

narrative non-fiction

Passenger with kids

Yuri Gagarin before and after March 27 1968

Biography. Molodaya Gvardia. REVISED VERSION. Moscow 2021. 512 pages**Publishers:** Italy , Hungary, Poland, Serbia

Polls show that Yuri Gagarin is the No. 1 hero in Russian history of the 20th century. It is all the more surprising that for many years there has not been an appropriate - open, objective, biography of the first cosmonaut based on current sources in Russia. The biography of Lev Danilkin is an attempt to close all the gaps in the biography of the „red Icarus“. This most complete chronicle of his life and afterlife to this day tries to ascertain what constitutes the myth of Gagarin. Interviews with eyewitnesses and a comprehensive review of Russian and foreign sources helped the author to answer basic questions. Is Gagarin just the figurative embodiment of Soviet design, or did he really have some unique qualities? What really happened on April 12, 1961? How did the first cosmonaut deal with the „Gagarinomania“ - his status as the most famous person on the planet? What is Gagarin: a product of the system and the era - or its mirror and justification? Was there a conflict between him and the political leadership of the USSR? What is the real reason for his premature death? Was his success just luck or the result of a deliberately designed career? Or was he a puppet in the implementation of a higher plan? What would have happened to Gagarin - and what would have happened to the USSR and its space program, had the “first citizen of the universe” not died in March 1968?



THE AUTHOR

translations
6 languages

awards

2017 Big Book Award
2017 Book of the Year
2011 Alexander Nevsky Award
2007 Big Book Shortlist

sample translation

english

other works

Lenin Biography

“Danilkin’s writing is strong and harsh, with the glow of a winter frost, but suddenly his polished style tips into a thawed hallucinatory pit. Then it reappears and shines cold again, but the pits ... The pits are the charm of this text.” *Sergei Shargunov*

“Gagarin is a myth. The first cosmonaut, icon, toy in the hands of the Soviet government and journalists, but not a man. Lev Danilkin took up this difficult task - to restore Gagarin’s human status.” *Theory and Practice*

Danilkin was born in 1974. He is one of Russia’s most advanced literary critics and had his own column in Afisha magazine for fifteen years. Since 2017 he has been an editor in the cultural section of Rossiiskaya Gazeta. He was also a jury member for the Litsei Prize, the Russian-Italian Gorky Prize and the National Bestseller Award. In addition to a collection of short prose, he has published three biographies in the famous edition ZhZL (Life of Famous People). Parallel to his Lenin biography, he published an anthology of selected works by Lenin. Danilkin has also translated Julian Barnes into Russian. Danilkin lives in Moscow.

Lev Danilkin