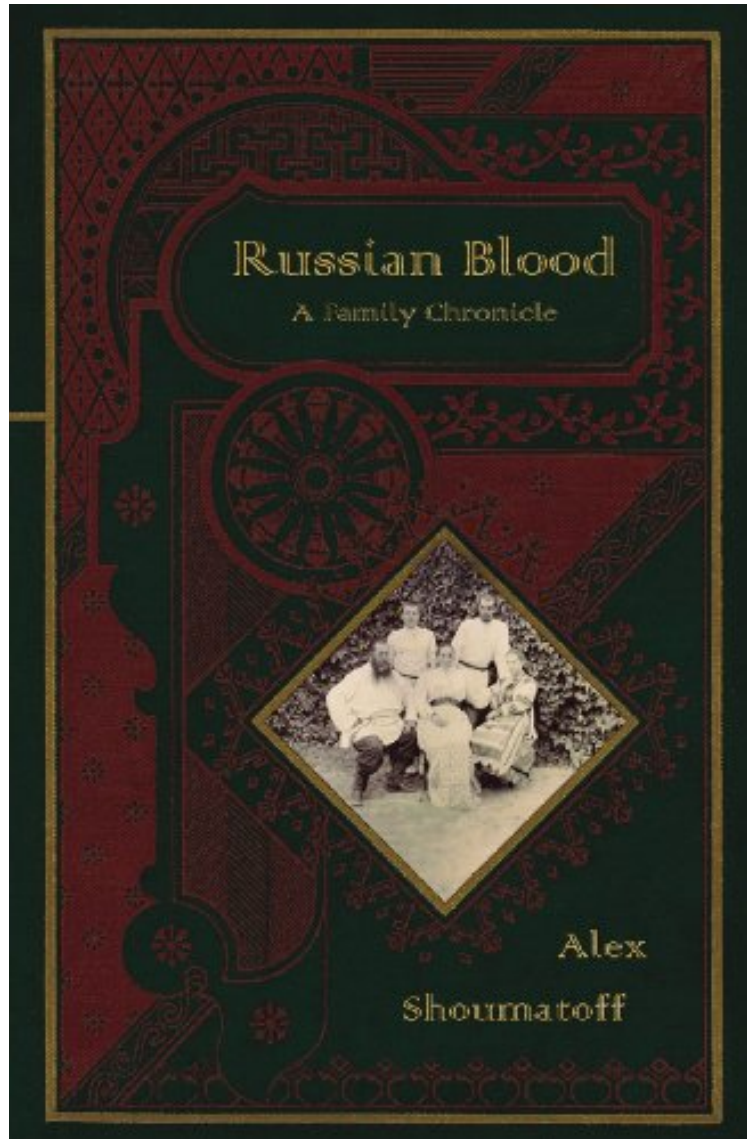


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Russian Blood

Alex Shoumatoff

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#4264174 in Books Alex Shoumatoff 1990-08-11 Original language: English PDF # 1 7.99 x .82 x 5.241, .91
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Alex Shoumatoff : Russian Blood before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Russian Blood:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Fantastic, what a family history By patricia rosen Fantastic , what a family history . The photos are wonderful . Mr. Shoumatoff never disappoints .6 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Slavic Nostalgia and American Striving By marronglace It was disconcerting reading Russian Blood, A Family Chronicle. The story of the author's antecedents' lives in pre-Revolutionary Russia was, indeed, evocative of a

lost time and place, but one could not help realizing that the period in which this book was written, researched, and published occurred prior to its 1982 date of publication. The young man who so well detailed, in particular, his paternal and maternal grandmothers' travails in escaping Bolshevik revenge in order to forge new lives in the United States has passed well into middle age (haven't we all?); the system that destroyed the way of life he chronicled has, too, passed onto the junk heap of history. True to the Russian nature of exuberance and generosity, one is served up more than an ample banquet of family history and reflection here (as well as maybe too much if a reader does not share the writer's (and his father's and uncle's)) family passion for butterflies and geology or what seems like an inherent need to establish high social pedigree vis-à-vis the old East Coast set. One matter of confusion: at some point this reader began to wonder to what extent certain branches of the Shoumatoff family were Ukrainian rather than Russian. This matter might have been amplified. That being said, it is too bad that Shoumatoff has not given us, in the intervening years, the memoir of his own life. When he touches on the truly personal, he leaves the reader wanting more. What was it like for him to grow up and establish his own American identity? What does he see for Russia now? A publisher would do well to ask him to undertake a personal story with himself as sole focus, or a travel edition in which he can "rediscover" Russia for us in this new century.

In the early 1980s, Alex Shoumatoff became curious about his roots. Both his grandmothers were in their 90s, and with a sense of urgency he collected their stories and reminiscences about their life as White Russian aristocrats, which was unceremoniously put an end to by the Bolshevik Revolution; how they "got out" and made new lives in America. The narrative he went on to assemble, which "compares favorably with Nabokov," one critic wrote, brings to life the languorous Turgenevian existence on an estate in Little Russia, of an exceptionally erudite and cultivated family of artists and natural scientists in the final years of the doomed tsarist empire; the failed attempt of Kerensky's provisional government to convert the absolute monarchy to a constitutional one; the 1912 expedition to Tibet of his great-uncle, a celebrated lepidopterist, who was looking for new species of alpine papilios; the early years of Igor Sikorsky's fledgling emigre aircraft company on Long Island; the death of FDR, while sitting for a portrait by his grandmother in Warm Springs, Georgia; the escape from the Gulag of his great-aunt; and a host of other poignant events and marvelous characters.

About the Author Alex Shoumatoff was formerly a staff writer for The New Yorker and is now contributing editor at Vanity Fair. He is the author of nine previous books and lives in upstate New York with his wife and five children