lights up the whole field. Edward Crankshaw, *The Observer* An excellent introduction, painstaking and enjoyable. *The New York Review of Books* Pipes has produced a masterly interpretative history of tsarist Russia. Choice

From the Publisher 14 1.5-hour cassettes About the Author Richard Pipes was for many years a professor of history at Harvard University. He is the author of numerous books and essays on Russia, past and present, including *Russia Under the Bolshevik Regime*. In 1981-82 he served as President Reagan's National Security Council adviser on Soviet and East European affairs, and he has twice received a Guggenheim fellowship. He lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Marlborough, New Hampshire.