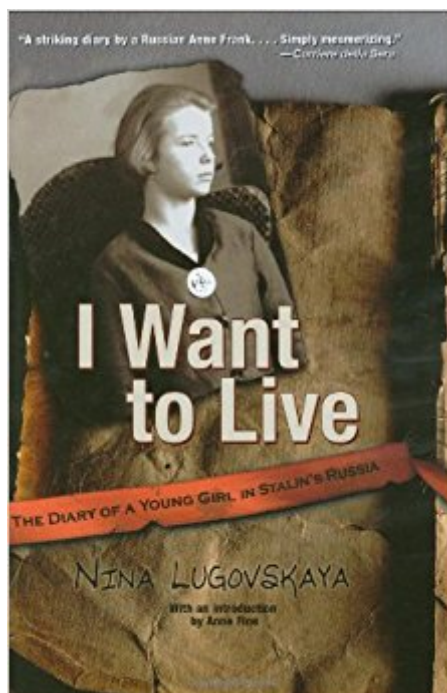


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# I Want To Live: The Diary Of A Young Girl In Stalin's Russia



## Synopsis

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.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

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 Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

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. . . . 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. Booklist, ALA

An interesting and painful read as we are pulled into her heart and soul. How could life be so cruel? A frightening thought that still screams more than ever in our modern world.

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.

I was captivated by this presentation of the diaries of Nina Lugovskaya and recommend it to anyone moved by the affect of cataclysm on deeply human lives. Nina's words create the longing for the impossible - wanting to meet the person at the centre of it all and wanting to know, wanting to feel, what her life was really like. How do you live a prosaic life in the midst of tumult? A life both 'ordinary' and 'extraordinary' at the same time - a fate shared then as now - by unknown millions. How do such situations come to exist, how do they come to warp the concerns of daily life? These questions remain vital for the world today. Think Iraq; Zimbabwe; North Korea; Chechnya; choose your country. The only qualifiers in works such as 'I Want to Live' are the invisible hand of the editor - how much of the diary has been edited out? The reader may never know. The unnecessary value judgements of Nina's opinions included in some footnotes to chapters (how does this serve the author or the reader at all?) and the use of a colloquial style of translation, with clichéd, TV expressions like - 'anytime soon' - words that Nina herself would never have used. These things serve to degrade the reader's experience. An interesting feature of the diary is how Nina, especially for such a young person, seemingly knew about events in the Soviet Union that apparently she 'shouldn't have' - could it be that the Soviet people knew more about the dreadful things happening in their society than western commentators give credence? Perhaps. In any case, 'Bravo Lugovskaya!' a spirited 'ordinary' life lived in sad and troubled times.

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