



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

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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.

I Want To Live: The Diary of a Young Girl in Stalin's Russia Details

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Lola says

Though along the same realm of Anne Frank's diary, Nina Lugovskaya's diary is vastly different. While Anne's diary is hopeful and beautifully written, Nina's diary is more cynical and contains her day-to-day life. Of course, Anne was stuck in the Annex while Nina could go out and about, so we learn more about Stalin's Russia in her diary than we do Hitler's regime in Anne's. Anne and Nina are very different girls. Anne Frank was pretty, charming, the type of girl everyone liked, especially boys. Nina Lugovskaya, on the other hand, was much darker, more cynical, and isolated from others. She was a bit of an outcast, which makes her diary read like a real teenager's. It really isn't fair to compare the two diaries, though, since Nina didn't get to edit hers beforehand like Anne did.

Nina, while often moody and selfish, is a shrewd observer, and you really get to see what Russia was like at the time. You learn about the day-to-day life there: school, shopping, and the police knocking down your door. Nina's father had been sent away for suspected suspicious activities and so she, her mother, and two older sisters were on their own in terms of money and food, both of which there was never enough. The most passionate you ever see Nina is when she's ranting against Stalin. I could really see the political climate and how it was going to turn out. Nina, though dreaming of being a writer as a kid, ended up being a painter. Like Anne, this is her only testimony to us. I'd recommend!

Kathy says

From the back cover: This diary was unearthed decades after it was confiscated by the NKVD (?) in 1937. Nina wrote about all the dangers around her at the same time she wrote about all the things that adolescent girls worry about. The diary ends two days before the family's apartment was thoroughly searched. Her diary was seized and carefully studied, the incriminating passages are underlined throughout the book. The diaries were used to convict her of being a "counterrevolutionary" who was "preparing to kill Stalin". She was sentenced to five years of hard labor and subsequent internal exile.

Nina's father was outspoken and continually banished from Moscow. Her mother worked all the time to keep food on the table. There is a lot of writing about her school studies, her self-consciousness and loathing of her looks, friends, and boys. There is also a lot of insight to the political situation around them. There is constant fear of intrusion and special knocks that the family has for when the father is secretly visiting. Nina seemed to be quite a feminist before her time. She constantly wrote about "proving that a woman is as smart as a man". I found it fascinating that someone her age could write and observe the way she did. There are a lot of questions out there regarding the book's authenticity. I underlined a lot of the book.

Genevieve says

Gave up after 67 pages. It started off okay-ish and I did find it interesting enough to keep reading but the "story" never went anywhere. It was the same thing over and over again and the writing wasn't exciting enough to keep you wanting to read about nothing. I very much doubt I will finish it at some point considering the fact that it was so incredibly boring and repetitive. If I ever get to hear about that flaming

Lev again I think I'll have to punch someone in the face!!

Tanuja says

I believe that this book was accurate to how a young teenager to young adult with severe depression would approach life. Nina describes everyday life a lot, her goals for the future (that are rarely completed), crushes on boys, political beliefs, and dreams. I related to the book in the sense that I am very goal oriented as Nina is (probably why I'm giving the book 3 stars). However, while the book shows how teenage girls think it does not give us the greatest idea of what life was back during Stalin's control. This is a real diary though, so it is not to be expected that Nina Lugovskaya was preoccupied with giving a thorough description of the time period, but of keeping an account of her own life and dreams.

Krista the Krazy Kataloguer says

This girl, Nina, was advertised as "the Russian Anne Frank". However, having read the latter's diary, I can say that Nina, while a good writer, is not as good as Anne, nor is her diary as interesting as Anne's. Granted, Nina and her sisters and mother were imprisoned in Siberia, at which time the diary was confiscated. But Nina and her family survived, and lived on, whereas Anne did not.

Aside from the comparisons, Nina's diary covers a period between 1932 and January 1937, in the early years of Stalin's regime, beginning when she was 13 and ending when she was 17. It took me forever to read through it! Much of what she talks about is BOYS, and how badly she wants a boyfriend, and which boys she likes, and their attractive features, and how she envies her sisters. She has a lazy eye, which causes her to hate her looks. She also talks a lot about having to study harder and harder, yet she describes getting drunk on wine and goofing off. At one point she talks about seeing a neurologist because her memory is so bad, and she can't remember her lessons. Much of it is repetitious and comes across as constant whining, which got tiresome to read. Yet there were fascinating moments, when she described the school system, and talked about authors she read, or news events of the time, or her political views. The most interesting part was when her family were vacationing in the country and her observations of the peasants (common people). Unfortunately, the tedious parts far outnumbered the fascinating bits. It's too bad that she never went on to write more, because she had potential. Nevertheless, I do recommend it for those interesting bits.

