

# **SVETLANA ALLILUYEVA**

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Alliluyeva, Svetlana (1926--2011) is the daughter of Soviet General Secretary Joseph Stalin and his second wife, Nadezhda Alliluyeva. The daughter of an old Georgian revolutionary friend, Sergo Alliluyev, Nadezhda was sixteen when Stalin married her on March 24, 1919. In addition to Svetlana, she had one son in 1919, Vasili. Svetlana also had an older half-brother Yakov (Jacob), the son of Stalin's first wife, Yekaterina Svanidze, a simple peasant girl, whom he married in June 1904 at the age of 25, but who died on April 10, 1907.

Nadezhda Alliluyeva's death in 1932, apparently a suicide following a quarrel with Stalin, deeply affected both her husband and her daughter. Morose, Stalin withdrew from Party comrades with whom he had socialized with his wife. Some believe her suicide contributed to his paranoid distrust of others.

Born on February 28, Svetlana was 27 when Malenkov summoned her to Blizhny, the nickname for Stalin's dacha at Kuntsevo, just outside of Moscow. In her first book, *Twenty Letters to a Friend* (1967), she poignantly described Stalin's three-day death from a brain hemorrhage. "The last hours were nothing but a slow strangulation. The death agony was horrible. He literally choked to death as we watched." Although she had lived apart from Stalin, who had always been "very remote" from her, she nevertheless experienced a "welling up of strong,

contradictory emotions” and a “release from a burden that had been weighing on [her] heart and mind”. After her father's death, Svetlana taught and translated texts in the Soviet Union. In late 1966, while in India to deposit the ashes of her late husband Brajesh Singh, she asked Ambassador Chester Bowles in the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi, India for permission to defect to the United States. She left a grown son (Joseph) and daughter (Katie) from two earlier marriages in the Soviet Union. Svetlana’s defection caused an international sensation. "I could not continue the same useless life which I had for fourteen years," she told reporters on March 9, 1967. Settling in Locust Valley, New York, she wrote the abovementioned memoir describing the deaths of her two parents, and a second one two years later (*Only One Year*), in which she described her decision to defect. Upon becoming a U.S. citizen, she married an American architect, William Peters, in 1970 and had a daughter by him. After separating from him, she returned to the Soviet Union in 1984 and settled in Tbilisi. She again left the USSR in 1986, returned to the United States, but then settled in England during the 1990s.

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