

Russian diaspora non-fiction

Lenin

Ruler of Sun Dust

Biography. Molodaya Gvardia. Moscow 2017. 480 pages

2017 Big Book Award

2017 Book of the Year

Publishers: France - Macha, Hungary - Gondolat, Serbia - JP Službeni glasnik, Spain - Almuzara

2024 is 100th anniversary of Lenin's death

Of course, you immediately think of everything you knew about Lenin so far. And you can confidently forget it while reading this book, which is quite different and more than just another Lenin biography.

Subject

Observed, analyzed, and accompanied as a historical and human phenomenon, the author follows Lenin with an unadulterated fresh gaze on his path as revolutionary, politician, economist and practical philosopher. Danilkin literally revives Lenin the chess player, the cyclist, the tourist, the sportsman, the speaker, the manager, the conspirator and lawyer. Danilkin does not lose sight of the precise analysis of Lenin's economic and domestic politics. But without ideological blinkers, Danilkin tries to understand the logic behind each of Lenin's steps possible at any given time, without allowing himself to be distracted neither from the Soviet nor the anti-Soviet discourse. The author repeatedly discovers a central theme for Lenin: seizing power and maintaining it. In addition to a multitude of companions who surrounded Lenin like sun dust, Lenin's partner Krupskaya is brought back out of historical darkness: the boring asexual companion proves to be an intriguing beauty (at least during her first 35 years of life) as well as a witty author of some of the texts that had been attributed to Lenin so far, as Danilkin credibly proves.

Composition

The immense documentary material base of this historically accurate biography is organized in an unorthodox and original way – geographically. Instead of an old-fashioned „Portrait on the Background of the Epoch“, the reader is taken on a discovery route to the places of Lenin's active work. Danilkin models them to speaking landscapes and mood carriers for his hero.

Style

Danilkin leaves behind any kind of clerk's office style, archive language or standardized scientific language. To bring Lenin closer to today's readers, he uses contemporary neologisms from the world of IT and social networks, and comparisons with figures and phenomena from literature, cinema, and pop culture.

Narrator

With the trick of introducing a narrator skeptical at first but capable of learning, Danilkin biography becomes not only extremely entertaining, but makes transparent at a high intellectual level that also the historical questioner is constantly influenced and changed by the object of his investigation.



THE AUTHOR

translations
6 languages**awards**2017 Big Book Award
2017 Book of the Year
2011 Alexander Nevsky Award
2007 Big Book Shortlist**sample translation available**english
full french**other works**

Gagarin Biography

Lev Danilkin

narrative non-fiction

"This book is not about bringing Lenin back to the Russian Pantheon or making him the idol of youth. The aim is to infect the reader with his own passion ... This book is an injection of sound reason, justice and healthy anger." *DMITRI BYKOV*

"(Danilkin) does neither try to archaize his narrative style artificially, nor to adapt it to the material, he is not devoted to the way his hero speaks. Danilkin speaks exactly as he would talk to his contemporaries about any other person. And that undoubtedly gives this book its relevance and freshness: Not a trace of the dust and patina we're used to when dealing with Lenin." *GALINA YUZEFOVICH*

"Danilkin's approach is populist in the best sense and highly effective for attracting a new mass readership." *NEW LEFT REVIEW*

Danilkin was born in 1974. He is one of Russia's most advanced literary critics and had his own column in Afisha magazine for fifteen years. Since 2017 he has been an editor in the cultural section of Rossiiskaya Gazeta. He was also a jury member for the Litsei Prize, the Russian-Italian Gorky Prize and the National Bestseller Award. In addition to a collection of short prose, he has published three biographies in the famous edition ZhZL (Life of Famous People). Parallel to his Lenin biography, he published an anthology of selected works by Lenin. Danilkin has also translated Julian Barnes into Russian. Danilkin has left Russia after Feb 2022.

Lev Danilkin