



# The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia

*Orlando Figes*

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**The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia** Orlando Figes

**From the award-winning author of *A People's Tragedy* and *Natasha's Dance*, a landmark account of what private life was like for Russians in the worst years of Soviet repression**

There have been many accounts of the public aspects of Stalin's dictatorship: the arrests and trials, the enslavement and killing in the gulags. No previous book, however, has explored the regime's effect on people's personal lives, what one historian called "the Stalinism that entered into all of us." Now, drawing on a huge collection of newly discovered documents, *The Whisperers* reveals for the first time the inner world of ordinary Soviet citizens as they struggled to survive amidst the mistrust, fear, compromises, and betrayals that pervaded their existence.

Moving from the Revolution of 1917 to the death of Stalin and beyond, Orlando Figes re-creates the moral maze in which Russians found themselves, where one wrong turn could destroy a family or, perversely, end up saving it. He brings us inside cramped communal apartments, where minor squabbles could lead to fatal denunciations; he examines the Communist faithful, who often rationalized even their own arrest as a case of mistaken identity; and he casts a humanizing light on informers, demonstrating how, in a repressive system, anyone could easily become a collaborator.

A vast panoramic portrait of a society in which everyone spoke in whispers—whether to protect their families and friends, or to inform upon them—*The Whisperers* is a gripping account of lives lived in impossible times.

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