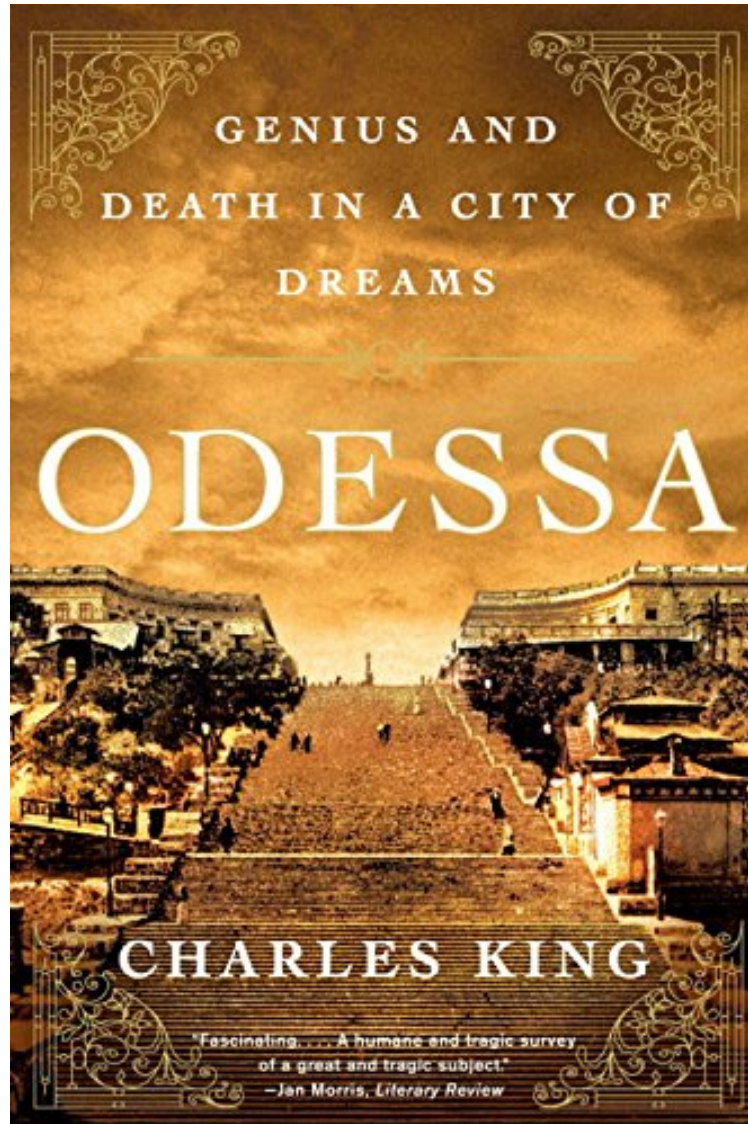


(Free read ebook) Odessa: Genius and Death in a City of Dreams

Odessa: Genius and Death in a City of Dreams

Charles King

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Charles King : Odessa: Genius and Death in a City of Dreams before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Odessa: Genius and Death in a City of Dreams:

38 of 40 people found the following review helpful. Odessa- a city for everyone and everythingBy Paul GelmanOne of the most famous visitors to Odessa was Mark Twain. He found a city that was full of people from various nationalities and religions. He had visited the city in 1867 and was one of the many who stepped ashore to see its famous cascade of stone steps, while observing the "city center, buzzing with the business of trade, shipping and exchange". Because

