

Roberto Echavarren

Russian Nights Autocracy and Testimony

Life in Russia during the Soviet Period as Told by Those Who Lived it

SERIES IN WORLD HISTORY

Summary

The details of the Jewish Holocaust have become part of our history through the testimony of those who survived the death camps. The details of Lenin's and Stalin's reigns of terror are far less known because they took place behind a wall of secrecy, and survivors have been reluctant to speak about them for fear of retribution.

This is an encompassing volume presenting an intense display, as complete as can be, of testimonies, gathered between 2001 and 2005 of actors implicated in different aspects of Russian life roughly through the period 1917-1956. They were people who had lived under the Soviet regime in times of peace and in times of war, from the Red Terror through the Great Terror. One must bear in mind the political and economic conditions in which those lives developed: the one-Party rule placed above both the government and the citizens, the abashment of the division of powers, the suppression of private property and private economic initiative, the political police, and the GULAG.

Russian Nights offers a wide and detailed perspective of what we call "the Russian Century": Lenin's takeover, the all-powerful Party, the GULAG, and the Second World War.

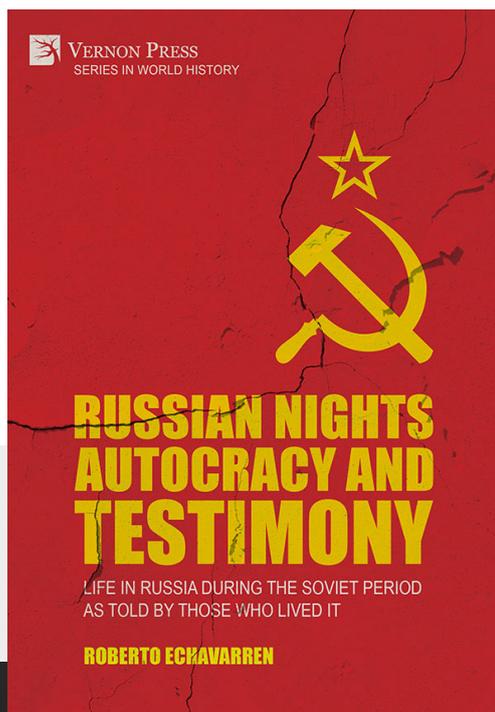
About the author

Roberto Echavarren is a poet, novelist, essayist, and translator. He was born in Montevideo, Uruguay, where he studied philosophy and law. He then pursued graduate studies in Philosophy at the Goethe University in Frankfurt, Germany, and received his Ph.D. at the University of Paris VIII. Echavarren taught at the University of London before teaching at New York University for twenty years. He has published five novels, notably his last three short novels combined under "Archipiélago" (Archipelago). He was awarded the 2021 Amado Alonso International Prize of Literary Criticism for his "El pensamiento chino" (Chinese Thought) book. In 2022 he published "One Against All, Lenin and His Legacy."

Whether the reader is touched by the courage of the survivors or horrified by the perverse cruelty of oppression and the annihilation of human life and the human spirit, this book completes the devastating landscape of the supposedly most advanced era of human history: the twentieth century. While the monstrous "Third Reich" forever looms ominously, the focus here is the insane Leninist and Stalinist regime (and implicitly its well-intentioned supporters on the Left) that murdered incalculable millions of human beings. Like the unspeakable words and images left behind by the vanished victims of the Holocaust, these testimonies from Russian survivors are as relevant to us as tomorrow's news because, out of ignorance, futile divisiveness, and indifference, we are on the brink of submitting to Autocracy, of allowing the Putins and the Trumps of the world to destroy civilization once again.

Suzanne Jill Levine
Professor Emerita

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