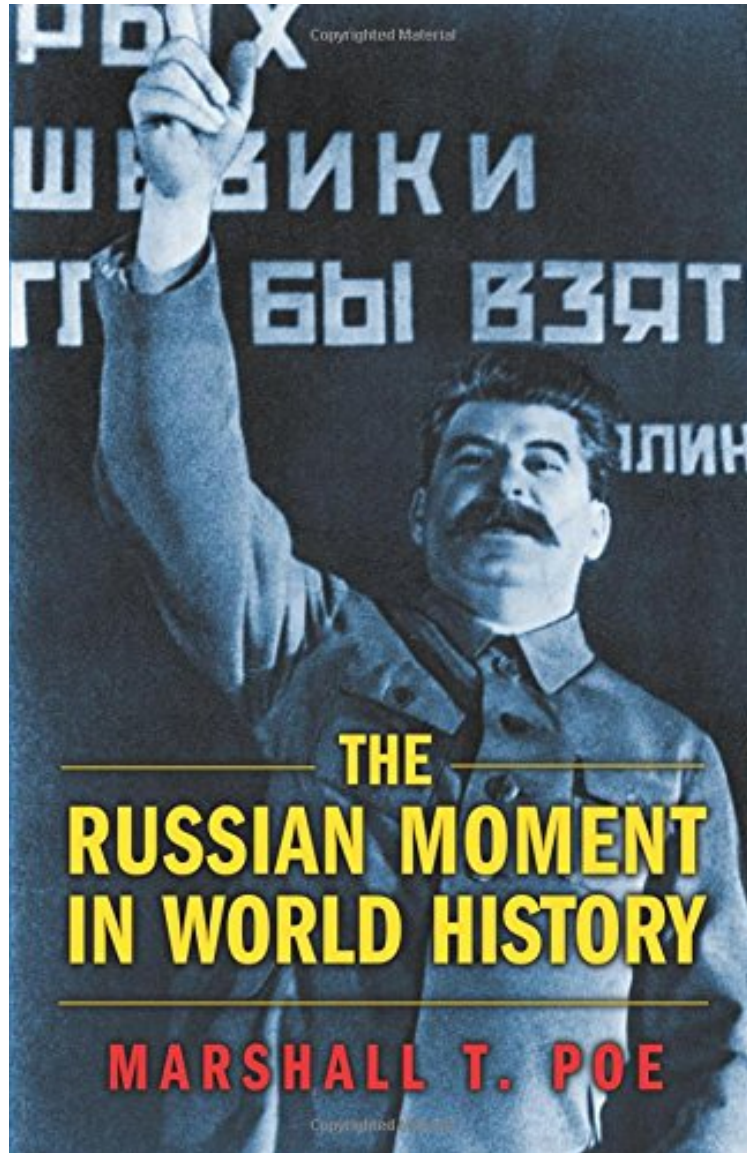


(Download free pdf) The Russian Moment in World History

The Russian Moment in World History

Marshall T. Poe

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Marshall T. Poe : The Russian Moment in World History before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Russian Moment in World History:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. WHAT MAKES RUSSIA TICK - A NEW AND CONTROVERSIAL APPROACH By Critical Mass Poe's controversial short book (more like a monograph) on the origins, character, and history of Russia and its people reminds me of A.J.P. Taylor's revisionist and highly controversial book on The Origins of World War II. If nothing else, it gives one much food for thought. In the end, one

