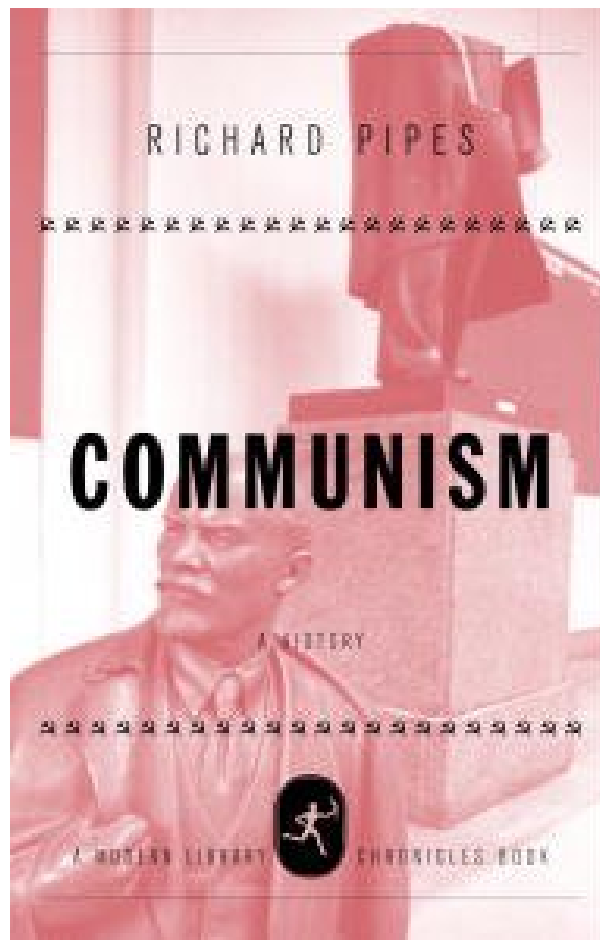
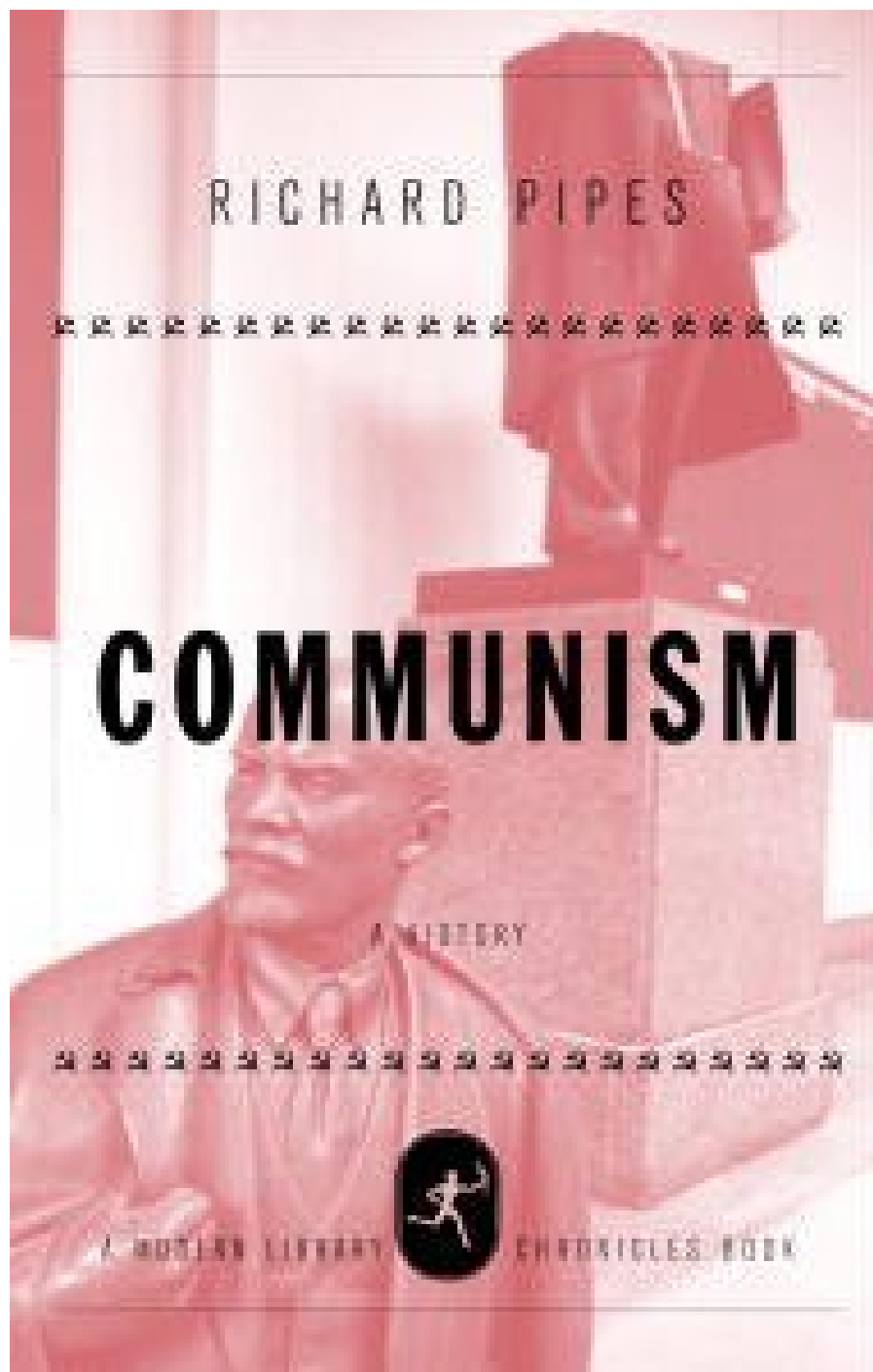


