

Vixi – Memoirs of a Non-Belonger by Richard Pipes.  
Yale University Press 2004.

From time to time an autobiography is written which is not only an enjoyable read but full of insights and information presented in the most approachable and comprehensible way. Vixi (I have lived) is one such book.

Richard Pipes, one of the most highly regarded and controversial Sovietologists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was an adviser to President Reagan on Soviet and Eastern European affairs, and as such may be said to have played a role in the collapse of Communism and the reunification of Europe. A man of understandably strong views, Pipes is Emeritus Professor of History at Harvard, this autobiography is nevertheless not a settling of old scores but an honest and open description of the life experiences that formulated the author's views and made him the man he became.

Pipes fled Warsaw and the Nazis with his parents in October 1939, eventually settling in America. During the course of his life he has been connected with many of the events of the second half of the twentieth century, on which his perspective is fascinating, and has known enough famous names to make even the most consummate name-dropper green with envy!

This is a terrific account of a far from dry academic life, enriched by love of a family and a proud and beating Jewish soul that, while not seeming to have exerted undue influence, seems to have encouraged a conscious sense of otherness which contributed to make Richard Pipes the highly effective and authoritative person he was and still is.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh