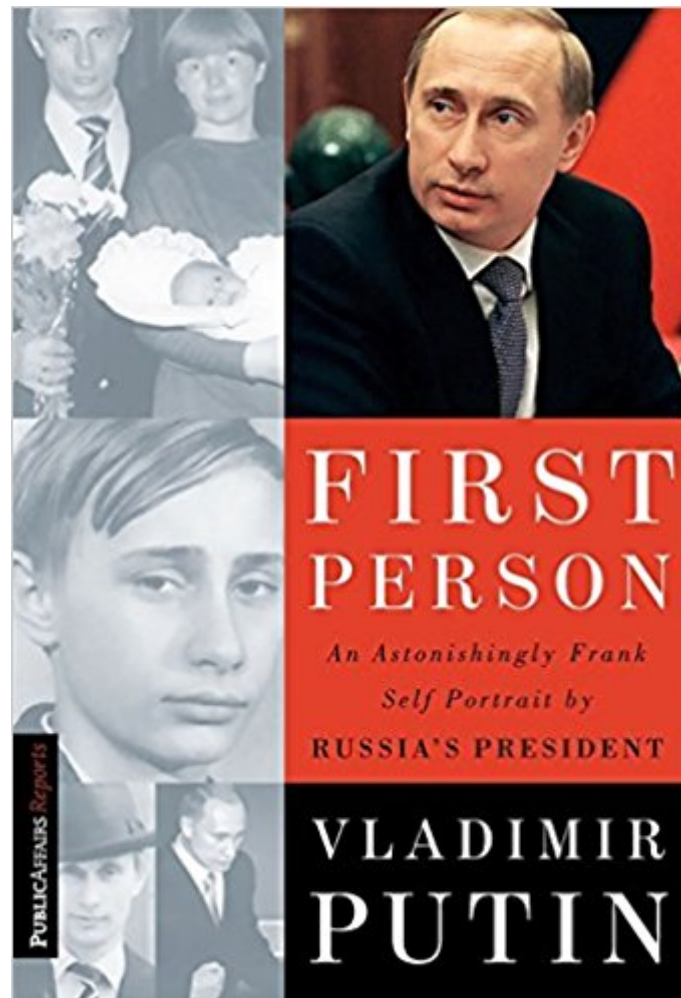


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First Person: An Astonishingly Frank Self-Portrait By Russia's President



Synopsis

Who is this Vladimir Putin? Who is this man who suddenly--overnight and without warning--was handed the reigns of power to one of the most complex, formidable, and volatile countries in the world? How can we trust him if we don't know him? First Person is an intimate, candid portrait of the man who holds the future of Russia in his grip. An extraordinary compilation of over 24 hours of in-depth interviews and remarkable photographs, it delves deep into Putin's KGB past and explores his meteoric rise to power. No Russian leader has ever subjected himself to this kind of public examination of his life and views. Both as a spy and as a virtual political unknown until selected by Boris Yeltsin to be Prime Minister, Putin has been regarded as man of mystery. Now, the curtain lifts to reveal a remarkable life of struggles and successes. Putin's life story is of major importance to the world.

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Customer Reviews

The product of six interviews conducted by Russian journalists (and translated into English by Catherine A. Fitzpatrick), First Person is a book-length Q&A session in which Russian president Vladimir Putin discusses his childhood, his life as a spy, and his surprisingly rapid rise as a politician in the 1990s. Parts of this unusual autobiography are plainly banal (he weighs 165 pounds and likes beer), but interspersed throughout are candid comments by one of the world's most powerful men. Putin admits that he didn't know much about Stalin's violent purges in the 1930s when he joined the KGB ("I was a pure and utterly successful product of Soviet patriotic education"). He also scolds

Soviet leaders for the invasions of Hungary and Czechoslovakia during the cold war: "These were major mistakes. And the Russophobia that we see in Eastern Europe today is the fruit of those mistakes." At another point, he expresses frustration with some of the things critics have said about him: "Why have they made up so much about me? It's complete nonsense!" On the war in Chechnya, he is predictably defensive: "I was convinced that if we didn't stop the extremists right away, we'd be facing a second Yugoslavia on the entire territory of the Russian Federation--the Yugoslavization of Russia.... We are not attacking. We are defending ourselves." There's also an interview with his wife, who, when asked if her husband ever gets drunk, responds: "There hasn't been any of that." (After Yeltsin, this is apparently of concern to Russians.) The interviewers also ask her whether he ever looks at other women. She replies with a question of her own, intriguingly: "Well, what sort of man would he be, if he weren't attracted by beautiful women?" But Putin is, appropriately, the main show. Readers interested in Russian politics will want to review the final pages closely, as the president discourses on contemporary topics. Confronted with tough questions about Russia's treatment of a journalist who filed negative stories about Chechnya, Putin says, "We interpret freedom of expression in different ways." That's a KGB man talking--and yet another reason Putin is worth watching. --John J. Miller

