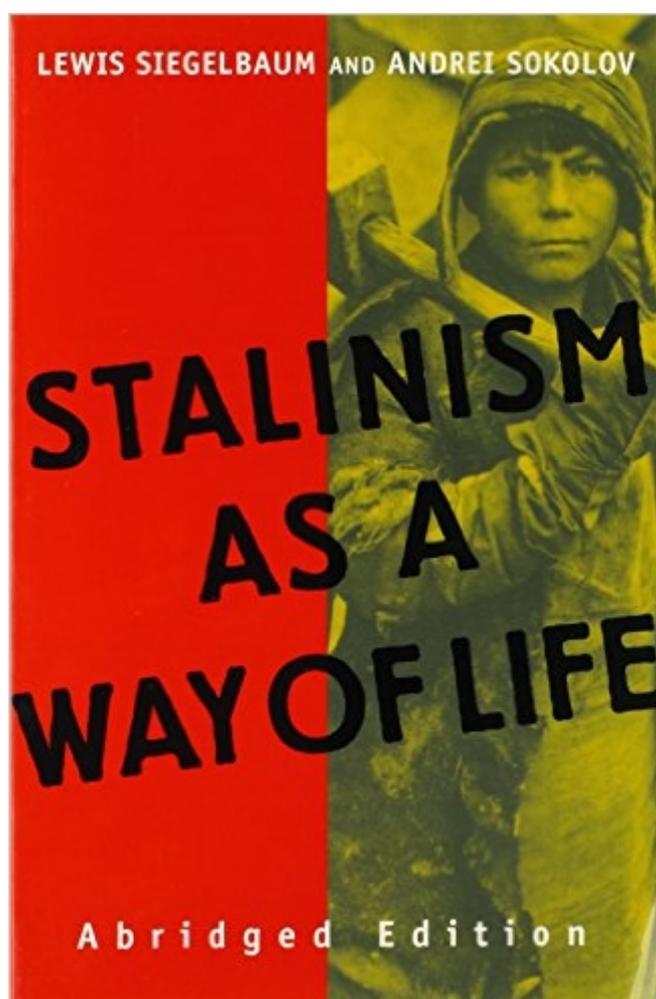


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Stalinism As A Way Of Life



Synopsis

In this unique book, an abridged edition of an earlier highly praised work, we hear the poignant voices of those who experienced firsthand the complex and perilous world of the Soviet Union under Stalin. Praise for the earlier edition "This remarkable collection of documents from the Soviet Union in the 1930s provides a wide-angle lens on the decade's dizzying events. Through citizens' letters to newspapers and party officials, the reader is made aware of the confused and often contradictory nature of Russian politics and society under Stalin."-Leonard Benardo, New York Times Book Review "Siegelbaum provides an excellent introduction as well as informative commentary throughout the book."-Harold J. Goldberg, History

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The popular picture of the Soviet Union in the 1930s as a bloody, erratic, dark prison inhabited by scurrying, cowed, silent victims of totalitarianism is only half correct. The victims were not that silent. Using their often newly acquired ability to write, they sent outspoken complaints right to the top, or nearly the top, and to newspapers. They even wrote the NKVD demanding and -- evidently -- expecting justice. Few of these complaints were published, but they weren't cast into the round file either. They were catalogued and saved and now they are being mined for an unparalleled worm's eye view of "Stalinism as a Way of Life." It was not different in principle from tsarism, even if the government was far more efficient at persecuting its citizens. But just as their grandparents had

blamed misery on local officialdom and believed that if only "little father the tsar" knew what was happening, changes would be made, grandchildren believed in the goodness of centralism. Change "little father" to Stalin, or, more often, Kalinin or Krupskaya, and the grandchildren's complaints are not greatly different from what the grandparents had. Except that, as Siegelbaum and Sokolov point out (in the last words), we don't have the written thoughts of the tsarist underclasses, since tsarism was careful to keep them illiterate. More than half a century ago, Alexander Werth wrote that Russian parents, despite the persecutions, were often grateful to the Bolsheviks for at least teaching their children to read. Kneejerk anti-Bolsheviks label Werth a Red stooge for saying so, but we now know that parents do think like that.

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