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?????????? ? ??????. 1900-1917

?????? ??????? , Mikhail Zygar

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## From Reader Review ??????? ?????? ???????: ??????? ??????? ?????????? ? ??????. 1900-1917 for online ebook

**Da\_sh** says

"?????????? ??????? ????????? ??????"

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**Chris Jaffe** says

This is a frustrating and disappointing book. It has one big advantage: lots of stuff. Lots of info. Piles and piles and knowledge on it. But .... Zygar has trouble doing anything with it. A lot of times this just reads like a bad undergraduate paper where it just gives paragraph after paragraph of stuff, with out any clear reason why it's there.

I'll give an example. Let's look at the first chapter, titled, "In which Leo Tolstoy becomes a symbol of the fight against the regime and the main ideologist of the opposition." The first ten pages or so deals with Tolstoy and his beliefs..... Then Tolstoy goes away and the chapter goes on for another 25 pages. Not everything in the chapter has to do with the title. You're allowed to have more than one theme. But the chapter didn't really have any theme. It wasn't just Tolstoy, it wasn't all about opposition to the regime, it was just ... various things going on in Russia around 1900.

For that matter, what justifies chapter breaks in this book? Damned if I know. The book is just one vague, formless blob of stuff. There is no sense of momentum, even though the book is heading towards the revolutionary year of 1917. It's just .... stuff.

There is a lot of knowledge in it, but the amorphous quality of it really detracted from my ability to retain the info. Midway through, I shifted from reading to skimming - and it really didn't make much difference.

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**Tania** says

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**Hasso von Moltke** says

In this work Mr. Zygar has penned a fascinating of an often overlooked period of Russian history. While much has been written about the fall of Tsarist Russia and the rise of the USSR under the Bolsheviks, the civil society centered on non-Bolshevik revolutionaries and reactionary forces are often overlooked.

Mr. Zygar seeks to correct this imbalance in this exhaustive account of the period between Tsar Nicholas II's coronation and the collapse of Kerensky's provisional government. A vast array of characters take part from bored sons of wealthy businessmen, to great writers such as Tolstoy, Chekov, and Gorky, to radical

revolutionaries, the reactionary Black Hundreds, playwrights and ballerinas, to a wide variety of Tsarist officials and princes. In spite of this huge cast, Zygar is generally able to keep this figures unique and the often confusing, to a western reader, list of Russian names easy to distinguish and remember.

The only real issue is the author's frequent asides, comparing the events of the past with contemporary Russia. These comparisons don't always seem apt, pull the reader out of the narrative, and I think it would have been better to simply cover them in the epilogue which does discuss contemporary Russia.

In spite of this, the book is otherwise a superb look at the final years of the Tsar and the stage that was set for the Bolsheviks.

## Tatyana Naumova says

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### Kirill Volunteer says

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## Ellie says

### Pros:

- + Russian author who uses history to give insight into current Russian politics.
- + A super in-depth look at the Russian revolution
- + I've read a fair amount about the revolution but never from such varied perspectives
- + All rubles are converted from 1900s values into modern USD, which REALLY helps put things into perspective
- + Because it's told in a journalistic way, there is little bias that colors the presented people and events
- + The epilogue is so powerful it bumped my rating from a 4 to a 5

### Cons:

- Really heavy on names/places, and that can be super overwhelming, espec. if you put the book down for a few days and forget everything (like me)
- If you prefer your nonfic to focus on personal lives, this one's not for you

Sooo nonfic isn't *usually* my fare on this blog, but it's something I've been reading a lot of since I graduated high school, and I want more of that on here to be quite honest. After reading *The Empire Must Die*, I realized something: read from natives. SERIOUSLY. Read books written by the people who the history belongs to.

Not only does it give you a more authentic experience, but it gives you a more relevant and authentic viewpoint.

On that tangent, I have to continue. We in the west have a (massive) tendency to romanticize one thing about Russia, and that's the Romanovs. Putting aside politics, when the average American thinks about Russia, they think about communism and Anastasia. (I know this because I'm American.) (I'd say it's pretty damn close to true.)

So that generally means the nonfiction we have about Russia, at least in bookstores and on bestseller lists, are about the Romanovs. OTMA, Nicky and Alix, the days at Ipatiev house, their letters and journals, their lives... or they're about Stalin and the Cold War. That's not to say there aren't books about the revolution--quite the contrary--but *rarely* do they focus on the everyday. Rarely do they focus on the means it took to get there, and the years of missteps, from the embarrassing to the horrific, that caused the revolution *in the first place*.

