



Alexander Yakovlev: The Man Whose Ideas Delivered Russia from Communism

By Richard Pipes



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A significant political figure in twentieth-century Russia, Alexander Yakovlev was the intellectual force behind the processes of *perestroika* (reconstruction) and *glasnost* (openness) that liberated the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe from Communist rule between 1989 and 1991. Yet, until now, not a single full-scale biography has been devoted to him. In his study of the unsung hero, Richard Pipes seeks to rectify this lacuna and give Yakovlev his historical due.

Yakovlev's life provides a unique instance of a leading figure in the Soviet government who evolved from a dedicated Communist and Stalinist into an equally ardent foe of everything the Leninist-Stalinist regime stood for. He quit government service in 1991 and lived until 2005, becoming toward the end of his life a classical western liberal who shared none of the traditional Russian values.

Pipes's illuminating study consists of two parts: a biography of Yakovlev and Pipes's translation of two important articles by Yakovlev. It will appeal to specialists and students of Soviet and post-Soviet studies, government officials involved with foreign policy, and general readers interested in the history of Russia and the Soviet Union.

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Review

"In this slim, highly provocative book, Richard Pipes engages in a much-needed exercise in historical reparation. We have here the first biography of an ideologue turned heretic and then apostate, whose ideas begot, to a decisive extent, the collapse of Lenin's state. . . . In documenting Yakovlev's epiphany, Pipes makes a seminal contribution to the literature on disenchantment, apostasy, illumination, and awakening."
—*Times Higher Education*

"We are in Richard Pipes's debt for calling our attention to the man whose ideas helped transform his own country and world politics during the late 1980s and early 1990s."
—*The New York Review of Books*

"The doyen of historians of Russia, Richard Pipes provides the first full biography of Alexander Yakovlev—the Russian Henry Kissinger to Gorbachev. Unlike Henry, however, Alexander was kept in the shadows by his boss. Using Yakovlev's own writing, some available only in Russian, Pipes, Ronald Reagan's adviser, opens a gold mine from which future historians and analysts will extract other precious nuggets."
—Jiri Valenta, author of *Soviet Intervention in Czechoslovakia, 1968: Anatomy of a Decision* and co-author of *Gorbachev's New Thinking and Third World Conflicts*

"Richard Pipes, the distinguished American historian of Soviet Russia, provides a notable scholarly and public service by writing [the] first biography that carefully follows every major stage in Yakovlev's career and political-ideological evolution."
—*The Washington Times*

"This book introduces readers to an extremely important historical figure of the twentieth century about whom very little has been written."
—Jonathan Daly, author of *Autocracy under Siege* (NIU Press, 1998) and *The Watchful State* (NIU Press, 2004)

"Richard Pipes has written an important biography about a man whose contributions to the fall of communism have been downplayed both by his former boss and by today's Russian leaders, who view the Soviet collapse as an unmitigated catastrophe."
—*Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*

About the Author

Richard Pipes is the Baird Professor Emeritus of History at Harvard University. He is the author of numerous publications, including *Communism: A History*, *Russia under the Old Regime*, *The Russian Revolution*, and *Property and Freedom*.

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