



# I Want to Live: The Diary of a Young Girl in Stalin's Russia

By Nina Lugovskaya

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**I Want to Live: The Diary of a Young Girl in Stalin's Russia** By Nina Lugovskaya

Recently unearthed in the archives of Stalin's secret police, the NKVD, Nina Lugovskaya's diary offers rare insight into the life of a teenage girl in Stalin's Russia—when fear of arrest was a fact of daily life. Like Anne Frank, thirteen-year-old Nina is conscious of the extraordinary dangers around her and her family, yet she is preoccupied by ordinary teenage concerns: boys, parties, her appearance, who she wants to be when she grows up. As Nina records her most personal emotions and observations, her reflections shape a diary that is as much a portrait of her intense inner world as it is the Soviet outer one.

Preserved here, these markings—the evidence used to convict Nina as a “counterrevolutionary”—offer today's reader a fascinating perspective on the era in which she lived.

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### Editorial Review

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The knowledge that Nina Lugovskaya survived a Stalin-era gulag means that her journals, recently discovered in KGB archives, probably won't inspire the same sense of tragic loss as the diary of a more famous young girl. This is still a remarkable document, showing an intelligent teen's rage against oppressive politics, as well as universal coming-of-age concerns--including anxieties about looks, academic pressures, and hopeful yearnings coupled with suicidal lows ("I'm just dragging out a pitiful existence"). Italicized context is inconsistent and not always clear, and Nina's meandering, depressed ruminations, covering her adolescence from age 13 to 18 and ending just prior to her family's arrest, may not hold readers expecting a narrative that more directly captures the intensity and terror of its political moment. But this will provide crucial support for high-school, and even college-level, studies of Russian history. Using boldfaced type, the editors have preserved those passages marked as counterrevolutionary by the Soviet investigators who confiscated the diary; helpful appended material includes editor's notes, a thoughtful bibliography, and several photos and family letters. *Jennifer Mattson*

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### Review

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About the Author

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