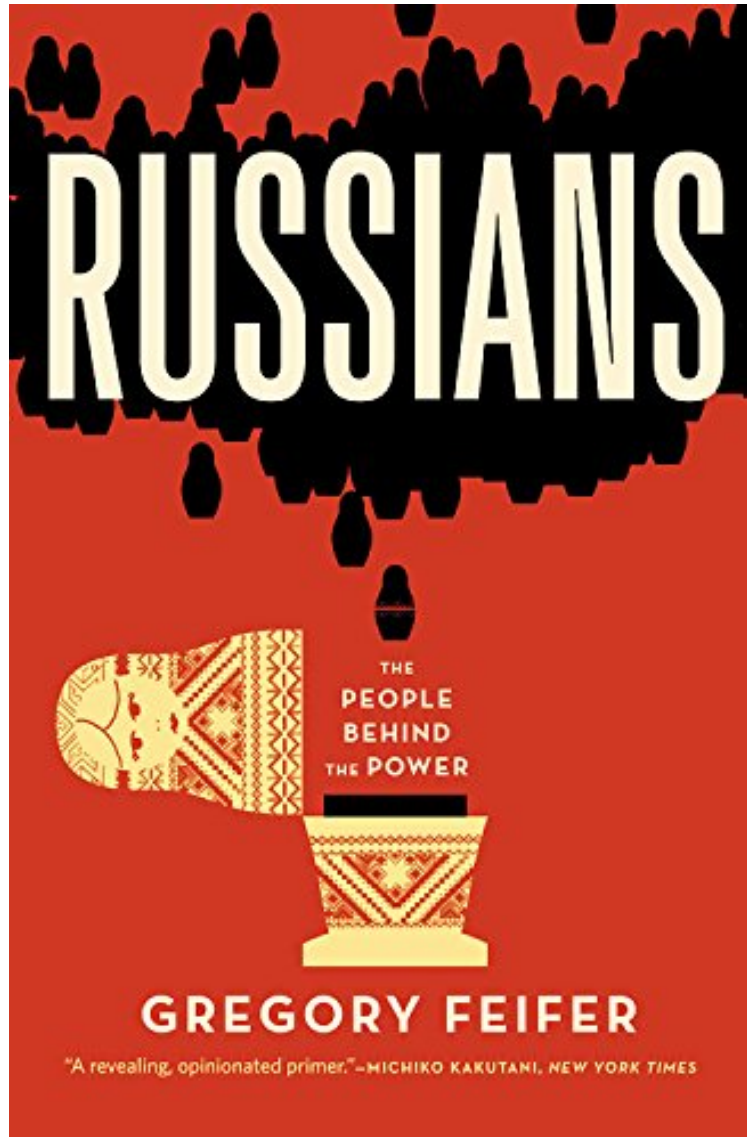


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Russians: The People Behind the Power

Gregory Feifer

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Gregory Feifer : Russians: The People Behind the Power before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Russians: The People Behind the Power:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. For anyone who wants a crash course on what Russia is today - and where Trump is trying to take us.By CobyIn the past 7 years, I've spent a significant amount of time teaching in Russia, so this book was of great interest to me. I think the author really "nails it" in so many ways.Any book about Russia is immediately obsolete upon publication, and so much has happened since this book was published. However,

it is still accurate and perceptive about so much of Russia's culture, history, and politics. Reading it now in September 2017 has been an often stressful experience for me because of our own U.S. political situation, with Trump, who appears to venerate all things Russian. I keep thinking "Trump just doesn't get it," but perhaps he does. If you want to see the dark places Trump is trying to take us to, read this book. So much in this book made me think, "This is what Trump wants us to be" - corrupt, dishonest, selfish, bigoted - all the horrid places he's trying to take us to. Russia is what Trump wants the U.S. to be - and that is not a good thing. So, if you want to see where I hope we will not head, despite Trump's attempts to ruin our country, you should read this book. I keep trying to tell people: "This is what Trump and his minions want us to be" - and it's not a pretty picture. Even more important, what Trump is doing is destroying the hopes of people in other countries, like Russia, that there is a better way to be. I do not intend to sound like I don't love and admire the Russian people - I do, passionately. All the good things about the amazing Russian people you will read in this book are true. They are truly wonderful and brave and loving. But their leadership, like our current leadership, is destructive and terrifying. This book will show you why Trump admires Putin and every other 2-bit despot he comes in contact with. It's pure selfishness and egomania born of feelings of insecurity and inferiority. Trump is trying to get enough Americans to join his cult of personality to get the tyrannical power he sees Putin has in Russia. We can only pray that he does not succeed. Trump is trying to take us to the darkest places this book reveals in Russia - while we need leadership to take us back to a good place that many Russians had hoped their country would be. It's extremely sad. We must pray for both countries and work to make sure both men's plans fail.

3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Putin bashing and the lawless nature of the Russian mafia / corrupt officials. By David G. The author obviously hates Putin. The first half of the book could be described as Putin bashing and the second half dealing with the lawless nature of the Russian mafia and corrupt officials. Much of the book was repetitive and could have benefited from stronger editing, making it shorter but more powerful. The sense I got was a country frozen in pre-1917 revolution social development with a strong feudal system that only works as well as the leader. A benign dictator can be a very efficient system of government. But it does not support long term stability and obviously it is a terrible way to live if you are on the outs with those in power. The author builds his case on anecdotes, but it is a fairly strong case. Until Russia starts to recognize institutions and laws as having a value and power beyond that of an individual ruler they will continue in their feudalistic governance. I did not realize how much Putin and his cronies run Russia like their own private fiefdom. But discussing with people who often trade with Russia their response was this is dead on correct.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Amazingly truthful and profound. By Anya1917 this was an eye opening book which helped me understand so much of my heritage and culture. I would highly recommend this book.