So, to me, this book is unique. It shows the revolution exactly as the cover states: 1900 to 1917, in a journalistic style, from the lives and viewpoints of prevalent figures at the time. There is a huge wealth of information in this book and I feel like seeing the revolutionary strings being pulled, inadvertently or by design, was hugely enlightening.

The fact that this was written by a Russian journalist makes this especially intriguing. The author is able to draw many parallels between the politics in Nicholas II's government to that of the post-Soviet government. All the sums are converted from rubles to modern USD and the translation is wonderful and well-done.

The biggest thing, though, was the epilogue. I definitely enjoyed and learned from this book, but the epilogue

had me straight up on the GROUND. The note the author ended on was hugely powerful and had me *emotional*. The epilogue ALONE is worth reading the whole book, but it's fantastic as well, so you really can't lose.

Original review (10/22):

That epilogue has me floored tbh....

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### **BAM The Bibliomaniac says**

Many thanks go to Mikhail Zygar, Hachette Book Group, and Netgalley for the free copy of this book in exchange for an unbiased review.

Zygar immediately clarified that he is a journalist and that this book is written from that perspective not necessarily from a purely historical standpoint. It begins around the turn of the twentieth century when the royal family was still on the throne, but social and economic reform was being shouted from the rooftops and the country's most hated man was calling himself religious.

I'm sorry, but this book was just too long for me. I was too bogged down in the minutiae of Russian political parties. There is no possible way ANYTHING has been left out of this comprehensive literary masterpiece. It was refreshing to finally read something about this time period that wasn't focused on the Romanovs. Most interesting to me to me were the revelations about Lenin. I also didn't know that most Bolsheviks took "brutal sounding pseudonyms": steel, stone, hammer, crowbar for example. Although I cannot deny I learned much from reading this, I can't say how much I actually retained. This book is an excellent reference for this time period, or a great gift for a fan of the Russian state. I'm glad I have it, but I don't see myself retreading it for a very long time.

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### **Lauren Albert says**

I thought this was a solid, well-researched book especially for someone who I believe is a journalist rather than a historian. My one beef with the book was his constant footnotes saying how much like some element of the past the present is. I think it would have made more sense and interrupted less, if he had done it as an afterward. Overall, an excellent look at the revolutionary period in all its complications.

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### **Gevorg says**

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## **Mik Chernomordikov says**

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## **John Plowright says**

In the Preface to ‘The Empire Must Die’ Zygar states that “I am not a historian, but a journalist”. He is, indeed, a very distinguished journalist and as brave as any war correspondent, having been the editor-in-chief of Dozhd, the only independent news TV channel in Russia between 2010-15, and winner of the International Press Freedom Award.

Zygar says that his book “was written according to the rules of journalism: as if the characters were alive and I had been able to interview them”. What this means in practice is that he treats his historical actors as unable to “foresee into the future even a couple of days ahead.”

In general this makes good sense – Lenin famously said that he would not see the revolution in his lifetime. However, there were a few who were able to look into the future with greater perception – Stolypin, for example, rightly remarked that his “wager on the sturdy and the strong” (through his agrarian reforms) required twenty years of peace if they were successfully to consolidate Tsarist rule. Moreover, Zygar’s claims seem at odds with his title: why must the Russian Empire die, if the future is not written?

In “turning the stories of the dramatis personae into a narrative” Zygar decries the tendency of most Russian historians to focus on the sovereign, and instead selects as his protagonists “the most luminous members of society: the leaders and shapers of public opinion – not only politicians, but also writers, journalists, artists and preachers.”

It seems to me that this is all highly problematic. What does public opinion mean, especially in peacetime, in a state as vast and diverse as Tsarist Russia? What does a Chechin Muslim have in common with a Lithuanian Catholic? What does a Putilov metalworker have in common with a black earth kulak? And what does a member of the Black Hundreds have in common with a member of the liberal intelligentsia? Zygar is bound to privilege intellectuals (or what he calls the creative class), not only because he is one himself but because these are precisely the people most likely to generate the memoirs which provide his principal source of primary historical information.

Zygar’s presentation of the facts is also sometimes open to question. He writes, for instance, that the Bolshevik Decree on Land takes land “away from” the peasants “and implements a redistribution ...

“This book is certainly not an academic work”, Zygar states, and I suppose it should therefore not be judged as such. What he offers is a narrative history, packed with colourful characters and revealing anecdote, which reinforces the important message that whilst everything looks inevitable with the benefit of hindsight, for those actually living through events, their outcome is difficult, if not impossible, to predict accurately. ‘The Empire Must Die’ like project1917.com, with which Zygar is also involved, is ultimately, for all its faults, a very vivid way of making the past come alive. In short, it is a good example of History as journalism.

Exceptional. A dive into Russia's history of 1900-1917. Truly an eye-opening experience.

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