

## Beria Is Made the Villain

# Stalin Family's Anguish Is Portrayed by Svetlana

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Svetlana Alliluyeva gives in her memoirs the homely details, the piercing insights and the sense of anguish arising from the years before 1953 when her father, Josef Stalin, leader of the Soviet Union, was alive.

She tells of a threatening gesture Stalin made as he died, of the influence that "horrible evil demon" Lavrentia Beria (the secret police chief) supposedly had on her father, of the morbid significance Stalin attrib-

uted to the English novel "The Green Hat."

The Memoirs, entitled "Twenty Letters to A Friend," reached Washington over the weekend from London, where a British publisher hurried out a Russian-language edition to protect the copyright against a Soviet-sponsored version. Harper & Row, with its British associate Hutchinson, is to publish an English-language edition next October.

In a foreword, written at her Long Island retreat since her defection from Russia earlier this year, Svetlana says she wrote the "letters" in July, 1963, in the village near Moscow where she hopes to be buried, and presents them now unchanged.

The first letter recalls her father's death. She was 27. Summoned to his villa outside Moscow, she found him unconscious and knew without asking that he would die. Everyone there—high politicians and low servants—felt a great event was in train and acted accordingly, except for Beria, the secret police chief, whose face showed "ambition, cruelty, cunning, power, power . . ."

The doctors Stalin trusted had been arrested, accused in the "doctors' plot" later revealed to have been a fraud. Hence Stalin was without medical aid; in his last years he had administered to himself.

How strange, Svetlana felt, that in his last hours she loved him more dearly than ever before, even

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though he had by then become very distant from his family: so distant that, although he had big photographs of children in his office, he never met five of his eight grandchildren.

Svetlana thought his face had become beautiful and peaceful and considered that she had been an unfit daughter to this singular man, but she sensed too that a great weight was being lifted from her heart.

### Died in Agony

She says he died horribly, in anger and agony, of asphyxiation, horrified by death and by the faces around him. He raised his left hand—which was paralyzed—in an awful gesture of threatening, and then "his spirit left his body."

Beria, she recalls, burst out of the room and called loudly for his car, while Nikita Khrushchev, among others, comforted her. The servants, who adored Stalin, cried and one threw herself sobbing on his chest. Svetlana herself was dry-eyed but, when the body was removed, she fell in tears on then Deputy Premier Nikolai Bulganin's shoulder. Not until hearing of the death on the radio could she and others bring themselves to register it.

In his villa, in Kuntsevo, Stalin had lived in one sparse room, and Politburo members came there daily to eat and do the government's business. Stalin liked to sit in front of an open fire in winter, walk in the shaded garden in summer. He listened there to records of folk music. The house is empty now, says Svetlana; she sometimes dreams of it and awakes with horror.

As a child living outside Moscow, Svetlana found her father deeply in touch with nature as a result of his "peasant" character. She grew up without luxuries, a mode of life attributed to her mother, but once her mother got her a fancy jacket from abroad, telling Stalin—who was enraged by the notion of foreign clothes—that the jacket was from Leningrad.

Her mother filled their house with family members and guests so that, Svetlana

recalls, her father was not fenced off from life, from honest people, as he later was to become, to her great regret. At one of her early birthdays, he sang in a fine, high, clear voice, quite unlike his low-speaking voice.

Stalin was often sharp with his wife; their natures clashed, Svetlana says, and in fact when she herself was an infant her mother left Stalin and went to Leningrad. She returned by herself in order, the mother said, to spare the state the expense of Stalin's going for her.

Mrs. Stalin detested the thought of drinking and when, at a banquet in 1932, Stalin said to her, "Eh, you, drink!" she replied, "Don't 'eh' me," and got up and left.

#### Mother Found Dead

The next morning she was found dead by her own hand; at first no one dared to tell Stalin. "Father," as Svetlana calls him throughout her memoirs, felt there was an arch reason for her suicide, attributing it at one point to her reading of Michael Arlen's "The Green Hat." Searching for someone to pin the guilt on," he



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**STALIN FUNERAL** — Lavrenti Beria, at extreme right, with black fedora, was a pallbearer at the 1953 funeral of Stalin. Other pallbearers, from left to right, Lazar Kaganovich, Nikolai Bulganin; Vyascheslav Molotov, then foreign minister; the late Vassily Stalin, son of the dead leader, and Georgi Malenkov, who was then the new Soviet Premier.

thought perhaps he could thereby discover his own enemies, Svetlana says.

