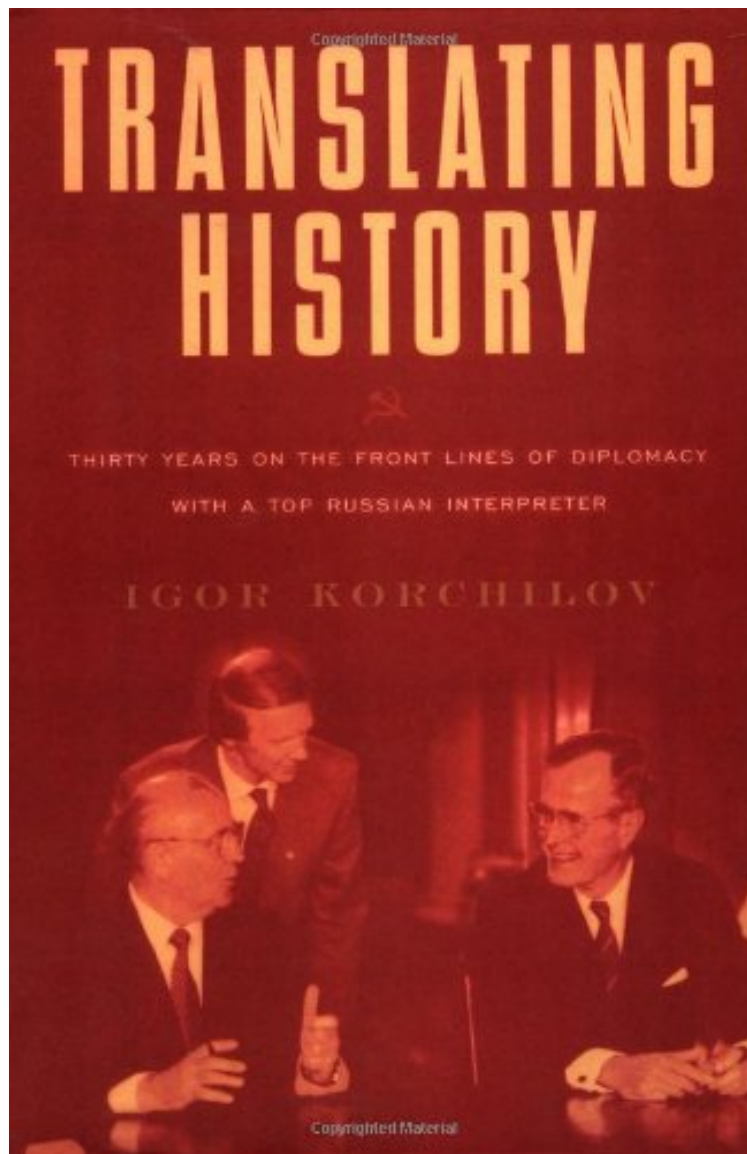


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Translating History: 30 Years on the Front Lines of Diplomacy with a Top Russian Interpreter (Lisa Drew Books (Paperback))

Igor Korchilov

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Igor Korchilov : Translating History: 30 Years on the Front Lines of Diplomacy with a Top Russian Interpreter (Lisa Drew Books (Paperback)) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Translating History: 30 Years on the Front Lines of Diplomacy with a Top Russian Interpreter

(Lisa Drew Books (Paperback)):

A top Russian interpreter, who spent 30 years on the front lines of diplomacy, offers excerpts from his journals--the result of his four years spent in the service of Mikhail Gorbachev--covering the pivotal period between 1987 and 1990, and including parts of Gorbachev's conversations with Reagan, Thatcher, and Bush, among others.

From Library Journal These two memoirs are indispensable sources for historians, diplomats, and students of international affairs interested in Gorbachev's relations with foreign leaders, especially Presidents Reagan and Bush and Prime Minister Thatcher, and in Soviet international diplomacy in the final years of the USSR. Both authors stood at the elbows of Gorbachev and foreign minister Edward Shevardnadze as their interpreter, and it is fascinating to view from behind the headlines the several summit meetings of the period and see how Soviet leaders reacted to their foreign hosts/guests. The authors, particularly Korchilov, have much to say on the human-interest side, offering personal impressions and judgments, for example, that Gorbachev saw California as "paradise on earth, with the sun all year round." Palazchenko is more analytical about how successive Soviet domestic crises affected his and his bosses' jobs. But both books complement each other well, confirming Gorbachev's attractive personality and sharp intelligence, and the former Soviet president is very much the hero of both accounts. The two authors also write feelingly on the collapse of their country. Essential for academic Soviet studies collections and larger public libraries. ?Robert H. Johnston, McMaster Univ., Hamilton, Ontario Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Kirkus s If one has any doubt about the vacuousness of most diplomatic summits, this book by Gorbachev's interpreter at the 1987 summit with Ronald Reagan in Washington, D.C., should remove it. Not that this is the author's intention. Korchilov, an appealing man who now lives in New York City, was entranced by an Elvis record as a youth, decided to learn English, and rose to the top of a highly demanding profession. It's clear that his presence at the summit left him somewhat dazzled; he regales us with lists of those who attended and with some of the less entrancing conversations. ("Welcome to the United States of America. We are delighted to have you here," George Shultz tells Gorbachev.) There is a good deal of that kind of thing, as leaders tell pointless jokes, assure each other of the historic nature of what they are doing, and are photographed walking together and smiling broadly as they talk to each other in languages they don't understand. The greatest interest lies in vignettes, as when Reagan tells Gorbachev how appalled he is by the brutal way in which the KGB treated Russian crowds that pressed in on him and Gorbachev winces but makes no reply; or when Gorbachev recounts how party bosses fought over who was to inherit the Lincoln Continental Brezhnev had been given; or in Korchilov's offhand comment that Gorbachev and his wife behave "like normal people," devoid of the arrogance "so characteristic of most Soviet leaders of the past." Korchilov believes that there was a diminution in Gorbachev's energy and sense of direction in his last year in office, but concludes that, while he may have destroyed the Soviet Union by mistake, "his reform program consciously and deliberately discredited the old Soviet system." A good deal of this stream has been exhaustively panned, but there are some nuggets here. -- Copyright ©1997, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.