From former NPR Moscow correspondent Gregory Feifer comes an incisive portrait that draws on vivid personal stories to portray the forces that have shaped the Russian character for centuries-and continue to do so today. *RUSSIANS* explores the seeming paradoxes of life in Russia by unraveling the nature of its people: what is it in their history, their desires, and their conception of themselves that makes them baffling to the West? Using the insights of his decade as a journalist in Russia, Feifer corrects pervasive misconceptions by showing that much of what appears inexplicable about the country is logical when seen from the inside. He gets to the heart of why the world's leading energy producer continues to exasperate many in the international community. And he makes clear why President Vladimir Putin remains popular even as the gap widens between the super-rich and the great majority of poor. Traversing the world's largest country from the violent North Caucasus to Arctic Siberia, Feifer conducted hundreds of intimate conversations about everything from sex and vodka to Russia's complex relationship with the world. From fabulously wealthy oligarchs to the destitute elderly babushki who beg in Moscow's streets, he tells the story of a society bursting with vitality under a leadership rooted in tradition and often on the edge of collapse despite its authoritarian power. Feifer also draws on formative experiences in Russia's past and illustrative workings of its culture to shed much-needed light on the purposely hidden functioning of its society before, during, and after communism. Woven throughout is an intimate, first-person account of his family history, from his Russian mother's coming of age among Moscow's bohemian artistic elite to his American father's harrowing vodka-fueled run-ins with the KGB. What emerges is a rare portrait of a unique land of extremes whose forbidding geography, merciless climate, and crushing corruption has nevertheless produced some of the world's greatest art and some of its most remarkable scientific advances. *RUSSIANS* is an expertly observed, gripping profile of a people who will continue challenging the West for the foreseeable future.

"Mr. Feifer gives us a revealing, opinionated primer...consisting of historical asides, family reminiscences, interviews with public figures and ordinary people, political assessments and sharp snapshots of the country across its nine time zones, from the gaudy Moscow restaurants... to the distant wastelands of Siberia, where cold and poverty still define daily life." Michiko Kakutani, *New York Times*

"Gregory Feifer's *RUSSIANS* joins a list of classic books by Western correspondents who have covered the politics and culture of what was once the Soviet Union...The particular strength of his account is how he places his reporting of the country's myriad and devastating problems within a broad

understanding of Russian (and not just Soviet) history."?New York Times Book "This entertaining and engaging book offers a set of deep insights into the tumultuous events and experiences that have shaped the lives and attitudes of the Russian people over the past twenty years. Informed by his studies of Russian history and culture, his personal family history, and his many years of on-the-ground reporting from multiple points across Russia's vast landmass, Greg Feifer takes us from the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 to the aftermath of Vladimir Putin's re-election for a third term as president in 2012. There is something in this book for anyone and everyone who wants to understand what lies behind the stereotypes of today's Russia."?Fiona Hill, director, Center on the United States and Europe, Brookings Institution and co-author of *Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin*"This is one of the best-ever books written by an American journalist trying to make sense of Russia. Full of wonderfully poignant family reminiscences, acute cultural insight, and off-color Russian jokes."?Stephen Sestanovich, author of *Maximalist: America in the World from Truman to Obama*A luminous study of a land and its people. Feifer gives a vivid portrait of today's Russia from the bottom up—based on numerous conversations with Russians, his intrepid travels to Russia's far-flung regions, and his own family history, intimately and wonderfully told. Feifer's analysis of Russia's political system is gloomy. Corruption, thuggishness, and mafia-style rule flourish under Mr. Putin. But what makes this book stand out is Feifer's sympathy for ordinary Russians, caught between an autocratic tsarist-communist past and an uncertain globalizing future. They emerge from "RUSSIANS as enterprising, stoical, brave, and adaptable, with a capacity for loyalty and friendship, and above all survival, in a country that both bewitches and defies the West."?Luke Harding, *Guardian*, author of *Mafia State: How One Reporter Became an Enemy of the Brutal New Russia*About the AuthorGregory Feifer is a senior correspondent for Radio Free Europe who also writes for *Foreign Affairs* and *The New Republic*. Until recently, he was National Public Radio's Moscow correspondent, and has reported from Russia for almost a decade. During its resurgence under Putin, he filed from other former Soviet republics and across Russia, where he observed the effects of the country's vast new oil wealth on an increasingly nationalistic society as well as Moscow's rekindling of a new Cold War-style opposition to the West. In 2008, Feifer covered the Russia-Georgia war from the breakaway Georgian region of South Ossetia and traveled to Siberia, Belgrade and Berlin to produce a series on the Kremlin's use of Gazprom, the Russian gas monopoly, as an instrument of foreign policy.Before joining NPR in 2005, Feifer—whose mother is Russian—lived in Paris and New York, and wrote for outlets including *Agence France Presse* and *World Policy Journal*. He witnessed the coup d'état attempt against Mikhail Gorbachev in 1991, and later, on a fellowship from the Institute of Current World Affairs, examined the end of the Yeltsin era and Russia's subsequent transformation into an authoritarian state.Feifer is the author of *The Great Gamble*, a history of the Soviet war in Afghanistan and coauthor of *Spy Handler* with former KGB colonel Victor Cherkashin.