She feels her mother's fate would have been even more horrible if she had lived, for as Stalin began to purge her family and friends she could not have stayed silent; indeed, she likely would have ended up among the enemies of her own husband.

Her mother's death stole from her father his remaining faith in people; it was an act of treachery, Stalin thought, and it left a spiritual vacuum which was filled to overflowing by Beria, Svetlana declares.

#### Reveals Beria's Role

She states that Beria was more clever, "stronger" than her father, who was prone to trust and doubt; Beria played on his "weaknesses," his spiritual loneliness, his self-love; flattered and glorified him shamelessly, Svetlana says she does not mean to shift blame from one to another but "unfortunately, they became spiritually inseparable," the "horrible evil demon," Beria and her father.

After his wife's death, Stalin underwent a "psychological metamorphosis," Svetlana believes, and came to be ruled by an iron logic: having agreed that someone was an "enemy," one simply collected facts to prove it.

"The past disappeared for him," his daughter writes; to turn back and examine the facts became psychologically impossible. She explains this was how Stalin could believe that his oldest and most trusted friends and colleagues were "enemies of the people."

And to schoolgirl Svetlana, as the Stalin menage became "depeopled" by the purges, those years were the annihilation of everything her mother had created.

#### Recalls Tenderness

She remembers that he would kiss her good night, every night, and send her gifts and notes, and she is grateful for his love in her

childhood. And she recalls, too, how touched he was when his mother, who died in 1936 at age 80, lamented that he had not become a priest.

But he was inattentive as a father, son and husband, she says; his existence was centered on "politics, struggle." With the outbreak of war, she came to see him rarely.

The real break came in 1941 when Svetlana, absent looking at a Western magazine, read that her mother had killed herself; she had been told she died of natural causes. It changed her life, Svetlana writes: she began to review the past in her mind, question others and, for the first time, to doubt her father.

#### First Romance

A year later she met a film writer named Alexei Kapler; he listened to her pour her heart out, gave her a private showing of "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," introduced her to Ernest Hemingway and, daringly, wrote her a message in the disguised form of an article he contributed to Pravda. This romance soon ended. Stalin demanded that she hand over his letters, slapped her twice in the face, and imprisoned Kapler for 11 years. That the film writer was Jewish irritated her father most of all, Svetlana writes.

In 1943, about to enter Moscow University, Svetlana complained that her secret police protection embarrassed her. Stalin "understood" and said: "Well, the devil take you, let them kill you."

When her brother Yakob—married to a Jewish girl—was captured by the Germans, Stalin forbade Svetlana to tell Yakob's wife of the capture and then jailed his daughter-in-law on suspicion that she had connived in Yakob's "desertion." Offered an exchange by the Germans to get his son back, Stalin refused.

He refused, too, to meet Svetlana's first husband, a Jew, father of her son, Josef, now 22. Not until the boy

was 3 did his grandfather meet him; Svetlana was frightened because her son had "large Semitic eyes." But Stalin "melted." She notes that her son now criticizes the crimes of the Stalin era but doesn't connect them with his grandfather, whose picture is on his desk.

#### Father a 'Prisoner'

With age, Stalin began to tire of loneliness but found himself isolated, Svetlana says. Once he looked over her shoulder at a magazine with pictures by Repin, a famous Russian artist, and confessed sadly he'd never seen them. Who can imagine such cruelties, Svetlana asks, as walking on a train platform cleared of all other passengers? Her father was the "prisoner" of this "system."

But then Stalin had gotten accustomed to being alone and when the good, simple people of his native Georgia organized greetings for him, he stayed in angry seclusion at one of his three southern dachas, a "prisoner of his own glory," writes his daughter.

In 1948 he ordered a new wave of arrests, including many Jews, and told Svetlana that "Zionists" had put up her first husband (by then divorced) to marrying her.

#### Filled with Suspicion

"He saw enemies everywhere. It was pathological. It was a persecution mania, arising from desolation, from loneliness," she concludes: once he even said that she harbored anti-Soviet thoughts.

Svetlana fell seriously ill in 1950 and later wrote her father a letter claiming he had neglected her in the hospital, and when she tried to reach him he would snap "busy" into the telephone.

And finally, in 1953, when she was 27, she was summoned to watch him die. Here Svetlana concludes her memories, pleading in her last words for "Kindness and Reason in our dear torment world."