Gary says

The diary of a sensitive, intelligent and moody young girl against the backdrop of the purges and and politicide of Stalinist Russia.

This book like The Diary of Anne Frank and the Diary of Eva Heyman (both child victims of the Nazi Holocaust) tells of the life through the eyes innocent young girl at a time of totalitarian terror and mass murder.

Nina mainly talks of boys, her friends, her moods, her family and her own angst.

But given the fact that her father had been a Social Revolutionary (a party opposed to the Bolsheviks) and is now imprisoned for being a 'counterrevolutionary', anything Nina wrote when the diary was seized by the NKVD and Nina and her family arrested and deported to a labour camp can be charged with being counterrevolutionary, under the sick system of communist dictatorship.

What we get a picture of is a magnificent young writer, a deeply intelligent girl with an eye for detail and analysis of her friends and family and a time and place where humanity is under the jackboot of a cruel ideology and the degenerates who inevitably rise to positions of power under such a system. She reveals the peculiarities and personalities of the people who live with her and her friends at school, her budding sexuality and her intellectual development. Inevitably she would write of her hatred for such a system as any intelligent person of substance would think like her.

Megan Anderson says

Oh, man. I had high hopes for this, since I'm reading it somewhat on the tails of all the other "wartime diaries" I've read--accounts of the Holocaust, Zlata's Diary, etc. But this...reading it seems jumbled. At times, the language is so beautiful and poetic, you wonder if someone between the ages of 13-18 could actually have written it. And then for pages on end she goes into an emo rant about how much she hates herself, other people, and life in general, that you think, "Yeah. A teenager wrote this."

But throughout the whole thing, I kept wondering if she really would have wanted her diaries published. A lot of the passages are really personal, particularly the rants. I feel more sorry for her about the publication of her private thoughts than I do about the content of the rants themselves.

However, her thoughts on the politics of the time are great. I wonder how much of what she said was inspired by what she heard from her father and his friends and the books she read and how much actually came from her own head. I guess I'll never know, but it's interesting to read and think about just the same.

I just wish it had been shorter.

3/5 on here, 6/10 for myself

Allison says

synopsis: the plot of this book was to tell about the life of a young girl in Stalin's Russia. It is a diary of the girl Nina. Some of the most important things that happened were that people she knew were killed and she and her family were arrested. The book is mainly about Nina's life and the events that happen during her life during this terrible time in Russia.

classification: This book was nonfiction (journal or diary)

A) Audience was 14 and older

B) Why? because they wanted us to know what it was like in Stalin's Russia from a regular person's view

C) 1: Journal

2: Nonfiction

3: Terror but normal day life

4: everyday person

criticism: to me this was an ok literature. It was a little boring in most parts of the book but could be interesting. What I did enjoy about it was the fact that it was about a young girl in this terrible time and I was

getting to learn about it. It was completely believable. The pacing was slow but overall i sort of enjoyed it but it could've been alot more interesting.

April says

This diary reads like a manic depressive with bipolar mood swings. In other words - a teenage girl. The diary itself is pretty unspectacular. The most interesting were the parts that were underlined by the NKVD and were deemed "counter-revolutionary." Some of the passages talked about her hatred of Stalin and the Bolsheviks, but other passages seemed pretty inane and I'm wondering what the Soviets found so offensive. An interesting read, but honestly quite boring.

Evariste Galois says

This is an incredible book, authored by a teenager who was such a good writer that she outsmarted most of the reviewers here on goodreads.com. Congratulations to Andrew Bromfield for a terrific translation. I have read both Anne Frank and Nina Lugovskaya, and Nina's literary sophistication and beautiful prose can easily keep up with Anne's; as can the drama and tragedy of her life.

Ilze says

Here is a book that's meant to: ... *inspire comparisons with Anne Frank* ... (according to the blurb). Frankly, the book disappointed me. Should there be any comparisons to be made, it would be that both girls kept diaries many years ago and/or during difficult years.

Nina is the third daughter of a father who ends up being arrested for anti-Bolshevik activities. Her sisters are twins and her mother works hard to get any food on the table. Nina herself never really mentions the poverty they were living in, but spends most of the diary giving you acute descriptions of her classmates and her feelings – most of these embarrassed confessions of a squint eye and a longing for the attention of that “special” boy.

The title of the book could well have been a desperate attempt to get it sold, for Nina only mentions a *want/will* to live in two places: In March 1934 (p 130) and again in January 1936 (p 314). Why would anyone use it as the motto of a book in which the writer contemplates and attempts suicide occasionally? Could it be that both editor and publisher felt so sorry for Nina and the fact that her diary was censored by the NKVD that it compelled them to publish it (making sure to embolden all censored sections)?