may draw the conclusion that Russia is neither European nor Asian. - but both. Its once Imperial flag with a double-headed eagle clearly indicated the two-directional view that the empire took of itself. But what does that mean? Poe uses the word Eurasian quite frequently. The question at hand and the focus that Poe raises in his book has to do with the essential political and social structure that Russia possessed (and arguably still does to a considerable extent) for the greater part of its history. The architecture of Russia is certainly both European and Asiatic depending upon its locale. Russia, even today, is enormous geographically speaking. It is as large if not larger than all of North America. Yet, its population is paltry for its size and in decline. Part of Poe's thesis regarding Russian society has to do with Russia's geographical location and its overall climate. One would think that Russia became Russia because no one else but the original Slavs and others who settled there were the only ones willing to do so. Certainly, climate and geography affect history and the people who live there. But Poe turns this situation on its head and presents Russia as a quasi-isolationist polity whose main preoccupation is to protect itself from European aggression and internal revolt. He fails to examine Asiatic aggression and its influence on Russia (aside from the Mongols and Tatars) in greater depth. The threat of Japan is almost treated as an after thought, not to mention the problem of Central Asiatic Islamic countries that stretch over most of its southern border. The fact that the first recorded act in Russian history was its assault on Constantinople is telling. That is hardly the position and attitude one would expect from an infant nation which prefers "to be alone and left alone" as a key basis of its existence. The desire to the present day to obtain warm water outlets and to be respected as a world power and not just a regional one says it all. However, if it were not for its nuclear arsenal, Russia would be a Third World country in every sense of the word. Its GDP is 1/16th that of the United States and is less than that of Italy or Brazil. And what of its manufacturing base? When was the last time any nation bought anything from Russia that wasn't related to either oil or military equipment? Where are the Russian autos, microwaves, TVs, cell phones, major appliances, etc.? It is outdone by little South Korea (a half country) and Japan, among others. Its vast size and resources do command attention, however. Yet, its very size has determined what type of government it has had and basically still has - autocratic. Even Putin has said that Russia is too big to be ruled by a Democracy. While Russia today is no longer considered to be "agrarian", its industry is noteworthy only for its military and outer space equipment and assets. Russia's defeats (in its different incarnations) or near defeats in the Napoleonic wars, Japanese encounters, World War I, and World War II, and Afghanistan are revealing. Had the US Congress given Gorbachev the financial aid that he requested, there most likely never would have been a Yeltsin and certainly no Putin; and today Russia might truly be a flourishing democracy standing shoulder to shoulder with the US. Instead, it has reverted to the basic autocracy that it has been for centuries, still worried about Europe in the form of NATO and the US. For all that, I still found Marshall Poe's book to be provocative in its own way and a lively read - and isn't that reason enough to read a particular book? 0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Great introduction to Russian history By NikA very comprehensive overview of the Russian history from the time of its inception up to the modern days. It has a sound theory at its basis, but the book's limited length inevitably leads to some simplifications that could potentially mislead a less informed reader. But still, the book is great for introducing students into the subject of Russian history. 8 of 9 people found the following review helpful. If half a millennium of Russian history is to be distilled By Kaushik into a hundred pages of text, one has to have a strong thesis. Poe does: once the Muscovite state collected itself in the sixteenth century, he says, Russia embarked on an alternative path to modernity. Unlike Europe, Russia combined autocracy, "control of the public sphere," state-controlled economy, and "state-sponsored militarism." This mix, moreover, made Russia the only "sustainable society capable of resisting the challenge of Europe." With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the 400-year "Russian moment" ended -- that is, the Russian path to modernity expired, and something else now awaits the country. Much of Poe's general description will not be contested, except by those who consider Russia to be historically a part of Europe. His analysis -- that Russia had no other choice, given its location, lack of resources, and weak society -- will be. If those who disagree can offer a counterargument as compact, vigorous, and accessible as Poe's, the rest of us will greatly benefit.

