

Stalin Daughter Disputes Husband On Separation

NYTimes

FEB 24 1972

By ROBERT A. WRIGHT

Special to The New York Times

PARADISE VALLEY, Ariz., Feb. 23 — William Wesley Peters and his wife, Svetlana Alliluyeva Peters, Stalin's daughter, are living nine miles apart but disagree over whether they are separated.

Mr. Peters, the chief architect at the late Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin West, a cooperative fellowship, says they are separated and sees little likelihood of a reconciliation. Mrs. Peters says they are not and sees no need of a reconciliation.

It is clear, however, that the man and wife of 22 months disagree sharply on life-styles and pursue totally different kinds—he a variation of the communal one that he calls "the quintessence of American democracy"; she an upper middle-class American one in a private two-bedroom house she bought in an exclusive section behind guarded gates.

It also is plain that each differs on the way of life at Taliesin.

Taking her 10-month-old daughter, Olga, Mrs. Peters left her husband's apartment a few days after Christmas and moved into a house in Mountain Shadows East, a development of 55 private homes built around and associated with Del Webb's Mountain Shadow resort hotel, some three miles northeast of the Phoenix city line.

The houses, which start in the \$65,000 range, are modest but are surrounded by the hotel's golf course and palm tree-dotted verdant landscaping in the midst of the Arizona desert.

Mrs. Peters said the house, a 15-minute drive from Taliesin, was a compromise that permitted her the freedom she felt had been denied her at the architectural complex while permitting her to remain close to her husband, who chose to continue his living pattern.

While Mrs. Peters declined to receive a reporter, she talked reluctantly by telephone. She described her marriage as a happy one and said she was "shocked by the statements my husband reportedly made (to the press after the separation was revealed this week) and by his mentioning divorce."

She dined last night with a friend who helped her prepare this statement:

"Our only conflict was over the Taliesin way of life. My living became especially difficult after our baby was born. There was no room for a child nor for such a simple thing as washing [machine] facilities and we were not able to build our home on the territory. There were authoritarian commands which I could not follow without compromising my responsibilities to my baby and my hard-sought freedom."

Mrs. Peters, who had been twice divorced, defected from the Soviet Union in 1967, asking asylum in the United States from the American Consulate in New Delhi. Her book, "Twenty Letters to a Friend," written after she arrived in the United States, described her life as Stalin's daughter in the Soviet Union and her route to defection.

When she was living in Princeton, N. J., she was invited to Taliesin by Frank Lloyd Wright's daughter, Iovanna, Miss Wright's sister, Svetlana,

Mr. Peter's first wife, was killed with their son in an automobile accident in 1946.

Mrs. Peters's statement continued:

"Finally, my husband and I decided to look for a place to rent. After looking, we decided it would be better to buy a house. We chose one near Taliesin which seemed a good compromise and would permit us personal freedom and at the same time allow him to attend to his professional demands. I did not anticipate that he would not be permitted to leave Taliesin.

"We lunched together in the patio of our house last Saturday when he delighted his daughter by reading the poem Christopher Robin, and he phoned me Monday night on returning from San Francisco.

"The first suggestion of a divorce is what I read in the paper. I am stunned. In only hope that he will not be a pawn for others, allow someone else to limit his private life or make him irresponsible towards his family and destroy our relationship."

Mrs. Peters said she did not want to give more specific reasons for leaving Taliesin, but ascribed what she termed the authoritarian rule there to Mrs. Olgivanna Lloyd Wright, the architect's widow, who is president of the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation and the prime mover behind the architectural school.

Mrs. Peters said the amount of time her husband spent at their house was "nobody's concern," but asserted that they owned the house jointly. She said they both had to obtain permission of the Mountain Shadows East Association before buying the home. She described the house as having two bedrooms, a living room, kitchen and patio. She said she and her daughter occupied one bedroom, a baby sitter the other.

Acknowledging that all architectural fees went into a common fund at Taliesin—"my husband was paid twice in two years, a miserable sum"—she said they had a joint bank account.

Mr. Peters, sitting in the Taliesin apartment he and his wife occupied from their marriage in June, 1970, until late December, denied that he had any ownership of the house and it was entirely in his wife's name.

"The last thing I want to do is to say anything against Svetlana," he declared. "I'm very fond of her and sympathetic. She just didn't understand our way of life here."

Mr. Peters, a tall, slightly graying man who will be 60 in June, spoke deliberately about himself and his wife but described the separation as "one of the great tragedies of my life."

"It was a mistake on my part to allow her to marry a person such as I am," he said. "I've given most of my life to help create this. I look at my work as an intense regimen."

Mr. Peters, who was born in Terre Haute, Ind., attended Massachusetts Institute of Technology and then joined Mr. and Mrs. Wright soon after they purchased Taliesin in 1938, at first living in tents on the

slopes of McDowell Mountain, rising from the desert here.

"Everybody here is here by choice, not compulsion," Mr. Peters remarked. "Svetlana failed to separate this from totalitarianism. This is the quintessence of democracy. She confused it with communal life. There is no communal property in that sense."

"Frank Lloyd Wright taught a higher degree of individuality than anyone I knew. Life here is based on individual personal freedom. Of course, there is leadership."

Mr. Peters conceded that architectural fees went into a common fund. Mrs. Peters, after she had been requested to contribute her personal funds to Taliesin, said, "I think they expected me to do that, but I never did."

In Mr. Peters's view, Taliesin is more "like a campus or a small village."

To a visitor that description seemed as accurate as did commune, although there is little about Taliesin to suggest the hippy connotation that commune has today.