of this, he was reminded of his America. Thus Mr. King starts his fascinating tale of the city's history—a city founded on the shores of the Black Sea. Later on you could find in it everything and everyone: Russians, Romanians, Jews, Greeks, Italians, Germans. The city has attracted all kinds of people. Many of them were prominent figures and they included Alexander Pushkin, Grigory Potemkin, Jose de Ribas, Isaac Babel and various Jewish writers and Zionist activists. It was a city where intellectuals, crooks and raconteurs were living side by side. Like most sea and river ports, Odessa became a haven for the underworld and this thing in itself "became one of the deepest and most enduring features". Criminals, delinquents, Jewish artful dodgers and schemers populated the city, which was built originally by Catherine the Great as a model of Enlightenment. One of the most famous personalities was Illya Mechnikov, the famous immunologist who earned the Nobel prize and whose tragic life is well told here. His story is only part of a greater picture of the terrible and endless plagues which were rampant in Odessa throughout the centuries. This resulted in many quarantines imposed by the authorities on ships and travellers alike. Another plague, that of locusts during the nineteenth century, caused the inhabitants of Odessa to find comic solutions, such as the creation of enough noise to scare the insects away. One lady had even organized an annual parade to deal with the pests, "by engaging her husband to use a large bell, then the gardener hanging on a water bucket, then the footmen clanging on shovels, followed by housemaids striking pots and kettles, and lastly the children tapping with toasting forks on tea boards". Not only was the city a magnet for merchants and businessmen. It was to become one of the bloodiest places for the Jews and the famous pogroms these unfortunate people have gone through are retold here in detail. Pogrom survivors came from all professions and social classes. Students, traders, clerks, teachers and port workers comprised the majority, while another group was that of housewives. Thus the city was also a place of tremendous violence and this continued through World War Two, when the famous Roumanian-administered Transnistria Area, which contained tens of ghettos, was established between the Bug and the Dniester. Odessa was its capital and Mr. King writes that "the horrors of Transnistria and its capital city, Odessa, had analogs in the more extensive and well-documented atrocities committed in the infamous death camps of occupied Europe and at the hands of the German military". Hundreds of thousands of Jews perished there. The chapter on the capture and trials of many well-known Romanian Fascist leaders is extremely interesting. Some of these included Ion Antonescu, Mihai Antonescu and the Governor of Transnistria, the murderous professor Gheorghe Alexianu, whose headquarters during the war was to be found in the former palace of Counts Mikhail Vorontsov, another prominent man who developed Odessa. Some Odessan Jews who left the city formed the Odessan diaspora, many of whom ended up on Brighton Beach, Brooklyn. The book is superbly researched, using many new and unknown sources and containing as rich bibliography. It is a history of courage, tragedy, fun, crime, murders, intellectuals and artists, villains and geniuses, and it is also a tale of optimism that characterized the city of dreams. This book is highly recommended because it is a tale of courage and glory of a world that was and will probably never exist again.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Illuminating! By Bruce E. McLeod Jr. Reading "Odessa" is reminiscent of the decisions by President Thomas Jefferson and the Louisiana Purchase; sending explorers to survey the new land and envision its possibilities. Catherine "The Great" made a strategic move as she engaged the Ottoman Empire in war and won. This win brought a new frontier for Russia called "The New Russia" and the designation of a new city named "Odessa". As the new addition began to unfold and amass new people, buildings, a culture embracing varied ethnicities and a mosaic that transcends most of Europe, this became a beacon of light that appealed to the rich and famous, including the nobility. In the beginning, it was a city with no racial or religious barriers and, had a bustling economy that was the envy of many countries. Trading expanded, along with scores of businesses, as cargo ships filled the ports with access to the open sea. Over time, the bubble burst. Along came strife, disheveled vagabonds, women of ill-repute, bribery, and scores of other menacing and unusual suspects. Internal disputes and pogroms ensued that decimated a culture and forever changed the landscape. As the story unraveled, I was transfixed on the causes of the downfall; horrendous atrocities inflicted upon the innocent as political imperialist instituted "ethnic cleansing" and eradicated a group that was responsible, in part, for Odessa's early transformation. Charles King is a wonderful writer. His descriptions reveal the very "soul" of an ancient city with its aromas and subtleties. As an expert on Eastern Europe, he has a feel, through his many visits, for the culture, its peoples and history. After reading his book, I would like to visit this city and walk the "Potemkin Steps" (as vividly pictured on the book's cover) and wander the narrow streets, (especially "Pushkin Street", which has a special meaning to me). I recently viewed the film "Battleship Potemkin" on YouTube, which, by its story line, has historical ties to the carnage that progressed in Odessa, culminating in the revolution that impacted the world. I think you will enjoy reading this remarkable book, albeit filled with tragedy. The many accolades it has received attest to its popularity.

Bruce E. McLeod, Jr. Las Vegas, Nevada 8 August 2013 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. More pastiche than history. By Michael Douman. Much as I admire the work of Jan Morris, I can't agree with her assessment of this book reprinted on the cover. This book is no match for Herlihy's history which unfortunately finishes at 1914. The writing is not as captivating as that of the Russian scholar Orlando Figes. All of this is a pity because Odessa has an interesting history. It reads like an idiosyncratic cut and paste scrap book - which is essentially what it is. I had to force myself to finish reading it.

"Rich and riveting, complex and compelling, powerful and poetic." Peter M. Gianotti, *Newsday* In Odessa, the greatest port on the Black Sea, a dream of cosmopolitan freedom inspired geniuses and innovators, from the writers Alexander Pushkin and Isaac Babel to Zionist activist Vladimir Jabotinsky and immunologist Ilya Mechnikov. Yet here too was death on a staggering scale, as World War II brought the mass murder of Jews carried out by the city's Romanian occupiers. Odessa is an elegy for the vibrant, multicultural tapestry of which a thriving Jewish population formed an essential part, as well as a celebration of the survival of Odessa's dream in a diaspora reaching all the way to Brighton Beach. 25 illustrations

From Publishers Weekly In his intricately researched new work, King (*The Black Sea*) brings to life the stories of the Russians, Jews, Turks, Greeks, Italians, Germans, and Romanians that make up the "quintessentially mixed city" of Odessa. Far from the Russian and Ukrainian seats of power, but close to Europe, Asia, and the Mediterranean states, Odessa has always been both a progressive, cosmopolitan trading port and a lawless outpost given to periods of violence, revolution, and economic depression. King effortlessly moves between the city's high points, like the booming grain trade in the late-18th and mid-19th centuries and urban development under the duc de Richelieu, and its desperate times, including the economic collapse associated with the Crimean War and the city's devastating Jewish holocaust at the hands of Romanian occupiers in the 1940s. King weaves into his history the lives of Alexander Pushkin, Isaac Babel, and Sergei Eisenstein, all of whom had connections to Odessa, a city still struggling to understand its place in the world. King's ability to lay bare the city's secrets both good and bad gives a fascinating prism through which to observe. (Feb.) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved. From Booklist Unlike so many other great cities, the foundation of Odessa is not lost in the mists of a distant, legendary past; it was formally founded by a decree of Russian empress Catherine the Great in 1794. Of course, as King illustrates, the spot that became Odessa has a long and fascinating, if often tragic, history. Located along the Black Sea at the nexus of multiple trade routes, the site and the surrounding area have hosted a great variety of settlers and conquerors over thousands of years, including Greeks, Jews, Tatars, Turks, and Germans. The result was a vibrant, diverse port city whose ethnic stew was both a blessing and a curse. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Odessa was a great center of Jewish culture, and King relates how the Jewish population was virtually destroyed by occupying Romanians under Nazi sponsorship. This is a well-written chronicle of a city unfamiliar to most in the West and serves as both a tribute and lament. --Jay Freeman Eloquent and engaging. - Michael Schwartz, *Moment* A worthy tribute to one of Europe's greatest and least-known cities. - *The Economist* Engaging and highly enjoyable King brings a travel writer's gift for clear prose and keen observation to history. - Matthew Kaminsky, *The Daily Beast*