For me, Nina's diary can be summed up in her entry for 10 February 1935: *I could go on reading Chekhov's stories and plays for ever. Oh, I just keep coming across myself in them over and over again! And that hopeless, despairing tone, that pessimism and helplessness are so familiar to me, so like me. How could I possibly not recognize myself in his Ivanov and Treplev! All of them are failures, dissatisfied with life. They're all tormented by social stagnation, a stifling, musty atmosphere. But what can I do? That's the way life is, life is like that, and it never has been and never will be any other way. What are energy, enthusiasm, joy and happiness? Just moments we experience only rarely in life. Writers love to add them all together and create an idealistic picture of life, but it's a lie, not life.* The editor informs us that “Treplev ... suffers from

unrequited love, becomes depressed and commits suicide. Ivanov, a frustrated idealist, also suffers from serious depression and romantic turmoil. It is easy to see why Nina identified with them” (2008: 230-231).

Kristilyn (Reading In Winter) says

Dubbed as the Russian Anne Frank on the cover of *I Want to Live: The Diary of a Young Girl In Stalin's Russia*, Nina Lugovskaya tells her tale of growing up in turbulent times in Russia, in diary format.

When I saw this book in the library, I knew it would be an interesting read. I had read *The Diary of Anne Frank* a few times in the past and have always come back to it because I admired Frank's courage and hope. I only assumed that this book from a Russian perspective would be the same.

While Nina Lugovskaya resembles Anne Frank in some ways, it's hard to put the two girls in the same category. Anne Frank's memoir tells, page after page, of the struggles of living as a Jew during the times of the Holocaust. She shows remarkable courage, leaving readers with a feeling of hope. Her writing is thoughtful and portrays the hopes and dreams of a 13-year-old, but is intermingled with the fear of living at such a time. She shows strength for both her and her family and the reader can't help but continue to read, even though the known end is fatal.

Nina Lugovskaya, however, comes across as angry and shallow. It is only through the interjections and commentaries of publisher that the reader really learns about what was going on during Stalin's Russia. Nina's entries begin as the normal diary entries of a 13-year-old girl: talking about school and boys, especially a certain crush. While the reader would expect Nina to grow up and start showing a more grown-up quality, Nina moves on to write about suicide (a continuous topic throughout the book, though more due to the result of boys not liking her or to her "deformity," than to her hatred or frustration of living in this society), her hatred of Stalin, and her hatred of her parents. It was hard to really feel compassion for Nina as her writings—while obviously very well-written—come across as constant complaining.

While the interjections and commentaries do provide an educational aspect to the otherwise love-stricken writer's memoirs, at times they can be distracting and I found myself wondering why the person who provided insight to Nina's diary felt so assured at times to say that Nina was "obviously being sarcastic" or to put thoughts or feelings to Nina's words, when there might not have been anything of substance at all.

If you're looking for a historical memoir for a young person, stick to *The Diary of Anne Frank*. It's timeless and a classic, sure to teach the readers something of courage, compassion, and hope.

Celia Scheer says

I read till I could read no longer. I wondered why I experiencing feelings of deep depression. It was coinciding with the reading of the book.

Touted as being akin to Anne Frank's amazing diary, just so you know...this is nothing like it. Yes it is the actual diary of a young girl. I think the comparison ends there.

Nina, the writer of this diary, lives in Soviet Russia and gives you some idea of Russia under Stalin's iron fist. However, peppered throughout this book is Nina's desire to die. The self perceived ugly duckling in her

family because her 'squint eye'. She has few friends (go figure), she complains about everything in her life and nauseam, like school...she is an A-1 student. She constantly plans her suicide and longs to die....over and over again. I was ready to slit my own wrists....geeeeeeezzzzzz!

So, read at your own risk, all I can say is when I finally realized the desperate weariness of this book was affecting how I was feeling, I skirted through to the end and put it aside! I felt better the next day and since! Do I get into my books, or what? Thank heaven it was a library book and I hadn't wasted money on it!

Natalie says

I got this book for Christmas and read it after I had finished Anne Applebaum's 'Gulag: A History', which I thought worked out well because I knew about the history and facts of what actually occurred. I've always preferred, however, to read personal accounts of things like this. I just think a personal glimpse is so much more honest and real. As you can probably imagine, Nina being a 13 year old girl, the diary is filled with a lot of ramblings of boys at school and dreams for the future, but I can't really argue, as I used to write about the exact same things. At times those parts had me a little tuned out, and I feel that what kept me going was to see what else she would write about the current situation, and how her final days before her arrest were. Admittedly, I would have liked to have read more about life at the time, much like Anne Frank's diary, but I think despite this it was still enjoyable. It's a good read if you're curious like me and love reading personal journals. I would give this book 7/10.

Grace Murphy says

I could not finish it because there wasn't a real plot to it and I decided to find something more interesting to read