Prior to his sudden rise to the Russian presidency, Putin was virtually a mystery; this transcript of recent interviews goes a long way toward filling the blanks in his past. In eight chapters of q&a, punctuated with anecdotes from friends and family members, Putin recounts his boyhood in St. Petersburg (then Leningrad), the three years he spent as a KGB intelligence officer in Dresden, his return to the collapsed USSR and decision to enter politics and, finally, the day Boris Yeltsin asked him to take up the Kremlin reins. In Russia, this slim volume surfaced quickly during the brief interim between Yeltsin's resignation and the March elections. But rather than focusing on his political views and ideology, the interviewers devote the bulk of the text to Putin's biography--an indication of just how unknown the new Russian president is to his constituency. And the book succeeds in humanizing the uncharismatic politician. Through his childhood memories, readers learn that the gaunt, stoic man in the newsreels was once a spunky teen cruising the streets of Leningrad in search of girls and judo matches and dreaming of being a Soviet secret agent. Putin, it would seem, was just the socialist boy-next-door, or, in his own unironic words: "a pure and utterly successful product of Soviet patriotic education." The question he leaves unanswered is: how does such an ordinary and unassuming guy find himself the president of Russia in an era of unabashed political intrigue? (May) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

I find this self portrait of the most controversial contemporary political man absolutely stunning. He is sometimes humble or cold or simply human. An balanced man with a solid brain and a will to make his homeland independent. Very far from Putin that medias want to sell us. And around him people are telling stories quite consistent with what we conclude ourselves from his own words. I enjoyed this book and hope it will help people to understanding of this man's mind good will.

In this day and age, it is common for the western press to vilify President Putin. It is very interesting to hear what Putin says--as opposed to what is said about him. This book is a compilation of various conversations held over a period of time in which Putin frankly discusses his life. It strikes me that America is in a similar situation to that of Russia at the time that President Yeltsin picked Putin as the person who might be able to revive Russia from the process of war and disintegration. We could use an American Putin! Besides this book, you will also find a very interesting 2 hour interview/documentary produced by Russian channel 24, with English subtitles. It is entitled President and can be found on YouTube.

Helpful, thoughtful study of Putin, his family and friends " all in the form of interviews. So you get to hear them talk about themselves. Typical Russian earthy frankness. Very credible, since what these people say accords very well with what we see Putin doing and saying on the world stage.

A very interesting book, which gives a very different perspective of the man whom we are used to hearing about in the news. The book was written quite a while ago, and obviously many things have transpired since then. He may do things that we do not condone in western society regarding the handling of his opposition and the press, but after reading this one cannot deny that he is very educated and smart. I have no doubt that if he intends to use Mr. Trump for Russia's benefit, Mr. Putin will manipulate him very successfully and masterfully, as unlike our Twitter-ranting new leader, he has the discipline to control his emotions, and he thinks before speaking and acting. Whether one likes him or not, Mr. Putin has to be given credit for becoming one of the most powerful men in the world through his own merit, he came from a very modest family--there was no silver spoon there to help buy his way to the top. To hear his story in his own words makes for quite an interesting read. It would have been better if it was more recent and contained interviews on events that have transpired since this was written, but it is still insightful.

When PM Putin visited president Bush at his Crawford, TX ranch, Pres Bush remarked that he could look into Mr. Putin's eyes and see his soul. That might have brought some laughs & derogatory remarks from the general public. For those doubters I highly recommend this book which illustrates that Mr Putin has a soul, a conscience, and a high mentality. It is true that we do not understand the Russian soul or mind, therefore, I highly recommend this book as well as "The Story of Russia" (available on Amazon.com) to anyone who might like to try. You will not be disappointed

Interesting historically. The interviews for this piece were done in the early 2000s. Before the level of "spin " and security that Putin employs currently. They do include interviews by both family and friends and expose humor and personality traits that give insight to this long popular Russian leader. Missing is a sense of Putin's financial and economic savvy, that is only indirectly apparent even now. But still very interesting.

Great book, I highly recommend it.

Excellent insight to an enigmatic man who has a lot of power. His childhood was simple and very poor, but he has a quick mind and knew what he wanted to do since he was 16 - work for the KGB which taught him how to lead and how to show restraint in any situation. I found it very interesting that he was willing to do this book as he was always a very private person. A must read for those interested in what is happening in Europe these days.

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