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Word for Word: A Memoir

Lilianna Lungina, Oleg Dorman

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A bestselling sensation in Russia, where it was called “the most significant cultural event of the year,” *Word for Word* is nothing less than the story of a nation’s literary conscience?the history of the twentieth century as seen through the eyes

A child of the 1920s, Lilianna Lungina was a Russian Jew born to privilege, spending her childhood in Germany, France, and Palestine. But when her parents moved to the USSR when she was thirteen, Lungina became witness to many of the era’s greatest upheavals.

Exiled during World War II, dragged to KGB headquarters to report on her cosmopolitan friends, and subjected to her new country’s ruthless, systematic anti-Semitism, Lungina nonetheless carved out a remarkable career as a translator who introduced hundreds of thousands of Soviet readers to Knut Hamsun, August Strindberg, and, most famously, Astrid Lindgren.

In the process, she found herself at the very center of Soviet cultural life, meeting and befriending Pasternak, Brodsky, Solzhenitsyn, and many other major figures of the era’s literature. Her extraordinary memoir?at once heartfelt and unsentimental?is an unparalleled tribute to a lost world.

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