



Alexander II: The Last Great Tsar

By Edvard Radzinsky

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Edvard Radzinsky is justly famous as both a biographer and a dramatist, and he brings both skills to bear in this vivid, page-turning, rich portrait of one of the greatest of all Romanovs. Alexander II was Russia's Lincoln -- he freed the serfs, promised a new, more liberal state for everyone, yet was brought down by a determined group of terrorist anarchists who tried to kill him six times before finally, fatefully, succeeding. His story proves the timeless lesson that in Russia, it is dangerous to start reforms, but even more dangerous to stop them. It also shows that the traps and dangers encountered in today's war on terrorists were there 150 years ago.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

It's difficult to reform Russia, as popular historian Radzinsky shows in this lively examination of the czar best known for emancipating the serfs in 1861. Viewed as the most liberal of Russia's 19th-century czars, Alexander II (1818–1881) came to power in 1856 with the idea of bringing Russia into the modern age. But as Radzinsky (*The Last Tsar*) shows, his liberal reforms brought him nothing but trouble. Alexander came under attack from the right for being too liberal, and the left for not going far enough. He also had to curtail his reforms when faced with the need to fight foreign enemies. Radzinsky focuses much of the latter half of the book on the rise of left-wing populist movements—the book covers in depth the intellectual currents that swirled around Russia during Alexander's reign. Some frustrated leftists eventually turned to violence. After many failed attempts to assassinate Alexander, they eventually succeeded in 1881. Some readers may think Radzinsky provides too much familial background before launching into the czar's life, but his well-translated, readable prose will win over most readers interested in European history, and those looking for a cautionary tale on what Russia could face in the future. (*Oct. 18*)

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Review

"Radzinsky tells Alexander's story with great flair, breathless pacing, and the novelist's eye for the telling detail and the revealing anecdote. *Alexander II* is a great read, vividly portraying the tsar and his splendid court, and offering evocative sketches of the age's great writers, artists, and intellectuals who made his reign one of such rich cultural effervescence."

-- *The Seattle Times*

"Lively and brilliant, both epic and epigrammatic."

-- *The New York Times Book Review*

"This is [Radzinsky's] best so far: *Alexander II: The Last Great Tsar* is dramatic, entertaining, and authoritative. Mr. Radzinsky is as comfortable in the palaces of the Romanovs as he is in the conspiratorial attics of their assassins or the studies of great writers like Dostoevsky.... Mr. Radzinsky skillfully tells the story of the czar, of course, but also of the terrorists who begin to hunt him ruthlessly in ever more ambitious plots."

-- *The Wall Street Journal*

"An engagingly flamboyant, intimate portrait of the tsar who ruled the enormous empire at the pinnacle of its culture and splendor....[Radzinsky is] informative, witty, and unfailingly entertaining."

-- *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*

"A compelling account of one of Russia's most important figures, as well as a portrait of a critical, formative period in Russian history."

-- *The Washington Post*

About the Author

Edvard Radzinsky is the author of the bestselling *The Last Tsar*, *Stalin*, and *The Rasputin File*. He is one of Russia's most celebrated playwrights. He lives in Moscow, where he is also an award-winning television personality.

Users Review

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Johnnie Lewis:

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