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Sommario/riassunto

This compelling and often traumatic book is the memoir of one of the most important figures in modern Russian history, Dmitry S. Likhachev, revered as 'a guardian of national culture'. Reflections on the Russian Soul is an incredible account of an intellectual's turbulent journey through twentieth century Russia. Likhachev re-counts the fortunes of people with whom he came into contact and reproduces the air of passed years in Russia. Likhachev vividly portrays his childhood years in St. Petersburg and continues into his student life at Leningrad University that led to an agonizing period of imprisonment and near death. He describes how a harmless prank caught the attention of the Secret Police, resulting in his exile and confinement within the infamous prison island of Solovki. He describes his first-hand experience of brutality in prison during the early Stalin years and the incident that not only saved him but also haunted him for the rest of his life. He reflects on the years after his release from prison and the events leading up to the Second World War. His powerful recollection of the blockade of Leningrad provides the reader with a horrific insight into the harsh effects of war, hunger and survival. Lichachev goes on to describe post-war Russia and how his own livelihood developed from literary editor to a return to Leningrad University as Professor of History. This compelling autobiography finishes with Likhachev's poignant return to Solovki as a free man.