



# The Last Man in Russia: The Struggle to Save a Dying Nation

*Oliver Bullough*

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Russia is dying from within. Oligarchs and oil barons may still dominate international news coverage, but their prosperity masks a deep-rooted demographic tragedy. Faced with staggering population decline and near-certain economic collapse driven by toxic levels of alcohol abuse, Russia is also battling a deeper sickness: a spiritual one, born out of the country's long totalitarian experiment.

In "The Last Man in Russia," award-winning journalist Oliver Bullough uses the tale of a lone priest to give life to this national crisis. Father Dmitry Dudko, a dissident Orthodox Christian, was thrown into a Stalinist labor camp for writing poetry. Undaunted, on his release in the mid-1950s he began to preach to congregations across Russia with little concern for his own safety. At a time when the Soviet government denied its subjects the prospect of advancement, and turned friend against friend and brother against brother, Dudko urged his followers to cling to hope. He maintained a circle of sacred trust at the heart of one of history's most deceitful systems. But as Bullough reveals, this courageous group of believers was eventually shattered by a terrible act of betrayal alone that exposes the full extent of the Communist tragedy. Still, Dudko's dream endures. Although most Russians have forgotten the man himself, the embers of hope that survived the darkness are once more beginning to burn.

Leading readers from a churchyard in Moscow to the snow-blanketed ghost towns of rural Russia, and from the forgotten graves of Stalin's victims to a rock festival in an old gulag camp, "The Last Man in Russia" is at once a travelogue, a sociological study, a biography, and a "cri de coeur" for a dying nation one that, Bullough shows, might yet be saved.

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