Is Russian history one big inevitable failure? The Soviet Union's demise and Russia's ensuing troubles have led many to wonder. But this is to look through a skewed prism indeed. In this provocative and elegantly written short history of Russia, Marshall Poe takes us well beyond the Soviet haze deep into the nation's fascinating--not at all inevitable, and in key respects remarkably successful--past. Tracing Russia's course from its beginnings to the present day, Poe shows that Russia was the only non-Western power to defend itself against Western imperialism for centuries. It did so by building a powerful state that molded society to its military needs. Thus arose the only non-Western path to modern society--a unique path neither "European" nor "Asian" but, most aptly, "Russian." From the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries, Russia prevailed despite unparalleled onslaughts by powerful Western armies. However, while Europe nurtured limited government, capitalism, and scientific and cultural revolution, early Russian society cultivated autocracy and command economics. Both Europe and Russia eventually created modern infrastructures, but the European model proved more productive and powerful. The post-World War I communist era can be seen as a natural continuation of Russia's autocratic past that, despite its tragic turns, kept Russia globally competitive for decades. The Russian moment in world history thus began with its first confrontations with Europe in the fifteenth century, and

ended in 1991 with the Soviet collapse. Written with verve and great insight, *The Russian Moment in World History* will be widely read and vigorously debated by those who seek a clear and unequivocal understanding of the complex history that has made Russia what it is today.

From Booklist In this short, muscular essay, Poe covers Russian history in its widest parameters, assessing various theses about the subject and offering his own. This is an interesting exercise for Russophiles since the historical controversies are enduring and, with regard to the Communist period, very polarized. Right off, Poe rejects the idea that Russians over the centuries have had a predisposition to authoritarianism, expansionism, or messianism--all categories of analysis one can find in the historiography both by Russians and Westerners. But surprisingly, Poe proceeds to interpret Russian history in terms that Russian leaders themselves have used to justify autocracy and territorial expansion: namely, the preservation of independence against European invaders. Since Russia achieved this goal, Poe views the features of Russia that are negative to many historians--its people's comparative poverty and abjectness before the power of the state--as a consequence of geography rather than inherent to Russian history. Students will find Poe an able provocateur of debate. Gilbert Taylor Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved "If half a millennium of Russian history is to be distilled into a hundred pages of text, one has to have a strong thesis. Poe does. . . If those who disagree can offer a counterargument as compact, vigorous, and accessible as Poe's, the rest of us will greatly benefit."--Foreign Affairs "Condensing 1,400 years of history into 100 well-argued pages is a remarkable feat, one Poe accomplishes in terse but powerfully stated prose. . . . Poe effectively commits to his chosen path of navigation and distills his observations and vast knowledge into a clear and well-presented theory. The author deserves credit for taking on the gutsy task of re-educating that he sees as a misinformed public with humility intact, an achievement that is a testament to the purity of his intent."--Gabriella Gershenson, San Francisco Chronicle "Students will find Poe an able provocateur of debate."--Booklist "This slim volume offers a sweeping yet cogent and highly stimulating reinterpretation of the entire course of Russian history from the time of the earliest settlers in Russian lands to the collapse of the Soviet Union. While intended for general readers, the author's views are firmly grounded in recent scholarship."--Choice "The task of compressing the whole history of Russia into a hundred easy-to-read pages would be a hard challenge for any serious historian, but the proposition of building and testing in the same space an innovative concept of what Russia is about might seem beyond possible. This neat book by Poe, which many readers would find difficult to put down before turning the last page, is the tangible proof that such a task can indeed be accomplished--and with astounding ease."--Pavel Baev, Journal of Peace Research "The thesis of this volume is that as late as the fifteenth century Russia was largely irrelevant to world history, that it became a noteworthy player in the sixteenth century, and that it remained so most of the time until 1991."--Richard Hellie, Journal of Modern History From the Inside Flap "This unique, interesting, and stimulating book shoehorns the whole of Russian history into a single long essay, one that is argued very forcefully and written with remarkable clarity and verve."--Reginald Zelnik, University of California, Berkeley, author of *Law and Disorder on the Narova River* "This is a stimulating and timely essay, which, as intended, is provocative and potentially controversial at every turn."--Simon Franklin, Clare College, University of Cambridge, coauthor of *The Emergence of Rus' 750-1200*