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From one of our greatest historians, a magnificent reckoning with the modern world's most fateful idea.

With astonishing authority and clarity, Richard Pipes has fused a lifetime's scholarship into a single focused history of Communism, from its hopeful birth as a theory to its miserable death as a practice.

At its heart, the book is a history of the Soviet Union, the most comprehensive reorganization of human society ever attempted by a nation-state. Drawing on much new information, Richard Pipes explains the country's evolution from the 1917 revolution to the Great Terror and World War II, global expansion and the Cold War chess match with the United States, and the regime's decline and ultimate collapse. There is no more dramatic story in modern history, nor one more crucial to master, than that of how the writing and agitation of two mid-nineteenth-century European thinkers named Marx and Engels led to a great and terrible world religion that brought down a mighty empire, consumed the world in conflict, and left in its wake a devastation whose full costs can only now be tabulated.

From the Hardcover edition.

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- Published on: 2001-11-06
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Amazon.com Review

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Most helpful customer reviews

47 of 53 people found the following review helpful.

Simply excellent

By Anthony Bates

I first read this fantastic little book back in 2003 and it never left my side throughout 4 years of university. That's my way of putting a disclaimer in that my review may be a little biased.

Over 161 pages Pipes charts the rise and fall of Communism from the very first intellectual musings by Plato and Aristotle all the way through to John Locke and of course Karl Marx and Lenin. Pipes argues coherently and articulately coming to the conclusion that Communism failed not because of timing, or location, or implementation, but because the ideology of communism is fundamentally flawed. It wouldn't have mattered one jot if the time, place or manner of implementation changed (as the Neo-Marxist argue) because the ideology was so fundamentally anti-human that it would never have worked.

If you are interested in finding out how such a fundamentally flawed ideology could control the actions and reactions of the hundreds of millions of people and dictate the formation of the geo-political situation for 73 odd years then read this book - you won't regret it and it is quite simply a page turner that I found impossible to put down.

34 of 40 people found the following review helpful.

An amazing introduction to an important subject

By Brian Considine

Communism was an amazing development in world history. A system of ideas took control of intellectuals and revolutionaries across the world, but in unindustrialized nations communism was able to achieve power and wrecked horrible suffering on those unlucky enough to be born within its grasp.

Richard Pipes does an excellent service by providing the reader with a concise history of Communism. Call it a 'Cliff Notes' if you will, yet it is brief and easy to follow.

Pipes splits his book into three sections. The first details the history of communism from Marx to its rise and domination in Russia. The second is the reaction to communism and its influence on intellectual life in other industrialized nations. Finally Pipes explores communism's influence in the third world with an excellent examination of China and how Mao's style of communism contrasted with the USSR (which was caught between hoping to encourage communism abroad but unwilling to see communists abroad who achieved power drift from control by Moscow...result tension and hostility between Russia, China etc.).

While Communism has died, it is important that we remember its errors for two reasons. The first is so we do not repeat them, obviously. The second is so that we know where the modern world came from as we start our way into a new century.

78 of 99 people found the following review helpful.

A Well-Deserved Obituary

By thewahlmighty

In a succinct 160 pages, Richard Pipes aptly lays down a history of Communism which is meant to serve both as an introduction to and an obituary for this "utopia" envisioned by Karl Marx and others.

The telling quotes and the refreshingly logical progression (from its starting point in the books of philosophers to the bloody ocean of victims it left behind) make this book arguably one of the best ever written on this grim subject. Although I cannot speak for everyone, the skill that Pipes displays while grounding his conclusions in the facts as well as his ability to pick the quotes that best exemplify each leader, make this the best that I personally have ever read on Communism--and thus my rating of five stars.

To be frank, if Communism does survive after this, the book will only prove its point--that Communism, in theory as well as in practice, has a reckless disregard for both the facts of reality and for human life.

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